

TT No. 179: Paul Roth - Saturday 26th January 2008; Kershaw Cambridgeshire League Senior Div. A; **Lakenheath FC** vs. West Wrattling; Res: 4-2; Att: 120+; Prog: 28 pp £1 w/a; Weather: Overcast, Mild & Dry.

Throughout the preceding millennia, human beings have evolved into a sophisticated super-race, capable of almost anything. Today our world is filled with wonders past generations would have not dreamt possible. What are Mankind's myriad greatest achievements? For me, one of our most wondrous is the ability we've commanded to communicate with one another, passing on snippets of useful information.

One such 'snippet' was from our esteemed web-editor, Martin, who some years ago told me about the glories of Lakenheath FC. That nugget stuck in my mind, and although it's taken me a few years to get here, by God I'm glad I've now been!

The enclave, American that is, of Lakenheath is found 5 miles North of Mildenhall, in picturesque West Suffolk. It's a famous US airbase, of course, of which most reading here won't need reminding of. You know you're getting near as the cars start to get bigger and brasher!

An uneventful drive on a dry sunny morning up the M2, around the M25 and M11, and via a couple of GBG pubs, I arrive at the Brewers Tap in Lakenheath for my final pre-match stiffener, 200 yards from the Football ground proper, found just off Wings Road almost opposite the pub. A small sign points to the arena (from the road there is not a hint of the crater you're about to plunge into) and one descends down an unmetalled track to the ample car park below. Nothing, even Martins' previous descriptions, could have fore-warned me of the splendour of the 'Pit/Nest' (as it is known). Set in a vast bowl, a former chalk quarry and natural kid's playground, the green pitch is enclosed on either side by metal railings, a 200-seater grandstand, green and yellow painted dugouts and a stupendous licensed clubhouse.

A table has been erected at the entry point to collect the ludicrously cheap £1 entry fee which includes the FANTASTIC 28-page programme. Without any shadow of a doubt, this is the best programme I've ever had from any club at this level (or many others for that matter) in my whole Groundhopping life. The colour cover is adorned with pictures of the ground and a black and white photo of the 1935-36 Lakenheath team. Everything and more, is assembled for the reader inside, including an in-depth look back on the 'History Page' at a match from the 1937 Exning Amateur cup game versus Newmarket, which, incidentally the Jockey's had won 2-1.

To Bruce Rutterford, the editor and compiler, Thank you for a stunning production!

As the 2pm kick-off approaches a large crowd gathers, as this is a top-of-the-table clash between the two best placed teams in the league, and this makes for a

cracking atmosphere. Billed as the 'Top' game in East Anglia today, the match doesn't disappoint. League pace-setters Lakenheath are out of the traps like whippets and are quickly 2 goals up, a little fortuitously I have to say, before Wratting find their feet and force parity on the stroke of half time with two superbly taken goals. The visitors continue to have the better of things until midway through the second half when the home side retakes the lead and adds a fourth, and match clincher, just a few minutes later.

What I'm not used to at this level of football, is the huge roar that accompanies the home sides' goals, but there again over 100 people don't usually attend matches at this level, do they? Looking through the clubs that compete in this division, the second tier of the Kershaw Cambridgeshire League, it's a surprise to find Fulbourn Institute and Somersham Town plying their trade.

Before the game, at half time for a cuppa and a filled roll and briefly after the final whistle, I had popped into the club pavilion to speak to club secretary Tracey Hannem, who is busy running the bar. 'Running it' is an apt description as this charming lady, whom I had spoken to earlier in the week prior to my visit today, is now a veritable whirlwind of activity, as the place is full to the gunwales with supporters. Tracey seems to encapsulate the epitome of this lovely football club, as her effervescence abounds both on and off the field of play.

Of all the Travellers' Tales reports that have ever been written and appeared on the FGIF website, never have the words, "A VISIT HERE COMES HIGHLY RECOMMENDED" been so heart-felt and meant. The 'Pit' is truly magnificent.

FGIF Rating..."WOW"!

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