

TT No.211: Paul Roth - Sat 15th March 2008; S&I League Prem Div. **East Bergholt Utd** vs. Brantham Athletic; Res: 0-1; Att: 70; Programme: 24 pages free; Admission: N/T; Weather: watery sunshine and mild.

It's been on my hit list for a number of years now, and at long last I've managed to 'ticked' it and I must say I was mightily impressed with what I found there. The GBG listed Swan at Little Totham, twice winner of CAMRA's prestigious national pub-of-the-year award, is a place I've passed nearby to on many occasions but up until today hadn't managed to visit. Another GBG establishment I dropped into later in the day wasn't quite such a success, but I'll come back to that later.

I'm on my way up to Gandish Road, the home of East Bergholt United FC for their important local Derby clash with near neighbours Brantham Athletic.

Found right in the heart of Constable Country and only a mile or so from the world famous Flatford Mill, East Bergholt is a sprawling village whose football club headquarters are located at the Recreation Ground. After parking in the ample car park, one finds the field of play to be fully roped-off with wooden dugouts situated along the far side. Cricket shares the facility at times, as is common with many such grounds. A lovely flat pitch aids good passing soccer. A sumptuous, comfortable pavilion and changing room block enhance the venue no end. Within this clubhouse is where I picked up the excellent 24-page programme, which is enhanced by splashes of colour. Also, within this building, teas, coffees, burgers, chocolate bars and alcohol are proffered.

In the preceding week I had e-mailed Carol Williams, the club's secretary, and on arrival she had made me most welcome and at half time even furnished me with a free cup of tea. Such lovely people make this Groundhopping hobby of ours such a joy.

Brantham Athletic and myself haven't crossed paths since the early 1980's, when they were playing in the Eastern Counties League, which is exactly where they are trying to climb back into. This season's campaign looks likely to be successful in that quest, as everything is in place at their ground to gain promotion, if they finish high enough in this league. This comfortable win, by virtue of a converted penalty kick midway through the first half, was sufficient to take another three points on that promotion trail. Brantham should have scored more today.

East Bergholt United is a very pleasant place indeed to spend an afternoon and I very much enjoyed my visit and the hospitality that was bestowed upon me. The surrounding area, of course, is worthy of your time too.

My return journey home is of note, and a story to which you all might hoot. I usually pack a 'Tiffin Box'(my parents spent a lot of their lives in Lucknow, UP, India and the family habit has stuck) for lunchtime sustenance, but today I was 'Sans' box. The tuna and roasted Fennel sandwich that I purchased from a GBG

establishment, that will remain nameless, passed through my not inconsiderable intestines quicker than Lewis Hamilton's Vodafone Maclaren Mercedes and I had to make four emergency 'Pit stops' as I trundled South, towards home, along the A12 and M2. I ask myself this question as I sit writing here.....is it time to get our Ford Focus equipped with 'SAT-LAV'?!

As ever is, with all my football journeys, another enduring day. FGIF Rating: 4*.

06/20