

TT No.132: Mike Latham - Sunday 28 January 2007: FA Cup 4th Round. **Arsenal** 1-1 Bolton Wanderers. Attendance: 59,778. Admission: £32; 84pp programme: £3; FGIF Match Rating: 3*.

David Garston's excellent review of the Emirates Stadium in the Autumn 2006 edition of *Groundtastic* (GT46) gives all the information you need to know about a visit to Arsenal's £380m new home so just a few notes here may help.

On a Sunday, particularly if coming from the north, it is advisable to park at Cockfosters which is easily reached on the A111 from J24 of the M25. There is parking for about 450-500 cars and it cost £1 to park all day. The tube fare to Arsenal tube station is £3 each way and the journey takes about 25 minutes. The new ground is within easy walking distance though after the game prepare for a long wait- the queues at the station were huge though everyone was patient and good humoured.

An alternative is to leave your car at a main line station at say Grantham, Peterborough or Stevenage and catch a train to Finsbury Park which is slightly further to walk.

Arriving 3 hours before kick-off allowed time to visit the site of Highbury where vast building works are taking place. There are several decent cafes in the vicinity and it may be wise to frequent these rather than stump up astronomical prices for the stadium catering with coffee £1.50, pies £4.20 and beer and lager £3.20 per pint.

Another good way to spend pre-match time is to pay a visit to the Arsenal museum where the staff were very friendly and the display of historical items well worth the £6 entry fee. There are two huge megastores at the ground.

Away fans are located in the bottom of the three tiers near the corner. The seats are luxurious and padded with excellent leg room though if people stand up in front of you there is no alternative but to do likewise. The view otherwise is good with the pitch cambered up from the surrounds. The floodlighting and acoustics are top class and there are two video screens at opposite corners of the stadium.

The programme, a weighty tome, is good value with plenty of reading matter and is superbly designed with a good range of modern and historical features and photographs.

With Bolton offering free coach travel if you bought a match ticket a number of shrewd northern based travellers took full advantage. Indeed, dotted among the 2,000 Bolton fans were some of the best-known travellers on the circuit all taking advantage of the chance to tick off a new ground.

It was a good day out, with emphasis on the day- despite no motorway hold-ups it was 15 hours from leaving Bolton to retuning just before midnight. Though it is a

hugely impressive new ground, albeit with a very genteel atmosphere, the sheer weight of people largely travelling by public transport make it a long day, as well as a costly one. Well worth doing but not every week.

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