

**TT No.145: *Dean McClean*** - Saturday 15th December 2007. FA Vase 3rd Round: **St. Ives Town** v Romford. Res:1-1 (AET; 1-1 at 90 mins); Att: c.220; Admission: £4; 36pp programme: £1; FGIF Match Rating: 3\*.

Last week's wet weather enabled a bonus trip to St Ives Town, for their re-arranged FA Vase 3rd Round tie with Essex Senior League side Romford.

Having visited Romford a few weeks previous, I have to admit I have adopted a soft spot for them as I was warmly received at their atmospheric Ford Sports Ground. So, I had a vested interest in this fixture.

Bitterly cold weather and worries about frost, prompted an early morning 'phone call to Cambridgeshire and the friendly voice on the end of the 'phone assured us that all was well and the match would go ahead as planned-all system to go to St Ives then.

St. Ives' Westwood Road ground falls into the category of unspectacular, not too good, but not too bad either. Cover is provided in two guises; a small covered stand with two rows of blue and red (mostly vandalised), coloured seats, while an overhang and three rows of terrace from the social club appears to be the popular home for most of the supporters and it is thronged with people by kick-off time. The social club is in two sections, one small section containing the bar, TV and toilets facilities, while a second larger part contains the function room. On a bitterly cold afternoon, the refreshment bar does a roaring trade in hot drinks, though anarchy nearly breaks out as we are told that the kettle hasn't yet boiled, as the second half kick-off approaches!!

This was a proper game of Cup football; how the FA Cup would have been played in times gone. A rugged undulating surface, two committed teams not giving an inch and a blood and thunder contest, played out in front of a vociferous and partisan crowd. If it was cold on the terraces, it was a cauldron on the field. As frost bite set in, it seemed that the (dreaded) prospect of extra-time would be avoided, as the home team took a surprise 1-0 lead with around 15 minutes remaining. A long hopeful pile driver caught Romford cold as the shot rebounded onto the inside post and into the back of the net, for what looked like the winning goal-a goal out of nothing one might say. However, Romford deservedly equalised with an almighty scramble only minutes later, to send us into extra-time. A quick visit to check on the football results and then back out into the cold. Romford down to ten men, by a harsh decision from a referee who struggled to maintain order in this feisty contest, didn't hinder the visitors as they had the better of the overtime period.

So, it's back to Romford on the Tuesday (18th). If you are in the area, I would recommend you to lob down to this one, as it will certainly be one to watch.

