

TT No.205: *Chris Freer* - Thursday April 9th 2009; **Bridgwater Town** v Bracknell Town; Southern League South & West Division; Score 3-0; Attendance 256; Entertainment value: 2/5.

I can categorically state that the number of games I've attended on a Thursday could be counted on the hands of one finger so it's something of a novelty to be travelling down to the south-west of England on said day of the week with football in mind. It's the day before Good Friday and I'm fitting in a bit of business prior to the match.

For the third game in succession (including Bury Town, and Barnsley v Forest last Saturday) I have my bro-in-law, Simon, for company. I suspect he'd much rather be windsurfing on some pond or other but the prospect of a pint seems to act as the proverbial carrot and we arrive at the ground in good time (two hours before scheduled kick-off in fact). The chap on the gate rattles on in a broad West Country dialect (something about pasties, I think) and informs us that Bridgwater town centre closes at 5.00pm each day but does point us in the direction of a good car park.

He is right with his prognosis - we dodge the tumbleweed in the main street - but he'd reckoned without Wetherspoons. The whole town is in here because Thursday night is curry night. The nearby Indian restaurant is strangely empty...perhaps lessons from the Wetherspoons chefs are in order?

Back at the ground for 7.15, and our friendly car park attendant informs us that there's no rush, as the visiting team has yet to arrive. Judging by the column of caravans streaming down the M5, we suspect they're amongst that lot somewhere. We use the delay to explore the ground, which lies in the shadow of a more impressive rugby stadium, complete with ginormous main stand. Strangely, both arenas by design offer ample opportunity to follow on-pitch proceedings without the hassle of having to pay - don't they have fence-builders in Bridgwater?

Fairfax Park lies alongside the main West Coast railway line, and is a train-spotters paradise. There's a small but upright main stand on one side, with the foundations for a duplicate opposite. Behind one goal is a short piece of elevated covered terracing, whilst behind the other someone has bolted some corrugated iron together to provide respite from the elements. The club bar is nothing special, being reasonably spacious with TV but no real ale. There's a separate canteen with a pretty impressive hot plate (Burgers, Sausages, even Faggots!) but it would be chips for the likes of me. Fortunately, I had my fill of veggie sausages at Wetherspoons earlier. The programme at £1.50 has an attractive cover which is stickered, indicating some of the content could be out-of-date. That fact is quickly brought home when today's teams are read out and both bear little resemblance to those in print. It's a weighty tome, however, and although full of the usual website stuff, is a decent read.

Meanwhile visiting Bracknell have made it to the stadium, and we kick off 35 minutes late. With Bridgwater pushing for the play-offs and their opponents languishing in the bottom three we expect one-way traffic but to be honest it's a fairly even, if very mediocre, first half, the highlight for us being when members of a ladies football team, training on a nearby all-weather, discover an open gate and position themselves all around us. Even better-looking ones are about to join them when a jobsworth spots the security breach and arrives with padlock in the nick of time. Drat!

The second half is much better, with an early goal for Bridgwater, and it opens up completely when the visiting custodian - a giant of a man - races fully forty yards from his goal to intercept an astute through ball. The linesman is level with us and really can't see which part of the anatomy the keeper uses to deflect the danger. In the interests of livening up the game, however, he goes for 'hand', and the ref dusts off his red card. With no spare keeper on the bench, a portly centre-half - Simon christens him 'Chunk' - goes between the sticks and becomes the target of coconut-shy tactics from the home side. Twice Chunk wilts and the game is over.

We look to celebrate with the football ladies but they've already moved - wise tactic!

There's more on my blog at: <http://flynn123.wordpress.com>

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