

TT No. 100: *Leon Gladwell* - Sat 21st November 2009; FA Trophy 3rd Qualifying Round; **Godalming Town** v Arlesey Town; Result: 0-3; Attendance: 154; Admission: £8; Programme: £1.50; FGIF Match Rating: 3*.

A trip to Weycourt had been jostling for attention in my mind for a few weeks now. Don't ask me why but sometimes I get a bee in my bonnet about a particular club and when the bee buzzes, off I go. This weekend was a 'free' weekend in that I had no games planned on my calendar so it seemed like the perfect opportunity to head down to leafy Surrey - although this time of year that should be leafless Surrey, I guess.

From Farncombe railway station (the club are actually based in Godalming's equally prosperous smaller neighbour), an interesting route to Weycourt is offered up by the club's website. Straight out the station, across the road to the church and from there, through a network of dingy alleyways which bring you out at the entrance to the ground. Safe to say it's probably a first time I have arrived at a ground having walked exclusively through alleyways. The air was full of the scent of bonfires and an autumnal dampness pervaded all around. Christmas is coming and the nights are drawing in. I love this time of year: it speaks of football, winter ales and inside places such as Weycourt, an indescribable cosiness probably linked with past memories of watching Bury Town at Ram Meadow on cold winter afternoons when I was a kid.

The first impression is that Weycourt is one of the smaller stadiums at this level. Indeed, from the small car park it reminds one of a typical private sports club, the kind these London commuter belt towns are full of. A plaque built into the exterior wall of the clubhouse bears the name Farncombe FC, a reminder that this place once belonged to Godalming's long-lost Surrey Senior League neighbours.

In fact, Weycourt is made up of a patchwork of other club's facilities. The turnstiles were brought in from Millwall's old Den ground and it's a curious thought to think of the more genteel patrons that pass through it nowadays compared with the altogether different breed that used it back in the 1980's. The grandstand had a previous life at now defunct Addlestone & Weybridge and a number of makeovers over the years cannot hide the fact that this is a crumbling relic of a stand.

Behind the stand and on a lower level (the pitch is perched on a plateau some six feet higher than the club buildings) a modern changing rooms block has been added and alongside this, 'The Oven Door' which is really just a simple tea bar with a fancy name. Behind the near goal, a Heath-Robinson special provides shelter for perhaps fifteen spectators. So, bits and pieces from Farncombe, Millwall and Addlestone couple with some quirky newer elements are all knitted together to create Godalming Town's humble little home. Sandwiched between the rolling greens of Broadwater golf club and Farncombe's quiet residential streets, this is a great little place to spend an afternoon.

Visiting today were Arlesey Town whose cup pedigree over the past twenty years has to be one of the best around. Years of Vase successes including a famous Wembley win in 1995 has in recent seasons been replaced by FA Trophy adventures including an appearance in the last sixteen a few years back. The Arlesey side that beat the likes of Dagenham & Redbridge during that campaign included Craig Mackail-Smith, Shane Blackett and Dave Kitson all of whom are now playing in the top two divisions of English football.

Whether or not they have any talent of a similar calibre this season was hard to tell as Godalming rolled over like a sappy two-week old puppy this afternoon. I was both surprised and disappointed as they currently sit in third place in the Isthmian South Division whilst Arlesey are eighth with a bunch of games in hand in the Southern League Midlands division. In addition, a win today and it could be a trip to Luton or Oxford in the next round. Only a few years ago I saw Zema Abbey turn out for Norwich City but now, still only 32, he's back at his first club having taken on the managerial role at Arlesey. And it was Abbey who ran the show this afternoon scoring twice and creating a host of chances, mainly for Nathan Frater who, luckily for Godalming, appeared to have forgotten his shooting boots otherwise it would have been seven or eight.

As the forecast rain hammered down in the second-half, I took up a position in the packed stand, next to a woman who complained to me throughout about her son not getting on (he was one of a couple of lads on the Godalming bench on loan from Woking). When boss Chuck Martini made his final substitution (which wasn't the son) the woman promptly got up, turned to face us in the stand and bellowed 'what a waste of eight-f*****g-quad'. With that she walked out and was not seen again. Despite loanee mum's outburst, Godalming is a friendly club and I enjoyed a few pints in the small, cosy clubhouse after the game with the locals.

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