

TT No.41: *Paul Roth* - Saturday 1st September 2007; KCL Division 2 East; **Canterbury City** vs. Borden Village; Res: 5-0; Att: 140; Prog: Special issue, 24 pages, £2; Entry fee: None; Weather: Cloudy - perfect for football.

May 7th 1994 and I'm at the St Lawrence cricket ground in Canterbury, watching Kent play Notts in a County Championship match (Notts won by 9 runs by the way). Much to my friend John's amazement I skip the afternoon session and venture down to the Kingsmead Stadium to watch Canterbury City FC play their last ever Southern League (then the Beazer Homes League) match, versus Salisbury City. The Wiltshire side win 2-0, City spend the next 7 years in the lower reaches of the Kent League and eventually fold in the Summer of 2001. The two cities have gone in different directions since that afternoon, footballing-wise.

13 years on from that day at the cricket and, like the proverbial Phoenix, Canterbury City have risen from the ashes and are now located at the recreation ground in the pretty village of Bridge, some 2 miles South of the famous cathedral city. A new dawn awaits and the club has been relaunched as a Community Interest Company (see the club's website for more info regarding exactly what this means) and high expectations linger in the air before the 2.45 pm kick off.

Bridge is a pleasant place to visit. 'Hoppers can get here via the railhead at Canterbury and then by bus (nos. 16, 17 or 89), or direct by train to Bekesbourne and then a 1.3 mile walk along country lanes. Howletts Wildlife Park is nearby and is more than worth a couple of hours of your time. A superb bakery, opposite the Red Lion pub, sells cheap pies and cakes and a stroll around the village itself is most rewarding. The White Horse, the aforementioned Red Lion and Plough & Harrow give three alternatives for the Real Ale and food, but the best option, only in my opinion that is, if you are driving, is the GBG listed Mermaid at Bishopsbourne a further 2 miles South.....look out for the old picture and timetable of the long since gone railway station, as you enter the public bar.

The recreation ground has been transformed today into a decent-enough looking football ground and a far more convivial arena than the awful Kingsmead stadium awaits the traveller. After buying the excellent 24-page commemorative programme from a man standing by the near goal, I adjourn to the pavilion for a cuppa and a filled roll. The venue has been fully roped off and a small gazebo erected for dignitaries. A lot of work has gone into getting the playing surface up to scratch and this looks magnificent today, resplendent with alternate stripes.

Football-wise, both teams seem well matched and the first half ends goalless. Canterbury have a number of chances to take the lead but the defining moment of the game happens when Borden have a player sent from the pitch 15 minutes before the break. After the interval City surge forward and score that all important first goal. The floodgates then open and the final score-line of 5 goals to nil is a true reflection on the afternoon's play. Borden Village, actually, will be one of the

better teams Canterbury play this season, so I expect a few teams in this league to cop a walloping from the City-ites. The crowd, of well over 100 goes away well pleased with what they've witnessed.

Back to the cricket now and as some of you may know, I'm a great lover of the summer game, so I will end, unusually, with a quiz question. All of those who arrive early at Bridge this season and need to spend an hour whiling away the time, instead of visiting the pubs, here's a task to complete: 'St Lawrence' is a famous Cricket club that play in the top division of the Sheperd Neame Kent League and who are also located within 1 mile of the football ground. But where is their HQ?

Without asking, have a go at finding it.....if driving allow yourself an hour, and if on foot, allow two. After that time has elapsed, ASK for directions! It ain't easy to find!

FGIF Rating: 5*. An historical day.

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