

TT No. 161: *Paul Roth* - Sat 13th February 2010; United Counties League Div. 1; **Thrapston Town** vs ON Chenecks; Res: 1-3; Att: 35(?); Entry: £3; Prog: £1 - 24 pages; Altitude: Chancery Lane is 29m (95.144 ft) above sea level; Weather: Sunny spells but cold.

After a break of almost three months, I'm back to doing what I love most. Drinking!

Now back in the saddle, an appropriate delineation as it happens, my football sojourn this weekend took me to the charming Northamptonshire town of Thrapston. Granted its Market Charter as far back as 1205, in exchange for two palfreys (an archaic title for a type of horse ridden predominantly by women), the town lays alongside the River Nene and has a distinct Cotswoldy feel to it, many of its buildings and impressive arched bridge being built of the local Brownstone.

Most of you who know me well enough by now realise it wouldn't be me if I hadn't partaken of a sharpener or two en-route. So, heading a tad further west than need be, along the A14 and bypassing Thrapston, Kettering was my pre-match destination. The Poppies' car park was a most convenient lay-by to utilise whilst I walked the 1.1443 miles into the old cobbling town to sample the eclectic mix of hostelries proffered by this year's good book. The Alexandra, in Victoria Street, will live long in my memory, its 14 (yes, fourteen!) handpumps smiled at me like long lost friends. Great to see an old Northants Skittle table in the back bar too.

Before getting to the ground, in Chancery Lane, just off the High Street, I'd met up with my old mucker, Geoff Seers, in the Snooty Fox at Lowick. Geoff had visited Thrapston Town FC previously but didn't get a programme back then, when watching them pummel hapless Huntingdon Town 18-0 some years ago. A revisit, on a day of limited choice due to work commitments, seemed to him a worthwhile pursuit.

At this juncture I must mention the Thrapston Town FC secretary, Cathy Stevens, who had informed me positively about the production of a matchday programme and had kept me up to speed as to the prospects of play, via her husband Bruce. Cathy edits the programme, runs the tea bar and is as charming a lady as you could ever wish to meet.

I'm assuming that a lot of readers will have visited the Castle Fields Ground, as of course had Geoff. It was therefore interesting, witnessing the machinations of his tortured mind as he gainfully endeavoured to recall the place.

So much has altered here that he eventually conceded he couldn't remember an iota of what occupied the space beforehand. For starters, there are now four floodlight pylons, one in each corner and a new changing block, which also houses the well-stocked tea bar, plus a comfortable clubhouse located behind the town end goal. On the north side of the arena a new Meccano-esque stand, resplendent with 40 or so blue seats augments the older standing, covered accommodation on

which can still be seen 'VENTURAS' (I think the meaning is 'Good Fortune') epithet that once adorned the club's title; the lettering is just about discernible, although now whitewashed over. The whole is surrounded by varying forms of barrier, nicely separating it from the adjacent cricket field.

We each paid £3 for entry, plus a further pound for the much appreciated 24-page programme; Geoff's glee on at last getting his mitts on such a publication was patently evident, squirreling his precious, new-found booty into his overly-large portmanteau. Our meagre outlay proved to be good value for money, the match turning out to be a most entertaining affair, with Thrapston's fading promotion aspirations taking a severe dent, despite taking the lead through a Cavell Jarvis penalty after just twelve minutes. ONC crafted a stunning equaliser ten minutes later, Lee Bradley's chip as fine a strike as you'll ever see at this level. Thus, parity prevailed at teatime. The latter period belonged to the team from Northampton, who netted twice more and despite sustained late pressure from the homesters and the disadvantage of being reduced to ten men, held on easily for a deserved victory.

To supplement my fun day out, I did actually learn something today. That is the origin of the peculiar name of Thrapston's opponents, The Old Northamptonshire Chenecks. It's apparently derived from the names of the Northampton Grammar School houses (the club was formed for rugby-playing boys at the school, who wanted to play football instead) Chipseys, Spencer, Beckett and St. Crispin's.....CHENECKS!

My visit to Chancery Lane at last completes the UCL for myself. It's only taken me thirty years!

FGIF Star Rating: 5*.

06/20