

TT No.36: *Paul Roth* - Sat 30th September 2006; Sussex County League Division 3; **Rottingdean Village** vs. Haywards Heath; Res: 3-0; Attendance: 32; Programme: 20-pages £2 including entry.

My first pleasant surprise of the day occurred at Margate Station when I found out that my rail fare to Brighton, travelling via Ashford International, was only going to cost £9.90. Unluckily for me a fire near the track at Eastbourne rendered my journey an excruciating one, arriving at the lively south coast resort a full hour after my intended rendezvous time. Still, I had enough time for a couple of beers in two GBG pubs before continuing on to Rottingdean. The Black Horse Inn on the High Street, here, is also a GBG listed hostelry.

Nigel Roes' description in the latest edition of "TFT" fully describes how to get to the ground, and he is absolutely spot on when he states that the ground "hits the top of the table as far as picturesque grounds go". In truth the setting is quite magnificent.

Walk up past the idyllic cricket ground, after leaving the main road, and come to the atmospheric clubhouse where old photos of cricket players adorn the walls hanging like friendly ghosts from seasons' past. On and upwards to the pitch itself which is positioned on a flat plateau now some 100 feet above the B2123 below. Fully railed off, the arena is accessed by a flight of steps at the bottom of which the tremendous 20-page programme sold for £2, which gained my entrance inclusively. The clubs' matchday magazine is simply superb. Full colour, relevant and with little touches that show it is a production of love.....for example, the centrefold, where the team line-ups are to be found, is printed on a background picture of the famous local windmill and is embellished with pictographs of coloured shirts of the two teams opposing each other today: ie. red for Rottingdean and blue and white stripes for Haywards Heath. Up to date league table and local league tables also enhance this smashing journal.

Atop the plateau that is the playing area, stop and take a 360-degree panorama of where you are. It is majestic! There is no other term for it and I count myself lucky to have stood on what must be one of the most scenic grounds in the country. Rolling fields covered with sheep sprawl north and east and back toward the sea the famous landmark windmill, a black "Smock Mill" known as "Beacon Mill" built back in 1802, stands proudly looking seaward. Along the ridge here, antlike creatures scurry along the hilltop, human beings of course, picked out against the late summer sky.

The football in truth was not the best I have ever encountered but resulted in the home side running out comfortable 3-0 winners, courtesy of goals from Turner, Smith and Watts, against a team that I still cannot believe are in the position they are today. Hayward's Heath are a sleeping giant and too much time has elapsed for them still to be in this state of torpor.

The crowd of 32, augmented by 400 lazily grazing and blissfully unappreciative sheep, had been treated to a spectacle, where for once the football, was of little significance. A breath-taking and memorable day out.

FGIF 5*, for the sheer glory of the scenery alone. Train day = 13885 steps.

06/20