

TT No.256: Paul Roth - Thursday May 10th 2007; KCL Div. 1 East; **Betteshanger Welfare** vs. Sheppey Utd; Result: 2-1; Programme: No; Attendance: 9.

The coastal town of Deal is where I spent my happy teenage years after moving from Wiltshire and later Somerset. It will be fondly remembered as the place where I met my first love Sally, had some great mates and started work in my chosen career in nearby Sandwich.

Arriving at Cavell Square, home of Betteshanger Welfare FC, in the Mill Hill area of Deal, quickly reminded me how lucky I am to live where I do. This part of town was built for the workforce, many from Scotland, that hued the coal from the local pit some three miles distant and which has long since closed. It is a dreary area.

I'd missed the main footballing event of the day at the club - P&O Dover vs. P&O Calais; the fans and players of both teams were well and truly 'oiled' in the bowls club bar before my match was anywhere near starting. So much booze had flowed that the Frenchmen had totally forgotten to take their impressive trophy with them! The whole social club here is superb and is central to life in this part of town...not surprising as Bitter is sold for £1.60 a pint!

Compared to so many of the other KCL set ups, there's not really much at the ground itself. The main feature is a small covered brick stand that has seen much, much, much, much better days [see my photo]. Programmes aren't produced nowadays although they were many years ago, long before I was born!

The home side, in red and white stripes, were in front after 20 seconds and that summed up the entertainment for the first 45 minutes. Rain started falling as the second period started and so I took shelter in the overhang of the main club entrance. Glad I did as for one I kept dry and secondly, I could clearly hear the melodic sound of the brass band practising in one of the club's many function rooms. The soporific lilt, redolent of bygone era. Betteshanger doubled their lead on the hour before Sheppey pulled one back with a neat header. However, this typical end-of-season-game quickly petered out as the drizzle got steadily heavier.

A lot has changed in the forty odd years since the town of Deal was my playground; I've become a Groundhopper, all my mates are married and divorced and re-married and that first love, Sally, became a lesbian! Or was she already one? "C'est la vie", as the French would say!

FGIF Rating: 3*.