

**TT No.69: *Paul Roth*** - Saturday 18th November 2006: Anagram Trophy 2nd Round: **Takeley vs. Standon & Puckeridge**; Res: 4-2; Att: 68; Programme: 20 pages, £1 including entry.

On a glorious late autumnal afternoon, I took in my first tie in this particular competition with a trip to East Hertfordshire. The earlier part of the afternoon had been spent eking out a couple of delightful Real Ale pubs in the wilds of Essex, most notable being the GBG listed 'Flitch of Bacon' at Little Dunmow. Much maligned, the county of Essex is a truly beautiful place to be at this time of year, as all the golden dropping leaves afford a cornucopia of colour.

Pretty spectacular as well, and a real gem of a football ground, is Takeley FC. The only club, so I am informed, with cover in the Essex Olympian League. It is a doddle of a place to find...turn left at the traffic lights in the village (if coming from the East), go over the long-disused railway line and the ground is directly on your left. Enter through the metal gates and a car park is available behind the goal.

£1 bought my 20-page programme...they only issue in this competition, I think. A good read it was too with a history of the Anagrams Trophy and a warm welcome contained therein.

The arena is really tidy and very smart with that covered stand being positioned on the changing block side of the ground. Hard standing is found there also and the whole pitch is fully railed off with alternate blue and white posting. Behind the far goal is a most characterful, wooden-clad water tower which adds an aura of history to the place.

I was made most welcome by their charming secretary Mrs. Cohen, a most helpful lady, who had e-mailed me to confirm that a programme would in fact be issued today. There is no clubhouse for a beer...this is taken in the village social club just round the corner on the main road. However, they do cook a superb range of hot dogs, burgers and bacon in the small tea bar, available from just before half time onwards. Also, sumptuous filled rolls are to be had here.

The football match itself was a really entertaining affair with Standon stealing into a 2-1 interval lead. An unusual position for the visitors to be in this term, as their league form has been pretty wretched currently lying bottom of the Hertfordshire Senior League top division. The second half was a much 'more-to-form' affair as the homesters stormed back to win quite convincingly, after gaining parity with a dubious penalty, by 4 goals to 2 and thereby earn a trip to either The 61 Club or White Notley in Round Three. I know where I would prefer to visit!

Home in Margate by 5pm, I was able to reflect on a real cracker of a day and a tremendous little football club. A gem.

FGIF rating 4\* plus!

