

TT No.48: Paul Roth - Sat 21st October 2006: Anglian Combination Premier Division: **Blofield United** vs. Mattishall; Res: 1-0 Att: 80 or so Programme: 24 pages (Barnes Print) £1 including admission.

It is almost 45 years since I last arrived at Norwich railway station from Liverpool Street and, like then, I was on my own today. In the early 60's, as a child of eight, I was embarking on my first ever holiday to stay with my Godmother who lived in a lovely seaside cottage on the North Norfolk Coastal hamlet of Salthouse. So, so much, including myself, has changed since then, although I am certain my love for Association Football was well developed even in those early days. For sure no eight-year-old would be travelling alone by train in this day and age!

My first couple of hours in Norwich, so ridiculed by "Alan Partridge", were spent journeying around some cracking GBG listed pubs in the city, and I am hard pressed this morning to recall a venue that offers so many stunning pubs all gathered in one place. The famous "Fat Cat" is probably the most well-known but every one of the other six hostelrys I visited was equally as impressive.

After my 'booze up', I bussed out to Blofield and quickly came across the well-appointed football club stationed on the right-hand side of the Yarmouth Road, as one faces east. This was my first Anglian Combination game, a little surprising this really seeing that my home is in Kent, but what a fine introduction to this league this afternoon was to be. The excellent pavilion which sold real ale (GK IPA) on handpump is adorned with the club name and adjoining this is a very small car park. Ample parking is to be found on the main road outside. Inside the clubhouse, the 24-page programme sold for £1 which included entrance today; a really interesting 'Barnes Print' effort this with more than adequate reading matter and a superb colour cover depicting the ground taken from an acute angle. Outside there are plastic seats and tables where half-time tea and soup can be consumed - alas no hot food was available; I could have murdered an artery clogging, coronary-inducing burger! There is a tiny covered area for spectators but on a lovely autumnal afternoon the larger-than-I-had-expected crowd clustered around the roped-off playing area. The locals turn out in their droves to support the team as was explained to me by the club's friendly secretary, Matt Eastaugh.

Going well in the league and only just behind the leading pack, Blofield started brightly, but the resilient visitors more than held their own in a very, very, even and keenly fought match which was settled with a late header in the homesters favour. It was one of those games where I just felt Blofield would score, despite Mattishall being their equal for nearly the whole of the 90 mins. In fact, they hit the inside of the woodwork in the dying seconds but it just was not going to be their day.

At the final whistle I walked down to Blundall Station, a mile away, only to discover that no trains are presently running in either direction due to long running

engineering works but fortunately for me, after a quick pint in the GBG listed Yare, I managed to get a service bus from the top of the hill immediately and was back in Norwich in time for another swift pint in the Rosary, before getting the 6pm train back to London.

After a superb day out and, on reflection, I wondered what would my erudite Godmother Ida have made of my agenda today nearly half a century after embracing, with open arms, that shy little boy on platform 1. My guess is, not much!

FGIF rating 4*. Train day = 15409 steps.

06/20