

TT No. 160: Paul Roth - Sat 24th February 2007; Suffolk & Ipswich League Senior Division: **Haughley United** vs. Stowupland Falcons; Res: 1-2; Att: 69ish; Programme: 24 pages, free; Entry: free also.

This had been a difficult week pondering where to head for. The fluctuating weather forecasts hadn't done much to help. Should I venture North or West...I don't have many other options living in Margate, do I?

Leaving the A12 at Colchester, I began a lovely journey through the by-roads of Suffolk, a most delightful County even on as miserable day as this, finally ending up at Haughley United's most pleasant ground, situated just outside the small village, some 2 miles North West of Stowmarket. On my way I had come across a couple of superb GBG pubs as I journeyed North, the White Horse at Edwardstone opening 30 minutes before schedule just to accommodate me, being the pick of the bunch.

After picking up a copy of the excellent 24-page programme (which was free of charge and full of interesting reading material), I walked around the ground and took a couple of photographs. Whilst entering the main club building, I was aware of a huge panting Labrador beside me. I couldn't shake her off and to my chagrin she followed me (or should I say barged her way past me), into the King's Arms pub which adjoins the football ground and ran amok therein. To my surprise everybody thought (and I think some do now) that it was my dog and asked me to remove it. Explaining as best I could, the beast was secured while locals tried to ascertain her provenance. They had failed to do this by the time I returned to the field of play some 10 minutes before kick off!!

Geoff Seers, his girlfriend Claudia and her young son Sean (making his footballing debut no less) were on hand to greet me and most welcome company they made during the wet afternoon.

Haughley United are hoping to gain promotion to the ECL and being in top spot at present this 'Local Derby' against Stowupland was an ideal opportunity to maintain their lead over Grundisburgh who have two games in hand. Facilities here are top notch with a newish clubhouse and changing facilities in place; only the lack of any covered accommodation and of course floodlights holds the club back. The pitch is roped off and black and white goal netting, the club's colours, is fixed to the goals.

A good crowd of over 60 saw a fiercely contested game and surprisingly it was the visitors, a long way back in the league, who went in one up at the break. Tea, coffee and all manner of foods and alcohol were made available inside the excellent clubhouse during the recess and this time was a welcome break from the now heavy rain. Stowupland increased their lead midway through the second period, before a cracking header set the game up for a tense and frenetic last 10 minutes. But it was the Falcons, from just north of Stowmarket, that held on to record a title-denting victory over their more illustrious neighbours.

A giant dog, a young 7-year old making his football watching debut, good friends, heavy rain, a truly cracking game of football and some memorable pubs had helped make this a day I will remember for a very long time come.

FGIF Rating: 4*.

06/20