

TT No.222: Paul Roth - Mon 4th May 2009; Kent County League Division 2 East;
Platt United FC vs. Bredhurst Juniors; Res: 2-3; Att: 45 (?); Entry & Programme:
N/A; Weather: Increasingly chilly with outbreaks of drizzle; French Onion Soup:
None!

From St Mary's Platt to Baghdad!

Groundhoppers often proffer Champagne following a visit to every club that comprises the compliment of that particular leagues' constitution. I've not quite completed the Vandanel KCL just yet (I've only three more clubs to 'tick'), but it won't be that celebratory beverage I crack open once I've polished off these few stragglers. Far from it in fact, as I'll be bemoaning my lot, having acquired the 'full house'. Why? Well, gorgeous Platt United FC is a prime example.

Their lovely Stonehouse playing fields ground, located just off the A25 in St Mary's Platt, only two miles distant from Jct. 2a of the M26, is about as charming as it gets in the KCL. I will really miss these little beauties, as they're of course they're right on my doorstep, and since embarking on my quest to visit them all, I've been taken aback as to how unctuous some of them indeed are.

Let me guide you around the Stonehouse Field. Turn off the main road into Longmill Lane in Platt itself; then take the immediate turning to your right, sign posted to the ground and follow the windy and humped narrow lane to its conclusion. The immediate impression is one of rustic, rural splendour, quite hidden from previous view, but now all embracing.

The pitch here is railed on all four sides, not quite fully, and is set in a natural bowl. The Garden of England's Kentish countryside encapsulates the whole. There is car parking pitch-side, across from the narrow road you've just driven down, and also further along, where the club pavilion adjoins the rather splendid cricket facilities. Look out also for the strangely turreted and fortress-like residence with its impressive row of attached stables: was it an elderly 'Shergar' I spotted there, munching happily away on carrots? Stiles have to be climbed by players to retrieve errant footballs deposited there by wayward strikers, in the adjoining fields!! (see my photo herewith). You don't get that at Old Trafford, do you?

I've been trying to get to Platt United for a couple of seasons now, and on virtually every occasion bad weather has scuppered my plans: when wet, the ground quickly floods. Myself and Darren Fisher, the club's hard-working secretary, have had numerous conversations about the possibility of play; all of which have been to no avail at various soggy times!! I should add at this juncture that Darren also runs the unofficial British Energy KCL website, which I guess we've all used from time to time; this invaluable resource is unfortunately going to cease at the conclusion of this season, due to his burgeoning work commitments.

In front of 50 or so spectators and a large contingent of 'hoppers, a few getting severely antsy as no referee had turned up by the 11.45 am appointed KO time and having other agendas planned for the afternoon and evening, Platt United FC and Bredhurst Juniors FC treated the gathered tumult to a thoroughly entertaining game of Association Football. I'm pleased to report that a suitable stand-in ref was quickly plucked from the crowd, and did a pretty decent job as it goes.

The visitors from Gillingham, resplendent in their blue and white quartered tops, strolled into a comfortable enough two nil lead by lunch time, thanks to strikes from Will Browning and Dave Crofts. The latter forty five minutes belonged almost entirely to Platt though, as they fought back gallantly to justifiably equalise with strikes of their own from James Brimsted and a Rob Sedge penalty; ultimately, they were unlucky not to gain at least a share of the spoils, when Bredhurst snatched all three points with a well taken header, following a corner, late on from Steve Prescott.

Fellow Groundhoppers:-

GET HERE QUICK!!

This Saturday, May 9th, is your last chance to visit this picturesque venue as it stands. As of next season the club is decamping to the adjacent field, with a view to sorting out the terrible drainage problems. The ground, as it is currently will be gone forever, as the railings are to be uprooted and the 'bowl' is to be completely levelled. Will it ever be the same? I do hope so, but we will have to wait and see.

After the match I had a swift pint in the Blue Anchor pub (not GBG endorsed, I hasten to add), just along Long Mill Lane and to the right, on the Plaxtol Road, where the conversation somehow turned from all about the football match I just watched to that all-perplexing question on everybody's lips at present....."What fate has befallen that Iraqi despot, "Chemical Ali"!! WHAT!!

For a more in-depth look at this fascinating club, with an interesting historical past, have a look their excellent website at www.plattunited.co.uk

FGIF Star rating: 5*.

P.S. I was upset to be informed by fellow 'hopper Bob Powell that Sittingbourne-based traveller, Cliff Heath, has recently suffered a stroke. Myself and all at FGIF wish you a speedy recovery Cliff and hope you're soon back on the circuit.

How about a bowl of French Onion Soup to hasten your recuperation?

On second thoughts, maybe not!

06/20