

TT No.96: Paul Roth - Saturday 22nd November 2008; **Bovey Tracey FC** vs. Stoke Gabriel FC; SW Peninsula League Division 1E; Res: 0-1; Att:60 (?); Entry: £2.50, including 48-page programme; Weather: Drizzly, dank and overcast.

Football this week takes me down into deepest Somerset to my great friends Bob and Hilary, who have invited me for a long weekender, or should that be a long week-bender! The madness starts on Friday afternoon in their local pub, which is dangerously only across the road from them. In fact, they are such good customers here that they receive staff discount on all purchases! We don't come out of the Nags until 3.15 am on Saturday morning. At breakfast Bob gives me a shot of their homemade Cherry Brandy and tells me it will "kick start" my system.

Kick start it!!.....it's so strong it would kick start the dead.

Instead of visiting pubs all over Dartmoor before our SW Peninsula league match at Bovey Tracey, Hilary drops us off in Buvvy (that's how the locals refer to the town) itself, outside the Bell Inn at 11.07am, and she disappears off to Westpoint, near Exeter, for an equestrian event. We enjoy an excellent pint of Bass therein. As we descend the hill towards the Cromwell, the only GBG listed hostelry in town and in fact my least favourite boozier of the five we visit on the morning, an extraordinary occurrence happens. Actually, when out with Bob the extraordinary usually does happen, so I shouldn't have been surprised.

Campanology, home brewing, horticulture and Worldwide travel are amongst the Honeyballs' hobbies; Hilary is also an accomplished horsewoman, and came within a whisker of representing Great Britain in three-day eventing at the 1980 Moscow Olympics. Unknown to me, antiquing is also high on their endless list of pastimes. Myself, I don't see the word 'antique' as a verb. In a shop window Bob spots some incredibly expensive, hand-painted antique claret glasses, accompanied by an even more ornate goblet. He's in, like a shot and negotiates the best price from the proprietor. My friend then pays for them with the biggest wedge of cash I've seen in years and has them carefully wrapped and proceeds to carry them around with him for the rest of the day. I was certain they would end up being smashed, but miraculously somehow, they weren't!

Do people usually carry that amount of money, or 'poppy' as Bob calls it, around with them?

Bovey Tracey FC's Western Counties Roofing ground is found atop St Johns Lane, at the Western end of town. A small car park leads to the entry gate and we pay £2.50 each for admission and the excellent and informative 48-page programme.

After winning the South Devon league last season 'Buvvy' have made numerous improvements to their HQ. A spanking new changing room block, which houses a well-stocked tea bar, sits proudly in the near corner and the playing area is well and truly enclosed with sturdy wooden fencing. New walkways have been laid and

holes have been dug in readiness for floodlighting. There is no cover here apart from an overhang on the new pavilion. Two large dugouts sit on the River Bovey side of the arena. It was obvious to us that the club are aiming for higher things than their current modest status.

Just one other thing, that didn't bother me particularly, but caused dismay for Bob was that there wasn't a pavilion selling beer on site!

After beating top-of-the-table Galampton last week and Stoke Gabriel losing 2-5 at Appledore, we were rather expecting a game in which the homesters might dominate. It didn't pan out like that at all and after Liam Moseley had given Stoke an early lead the visitors dictated play from thereon in, with the men in red never in it. The 1 nil winning margin should have been greater. Don't forget, all this was watched by my friend stoically clutching onto his delicate £2500 worth of 'antique glassware'!

Upon Hilary's return we have a couple of ales in the Riverside Inn, just along from the ground, before seeking out some GBG listed pubs on and around the Blackdowns, en-route back to their cottage. They had visited them all before, naturally, and actually only the superb Culm Valley Inn was indeed new to myself. A lovely meal in another of their local inns, the Farmers Arms and the day finishes by their fireside with a more than generous glass of warm Poire William, and Hilary studying her new vessels.

To be honest, it's been hard finding words to adequately describe today but I reckon the adjective 'breath-taking' about sums it all up.

FGIF Star Rating: A 'Buvvy' marvellous 5*.

06/20