

TT No.123: Paul Roth - Sat 24th November 2007; West Sussex League Premier Division; **East Dean** vs. South Bersted; Res:4-2; Att:22; Programme: 24 pages for a donation; Entry: Free; Weather: Dry, overcast and chilly.

Often I've thought that it would be nice to support one particular team, as I did before this groundhopping bug overtook my life; but it would have to be a small, friendly village affair, where both my wife and I could perhaps amble along to from our cosy cottage after an hour in the local pub perhaps, and where we knew all the players by their Christian names. A real heart-of-the-community club in an idyllic country village setting is what I'm after.

East Dean FC fits the bill perfectly.

After the horrors of Willesden Constantine (WC, very apt initials I feel) last week, I needed somewhere rural and lovely (East Dean FC again fits that bill), and remembered Mick Burt's article about this West Sussex League club in TFT a few weeks previously. I will surmise that many people reading this will have read Mick's excellent article, so I won't duplicate his words. If you haven't, then go along to East Dean FC as his jottings are posted on the wall of the 'Tardislike' clubhouse.

Set in wonderful countryside, with Goodwood Racecourse just a mile or so away...no wonder it has the epithet 'Glorious', this cracking little club is shoe-horned into about the only available square of useable playing field in the tiny village. Earlier in the week I had rung club captain and programme producer Peter Kearvell about prospects for play and after a wet week he informed me there was no problem regarding the fitness of the Gasson Meadow pitch. Peter had warned me that the ground does get wet during the Winter months though, so check if travelling.

As is usual for myself, a few GBG pubs to the West of East Dean were visited en route to the football, and although these were sublime themselves, it is the majestic setting these hostelries find themselves in, and the drive to them, that will live long in my memory.

To the football then: after parking-up in the minuscule car park and gleaning my 24-page programme, a stunning effort for a club at this level of the football pyramid, full of relevant info and much more, I was well prepared for the match proper. And what a cracker it was to turn out to be. South Bersted, in green shirts, had most of the play, but somehow found themselves two down at half time, only to hit back quickly after the break and draw level. A dubious penalty restored the homester's lead, and the killer fourth goal, 10 minutes from time, sealed the fate of the team from Bognor Regis (they actually groundshare at BRT FC).

The 2pm kick-off meant I was home by just after 6 o'clock, after a day I will describe as cathartic, blissful and wondrous. Oh yes, and thank you Mick Burt for unearthing this gem.

FGIF Rating: 6*...that is 5* for just being East Dean FC, and 1* for not being WC FC.

06/20