

TT No.232: Paul Roth - Sat 12th April 2008; Middlesex County League; **Bethnal Green Utd** vs. Indian Gymkhana; Res: 3-1; Att: 4 on the pitch and 2 looking out from a balcony above (see my photo); Prog: 4 pages, free; Weather: Heavy, cold April showers!

Martin and Steve Harris have both written articles about Bethnal Green United this season, on this site, and there is absolutely nothing I can add to their eloquent words that will enhance the reader's knowledge of Meath Gardens further.

The very name, Bethnal Green, connotes the 'East End' of London and it is actually a part of the capital that has long and colourful, and in parts ignominious past. The first Doodle bug to hit this country landed here, and on March 3rd 1943, 173 people were killed, including 62 children, on the steps leading down to the town's underground station, amid a stampede to avoid an air raid.

Today, the Columbia flower market, held every Sunday, is considered the finest in the whole of Great Britain.

Meath Gardens itself is much changed today, and if you look past the Eastern goal on the ground and focus on the nearest building to that goal, on the other side of the canal, you might just realise that building is a pub, the Palm Tree. It is set in wonderful isolation and if a glass of something oils the machinations of your day, and if you can spare the time, go and engage landlord Alf in conversation. The pub is unique, and just such a typical East End boozier. It even boasts 'palm tree' wallpaper, commissioned by the landlord's wife, over 30 years ago.

A nicer Cockney gentleman than Alf you'll never come across, and he paints a picture of how the surrounding area used to be that will transport you back to those times instantly. Where that Easterly goal is now, used to be a large, busy commercial dock!

League leaders Indian Gymkhana came to the Gardens this afternoon looking for another three points to consolidate their place, six points ahead of chasing Sutton Common Rovers, but in a real turn up for the books, it was the men in green, from the Green, that deservedly took the spoils in this highly entertaining match. Admittedly, it was IG who had 70% of the play, but only had one penalty goal to show for their efforts throughout the ninety minutes and BGU punished them with some excellent finishing, taking every chance they created.

Incidentally, I got another soaking today as a cold, heavy April shower lashed the arena and made the middle part of the field pretty boggy. Both sides did well in these tricky conditions.

With the Camel pub, half a mile west of the Palm Tree, your choice of GBG hostelries is instantly augmented in this urban area and you could well be forgiven for thinking that you were in an oasis, given the desert connotations!

FGIF Rating: 5*.

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