

TT No.270: Paul Roth - Saturday 26th May 2007; Essex Olympian League Div. 3; **Basildon Town** vs. Barnston; Result: 1-2; Attendance: around 35; Programme: 16 pages, free from the clubhouse; Admission: none charged.

Picnic hamper, Summery food purchased and our boater hats dusted off - we were ready for our first cricket match of the season at our chosen idyll.....so, '*naturellement*', down comes the rain and it gets much colder. My wife and I are fair weather fans of the Summer game! However idyllic the ground at Sandwich is, it would have been idiotic for us to sit and watch cricket in the dank, cold conditions when we both suffer with bad backs.

So, it's football and for the last game of the season, my chosen venue is Basildon. Not the most salubrious of places, I know but as has so often has been the case this term, a real find! Basildon Town play at the Selex Sports ground, off Gardiners Way in the North East part of the Essex town. Literally, the ground is just two minutes off the A127 London-Southend dual carriageway. The club has an excellent website which boasts on its home page "Basildon Town, the oldest club in Basildon". Founded in 1946 to be precise. They're a proud lot here.

The long driveway leads up to the superb club building, more reminiscent of an aircraft hangar where superb social facilities are found. I had a pint of Vale Brewery Black Beauty Stout here and there were also two other real ales, on offer. Another larger club room sports a giant screen TV. Outside there are table and chairs and today a barbeque was running, feeding the crowd which was swelled by many of 'hoppers in search of their final 'fix'. The pitch is roped on this nearside and behind both goals; wooden dugouts are in situ on the far side.

Basildon RUFC is located to the left as one leaves the bar and its floodlight pylons are easily visible beyond that left-hand goal. It is just possible to glimpse Basildon Utd FC's stand and lights further in the distance. The whole place is dominated by the huge white 'Mushroom' in the tractor factory and this gives the field a unique character. Other playing fields surround the area.

Vince Taylor, who I met last Saturday at Hutton, had brought along a copy of his own '*Groundtastic*' magazine to give to the club's secretary; this featured a photograph taken in the 1950's of the club's old grandstand, at a former ground. This edifice was in fact an old Omnibus, positioned behind one of the goals. A truly iconic image.

A tight and always interesting game was won by the visitors from near Great Dunmow by the odd goal in three and I suppose this was actually a bit of an upset but I understand the home side couldn't field a full-strength side this afternoon. The result had little bearing on the final league table anyway.

Sunny times must be on their way soon so it WILL be cricket then, surely?

FGIF Rating: 3*.

