

TT No.234: Paul Roth - Wednesday 16th April 2008; KCL Div1 West; **BELVEDERE FC vs. BROMLEIANS SPORTS**; Res: 1-0; Programme and Entry: N/A; Weather: Cold but mercifully dry!

16th April 1990 is a significant date for us, but has only been of relevance to us for the past six years. That's how long we've had our beloved cat, Ben (Benson, the archduke of Lotharingia, to give him his ridiculous, full pedigree name), and so today sees him celebrate his eighteenth birthday. Given everything he has wrong with him, the numerous operations he's had to endure and the plethora of pills he currently takes, it's a miracle he's survived to celebrate this day. But celebrate he does, as extra fusses, his beloved lobster and loads of presents enhance his special day.

As he sleeps off his gourmet luncheon, I slip off to Belvedere FC, to take in that club's KCL Div1 West fixture against Bromleians Sports. Belvedere FC have a distinguished past (their website has a full club history) but it still comes as a surprise to me how nice this ground is. A narrow driveway, reminiscent of Wickham Park's, leads to the large club building and in turn that leads on to an ample car park.

The pitch is a one-hundred-yard walk away, and to get to it one passes a small memorial garden, resplendent with a new bench, dedicated to a long-serving member of the club. Alongside this chained-off garden is a small Cenotaph, covered in poppies and I'm pleased to report here that neither have been vandalised! The playing area, railed on its furthest side, is immaculate and even boasts striping upon the grass. It looks more like the first game of the season upon its turf, rather than nearly the last.

As I arrived here nearly an hour and a half before kick-off, I walked back into Belvedere and had a drink in three of the small town's pubs....the Fox, the Victoria and the Prince of Wales. All are unremarkable but each were full of 'Blue Collar' workers enjoying a well-earned 'après-work' drink. To me, this is one of the best 'Session' of a pub's day, as folk relax after the grind of daily life.

It's an interesting walk back to the club, along and past the various dwellings that occupy the Woolwich Road, and I'm always fascinated to witness the differing states of peoples' gardens and properties, and wonder what their lives are like. Not many are venturing along to the football on offer up the road this evening, that's for sure!

It's great to see a few friendly faces in the shape of some familiar Groundhoppers at the game, and we are treated to entertaining match, which is won by the home side by virtue of the only goal of the entire ninety minutes, scored midway through the first half. This was a relatively meaningless fixture, as far as the league table was concerned, but both sides did their utmost to score goals and all present thought their evening had been worthwhile and enjoyable (except for those from

Bromley, perhaps!). It was a little chilly though (after all, it is the start of the cricket season today!).

Back home, Ben only wanted one more thing from me, before settling down for the night...yet another fuss and cuddle!

FGIF RATING: 4*.

06/20