

**26/02/06 TT No.185: Paul Roth - Brading Town (Wessex League Division 2)**

Sat 25th Feb Brading Town vs. Alresford Town; Wessex Lge. Div. 2; Res: 1-0;  
Attendance: 70ish; Entry: £3; Programme: 50p -32 pages.

Every once, in a while, you come across a gem of a place to watch football and Brading Towns' Vicarage Lane ground was one such venue yesterday afternoon.

It was a real pleasure to set off by train from Margate safe in the knowledge that my journey ahead was engineering works free. Within four hours I was walking along the pier at Ryde after a hassle-free train and catamaran trip. With loads of time on my hands I headed to Shanklin on the Islands' old-fashioned tube train and had a long walk down onto the Esplanade and up into the old town to take in a couple of GBG pubs. Out of season and with the wind howling there were precious few people about. Back to Brading by bus, which dropped me at the excellent Yarbridge pub, also in the GBG, and then it was an easy mile or so walk through the small, town centre to Vicarage Lane itself...or should it be Vicarage Dirt Track! Only a glimpse of the floodlights gives the visitor any clue that a football stadium exists up this muddy track, save for a sign halfway along which "welcomes you to Brading Town FC".

At the end of the 500-yard lane is a small hut where I paid my £3 admission fee and bought the 32-page programme for 50p.....a really newsy and generally all-round good production this and a great read pre-match. The vista then opens out in front of you and quite a magnificent sight it is too. There are two stands either side of the pitch and hard standing all round and floodlights (purchased from old ground at Erith And Belvedere FC), and red and white goal nets setting off what is the 'hoppers archetypal ground. Behind the far goal the little island tube train, painted in a kaleidoscope of colours trundles occasionally by. The clubhouse set up again is super, as to get to it you walk through the tea bar....even this place is a real gem as all manner of eatables are on offer and it has the feel of an old school tuck shop: it's not big but it is a friendly place to wait away from the raw cold outside.

The game was never going to be a classic, the ferocious wind saw to that, but both teams put up a spirited performance and Alresfords' position at the bottom of the league belied their efforts yesterday. The only goal of the match came in the 20th minute from a straightforward shot from 10 yards out. Brading created enough chances to have won more comfortably but the truth was that the visitors rarely threatened the home goal.

A magnificent venue to watch football and a truly great day out.

A train day so: 13332 steps and a FGIF rating of 4\*.

