

TT No.200: Paul Roth - Saturday 23rd February 2008; Kershaw Cambs League Premier Division; **Great Shelford** vs. Wickhambrook; Res: 0-0; Att: 35; Programme and Entry: N/A; Weather: Overcast but mild.

Ever been somewhere and had a really great time and gone back and tried to repeat the experience? It's never as good the second time, usually, is it?

The last month has seen me at two cracking venues and games in the Cambridgeshire League, at Lakenheath and Cambridge University Press respectively, and so naturally I thought the top team, Great Shelford, might yield more joy.

Great Shelford is a small village at the city of Cambridge's southern extremity, and normally to achieve this destination I would travel up the M11 and turn off at either junction 10 or 11. By way of a change I alighted at Junction 8 and wound my way North via the peaceful idyll that is the Essex countryside, of course sampling a few GBG listed pubs on the way. The juxtaposition of the ancient Bell at Wenden's Ambo and the brand new, so new in fact that the varnish is still tacky, Elmdon Dial at, you've guessed it, Elmdon, was the highlight of an excellent day out pub-wise.

The 'Rec', the home of my chosen club today, is found along Woollards Lane, in the centre of the village.

Parking is available here, and the field lies beyond. I meandered over to the changing pavilion/tea bar and was given a welcome cuppa by friendly club secretary Tony Holden. It was sad to see this facility had been badly vandalised the previous night.

Martin, our FGIF host, had told me that the club actually competed in the FA Vase, back in the latter half of the 1980's, and looking back I see they reached the 2nd round proper in the 1987/88 season, losing out at home 2-5 to Witham Town. Those were the days, weren't they? Time, surely, to initiate the FA Flowerpot, and get these smaller clubs Wembley-bound.

The arena is one of those that can be assembled on the day, and then dismantled and loaded into a pantechicon, and transported elsewhere, if so desired. Even the goals are on wheels! Once constructed it does feel like a proper football ground, though.

Tony had told me that the team were without some regular players today for this important game versus lowly Wickhambrook, and although the home side played some good football up to the penalty box, that final decisive goal-strike never really looked like coming. In fact, the visitors had a few fleeting dalliances themselves, with the host's goal. Overall, it was a disappointing game of football.

At full time I popped into the club's superb social club, situated in the aforementioned car park. Hot food is served therein, along with alcohol and soft drinks. SKY TV is tuned to the results pages.

The club don't issue programmes, but do boast a cracking website which is well worth a look at. The lack of a programme is going to put a lot of travellers off, I know, which is a shame. Purely for my own benefit, I printed my own colour, four-pager, which I handed to myself, free of charge! (Paul, you've got to get out more, my son).

That 'joy' I was searching for wasn't apparent today, football-wise at any rate, but I'm certain Great Shelford do play a lot better than this and of course aren't top of the league without reason.

Notwithstanding the football match itself, I thoroughly enjoyed my day out in Cambridgeshire and that lovely drive through rural Essex. In fact, my poodle yielded one of the oddest named pubs I have ever come across. 'The Beautiful Ugley Chequers', at Ugley! It was that sort of day.

FGIF Rating: 3*.

06/20