

TT No.61: Paul Roth - Saturday 4th November 2006; Midland Combination Premier Division; **Highgate Utd** vs Continental Star; Res:4-2; Att:70 or so; Entry: £4; 20page programme: £1.

How many important and good decisions have been made sitting on the toilet, I wonder? For that matter, how many wrong ones have been made there too? On Thursday I was perusing my Birmingham A to Z, sitting on the throne, looking at clubs near railway stations for ease of getting to/from the city centre, when I espied Highgate's ground being only 5 minutes away from Whitlocks End railhead. A quick look at the league table and my decision was made to take the journey to the 'Coppice' for their game versus Continental Star.

Being only 48 hours before travelling, I looked at the Trainline.com website for any offers and was surprised to discover I was able to buy two singles (£10 each way) from Euston to Birmingham. The trains all ran to time today. Arriving in the West Midlands at 11.15, I embarked on a slow tour around a few of the GBG listed pubs in the city centre. The city has never greatly appealed to me pub-wise, but today I have to admit I enjoyed my tour round which took in pubs in the rejuvenated canal-side areas, the cathedral and some on the outskirts of the ring road that had somehow managed to escaped the bulldozers shovel.

Refreshed, I took the train from Moor Street to Whitlocks End (21 mins) and walked the three minutes to Highgate's ground, passing Shirley Town FC on the way! Two other clubs are nearby also but my 'refreshment' has rendered my memory of their names defunct.

The Coppice is a really old venue and is right out in the sticks. I was made to feel welcome in the clubhouse which looks better from the inside than it does out. Beer, tea, coffee, chocolate and good value filled rolls (50p) are sold from here.

£4 gained my entrance and another £1 bought the decent enough 20page programme; a little bit of a mishmash this one but with snippets of real interest.

The arena itself is 100 yards further into the field and has a stand running the full length of the nearside and has 70 or so seats within. The ground has hard standing all round and floodlights. Graffiti has been scrawled all over the old stand and dugouts which gives the place a slight a feel of neglect; this is a shame as this is a club with a proud history - they were contending the FA Amateur Cup semi-final only 34 years ago!

A highly entertaining game ensued with Highgate being slightly flattered by the final score of 4 goals to 2. The Oldbury based side could count themselves unfortunate to be going home pointless. At the final whistle I hurried back to the station and was in plenty of time to get the 16.59 back into the city centre for a bite to eat and then get the 18.30 train back to London.

Ultimately my decision, made on the toilet on Thursday morning, had been a good one.

FGIF rating 4*. A train day = 15132 steps.

06/20