

TT No.153: Paul Roth - Sat 21st February 2009; Hellenic League 1 W; **Cirencester Utd** vs. Wootton Bassett Tn; Res: 0-3; Att: 30; Entry: £4; Programme: 36 pages, £1.50; Weather: Gorgeous! French Onion Soup: None.

Whilst in the waiting room of the Spring Gardens Clinic in Canterbury on Thursday afternoon, about to undergo my annual Colonic Irrigation therapy (my clinician, Lance, says February or March is the optimum time of year to have this procedure carried out), I happened to read an article regarding a research project carried out in Austria; it had concluded that 29% of everything the male of our species, over the age of 18, says and does is in fact nonsensical, rubbish. This statistic doesn't particularly surprise me, however the same research group concluded that only 3% of what women over the same age utter and do is also irrelevant nonsense. That statistic does astound me, inasmuch as there is such a disproportionate anomaly between the numbers. Let me quickly state here and now, I'm no misogynist.

For a change, it's a glorious day and I've made the trip down to the Cotswolds to take in this Hellenic League Division 1 West match at Cirencester. Incidentally, this is the fourth football ground in and around the town I've now visited.

A leisurely drive down to Gloucestershire finds me choosing four pubs to visit prior to the match, chosen from the good book, naturally. The Old Spotted Cow in Marston Maysey, actually in Wiltshire, is excellent but is only a precursor to the next three glorious watering holes I discover to the north of the Roman town, along and off the A435, at North Cerney, Chedworth and Cockleford respectively. The Green Dragon at the latter boasts a chainmail fire guard curtain across the huge open, roaring inferno; it's a feature I've never come across before. Stunning countryside, millions of snowdrops carpeting the landscape, Cotswold Stone buildings and that welcome sunshine couldn't have set me up more nicely for my afternoon's 'entertainment'.

It's £4 to get in and a further £1.50 for the 36-page programme. Most Groundhoppers will have been to the 29th Regiment Ground at South Cerney, Cirencester United's current HQ, during the August Bank Holiday hop last year. It is hard to imagine the place packed with thousands of football fans, as it was then, because today the official attendance is given as just 30: A rather generous number if you ask me.

The railed-on-three-sides pitch is located on the left of the A419 as you drive away from Cirencester towards Swindon. There is an old pavilion, laying a hundred yards or so away from the pitch, which houses the two sets of changing rooms and a very modest tea bar. The arena has two dugouts on the road side and that is it.

I was expecting goals, as 'Ciren' are currently occupying bottom spot in the league and shipping goals at an average of five per game; in contrast, Wootton Bassett, are challenging for promotion and with games in hand are well placed to achieve it. So imagine my surprise when teatime arrives and honours are all square with

the homesters giving as good as they got play-wise. If I'm honest, it's wretched fare.

My medical procedure I eluded to earlier is a rather odd, but not unpleasant, but the after effects are easy to describe. I feel invigorated, rejuvenated and have even more get-up-and-go than normal. Everything I eat seems to taste that much sweeter. To summate, I feel on top of the World. So much so, that if they'd had it for sale during the break, I would even have contemplated trying another beaker of that French Onion Soup! You must surely now understand how good I do actually feel!

I Made a friend during the second half, the now injured and limping home 'keeper, Dean (Deana) Dixon. Asking him how come his side are doing so well today, he informs me to "just have patience, as inevitably we'll capitulate. We're s**t, we always are in the second half"

By about the 70th minute, and with the team that sounds like an extinct Blood Hound getting more and more frustrated, as they miss chance after gilt edged chance, it looks increasingly likely that United are going to glean only their sixth point of the season. But then, suddenly, 'Deana is proved to be spot on. WET score and as the hamsters run out of puff the visitors add a further two scores. If they had taken all their chances and it hadn't been for the heroics of Messrs. Dixon, his defence, the woodwork and their own profligacy then the Wiltshire side would have hit double figures in that second half alone.

I must thank Gordon Varley, the club secretary, programme editor and linesman-for-the day (such folk are the life blood of our beautiful game) for keeping me informed as to the chances of play today, as it wasn't a foregone conclusion that the match would go ahead; only last Saturday the ground was under eight inches of snow.....I know this to be true, as Gordon showed me pictures he'd taken of it on his digital camera.

Days like this and the people I met today make Groundhopping for me the joyous hobby it is.

And, finally, my wife's reaction on showing her the article regarding that Austrian research team's findings, as she sat next me in the waiting room. She scanned it like with the stealth of a speed-reader, handed it back to me and continued reading her book without ever looking up or at me; then in her usual indomitable, uncomplicated, and 'black-is-black' and 'white-is-white' way uttered these immortal words.

"Yep, that's about right, except in your case the 2 and the 9 should be reversed"!

FGIF Star Rating: an utterly breath-taking 5* day.

06/20