

TT No.262: Paul Roth - Sunday 13th May 2007; **FA Vase Final 2007** at the 'New Wembley'; AFC Totton vs. Truro City; Result: 1-3; Attendance: 27,754; Ticket: £15 (Most expensive available); Programme: 32-pages, £3.

Vintage buses are a wonder to behold, not so great if you are sitting on one that is currently being used instead of a train to get you to your chosen destination. That was all part of my journey up to the capital on Sunday afternoon to watch the Vase final at the 'New Wembley'.

Via Waterloo and the auspices of the Jubilee and Metropolitan tube lines I was finally at the home of football just after 1 pm. The twin towers are gone and in their place is the great new arch of steel that is visible for miles around. Olympic Way is still there, as ever tatty and it was along here, I purchased my light luncheon - a hamburger, paid for by credit card, as prices are so steep in these climes.... my 'Tesco' Clubcard, alas, was not accepted here though.

Bucketing down with rain, I was to meet my 'Oppo' Steve Hurley by the Bobby Moore Statue; he had heard that the bronze was more like Trevor Brooking in appearance but I have to disagree with that! A quick phone call altered our plans and we met up inside the stadium proper.

My first task, after entry, was getting past the security staff with my 1200mm camera lens and photographic equipment. I had printed up 70 pages of ground regulations that clearly didn't state that I couldn't bring this piece of kit into the ground. The fellow thought I was wanting to transmit live pictures back to Cornwall. All that paperwork quickly put the fellow off his stroke and I was granted entry.

Escalators convey you to the uppermost tiers where programmes [pretty good read this and not the enormous tome I was expecting - size-wise that is]; Wembley souvenirs; drink and food can be purchased.....for the well-heeled only I should add at this point - a small casket of fish and chips retails at £8.50 and a beer £3.50.

Everyone employed within the stadium remarks "Enjoy your day" after they've had contact with you and firstly, I thought this was politeness personified; however, I soon realised this was actually 'Wembley Stadium Ltd finishing school speak'. A bit irksome after a while.

Once inside, the arena is quite simply stunning. A bigger version of the new Emirates Stadium, I thought. My balding friend and I climbed to the very top of the edifice and looked down at the view below with awe. As play started both of us were rooting for the Cornishmen but, as time went by, eventually we were cheering on the lads from near Southampton, mainly because we felt they had been unlucky not to have at least finished level after the 90 minutes. At least the

game didn't meander along and finish in one of those dreary one-nillers, so reminiscent of other Wembley finals.

I stayed on to witness the 'Pot' being presented and made my way back to the BM statue outside to have a closer look by now in the relative-dry. From here it was back to central London for a spot of Tiffin, before engaging in a truly awful return journey back to the East Kent coast, encountering those vintage omnibuses again. Steven was actually back in Blackpool a full 42 minutes before I strode across our drawbridge and lowered the portcullis!

An interesting and a thoroughly enjoyable day; but did I enjoy my trip to Barnston FC more, the day before.....?

FGIF Rating: 5*.

06/20