

TT No.110: *Paul Roth* - Sat 13th December 2008; Kent Senior Trophy 2nd Round, Deal Town vs. Holmesdale; Res: 2-1; Attendance: 55-? Entry: £6; Prog: 32 pp, £1; Weather: Heavy rain, icy cold and utterly miserable throughout.

My original plan to travel to Swanscombe for a Kent County League match between Borough United and Forest Hill Park was scuppered early doors, as the torrential overnight rain took its toll. Also, I had planned and was looking forward to a look around the British Cement Heritage Institute thereabouts, where I was hoping to visit the newly opened gift shop. Anyway, by 11.30 am my next nine choices were all also deemed unplayable and quickly I realised it was going to be one of those frustrating days...now, what's the date?

Ultimately, I had a choice of three local fixtures that were still scheduled to take place and as I hadn't been to the Charles Sports Ground for a few years, I popped over to Deal town for this Kent Senior Trophy 2nd round tie versus Holmesdale, from Bromley.

I have to say I very much like the seaside town of Deal, having spent a lot of my youth here, making some great friends; that reminds me, Larry and Nikki, we must get round to seeing you both again soon; it's been far too long! With equal affection do I hold the town's football club, and I'm still coming to terms with the fact that the club not only got to Wembley in the year 2000, but actually won the FA Vase there. AMAZING!!

Eight years on and things are at last back on the upward path at St. Leonard's Road, as a whole host of new construction has taken place and is ongoing. First off is a new turnstile block that greets you as you enter from this end. The arena has a new wire perimeter fence here too and the vast splodge of mud hereabouts is soon to be transformed into a brand-new clubhouse, which should be functional by the start of next season. I'll miss the old one, mind you! They don't make 'em like that anymore!! The splendid old wooden grandstand that featured so prominently on the far side has been replaced by a Meccano-style 200-seater affair, with a lean-to standing-only shelter a few yards further on. The modest bank of terracing behind the sea end is long gone too, but the marvellous old dressing room building in the far corner is mercifully still in situ. An overhang that runs the length of the current pavilion offers a modicum of shelter and by its entrance is the tea bar, run by some of the friendliest, most efficient and voluptuous ladies you'll ever come across outside of a brothel! The chips and tea sold here are world class.

£6 got me through the new turnstiles and a further Gold-un' purchased the 32-page programme, which I have to say isn't quite as good as it used to be...I'm sure it was more, newsy.

The game of football offered up for my delectation was magnificent fare as well and a credit to each and every player that took to the pitch on this horrible

afternoon. Well done to referee Regan also, for not hesitating about playing in what were truly appalling conditions.

Deal had the lead on 20 minutes through Shane Suter, after they had twice hit the crossbar, but the visitors gained parity soon after when Joel Greaves rifled in, the home 'keeper injuring himself badly in the process, when he clattered into a goalpost. That was how it remained until teatime and it looked on the cards that this tie might go to extra time until, that is, a well worked corner saw a back-flick at the near post, and Josh Davidson slam the ball home for what proved to be the winner. Home stopper Rogers, rib clutching since his earlier injury, pulled off a breath-taking save to deny Holmesdale a last-gasp equaliser. God bless that man!!

Originally today I had reckoned on a visit to a concrete jungle and a cement museum, but instead, ended up by the seaside, albeit for a revisit to a club I've been to many times previously, but you know what?...I loved it at Deal today and look forward to returning when all the current ground improvements have been completed.

FGIF Star Rating: 5*.

06/20