

TT No. 179: Paul Roth - Sat March 6th 2010; West Midlands (Regional) League; Bromyard Town FC v AFC Wulfrunians; Res: 1-4; Att: 50; Entry: £4; Programme: 44 pages, £1; Weather: Dry with sunny interval; Altitude: Delahay Meadow lies at an elevation of 110 Metres(360.892 ft) above sea level.

As time goes by it seems my need for sleep diminishes. Most mornings I'm awake by 4 am, sometimes earlier. More often than not I manage to drift off again but occasionally, despite counting endless beer bottles and sheep, I find it impossible to re-attain restful slumber.

Awake at this unearthly hour again today, this time consciousness was welcome as I needed to be up and about for a much earlier-than-usual start to my footballing Saturday. GS and myself are Bromyard Town FC bound for their WMRL match versus table-topping AFC Wulfrunians and with my cohort to collect en-route, in Hertford, plus a 278-mile trip ahead of me, a prompt getaway was required.

By 7 O'clock we were tucking into Geoff's now legendary, gargantuan 20 item (3 fried eggs, 3 sausages, 3 rashers of bacon, 2 roundels of black pudding, 2 plum tomatoes, 2 small Portobello mushrooms, 2 hash browns, 2 slices of toast and baked beans* (see note at foot of report) - all washed down with a massive mug of cream-topped hot chocolate), belly-busting breakfast.

It's truly a repast that's just a hunk of Manchet Bread short of a medieval banquet.

"Are you set up for the day mate?" The chef enquired.

"Yes, probably for a coronary!"

Stuffed to the gunwales after our over-indulgent calorific feast, a steady drive along Motorways 1 & 40 ensued.

Idle chitchat, raucous laughter and the soporific music of Mantovani filled our vehicle at varying intervals as we headed westward. It was threatened, but I'm glad to report that gaudy, jewel encrusted I-pod never saw the light of day. Not having the world's largest kakapo sitting in the passenger seat also made a change!

Somewhere in Northamptonshire we got on to the subject of genealogy: Mother's forebears originated from Windsor, Berkshire, whilst Pops' family, unsurprisingly, had emanated from Germany (Lower Saxony to be precise), where they were landowners and noblemen. Geoffers' mater's dynasty is west London through and through, but I was surprised to learn that the Seers' lineage can be traced back to 16th century Worcestershire. Ownership of a smallholding, in the tiny hamlet of Martin Hussingtree, just to the north and east of the county town, where his ancestors were apparently pig farmers, goes some way to explaining Geoff's insatiable penchant for Pork Jerky; it also precludes any imminent conversion to Islam!

Hop flavoured water was sought out, found and relished along the highways and byways of rural Herefordshire and Worcestershire, with all the hostelries visited best described as sublime; the hidden-away, thatched Live and Let Live drinkery at Bringsty Common is one of the most wonderful buildings, let alone pubs, I've ever set foot in; it even has sackcloth curtaining!

The town of Bromyard itself, probably best known for its three-day folk festival, the Nozstock Festival of Performing Arts and its half-timbered black & white pubs, is a pleasant one.

More especially so when viewed from the saloon bar of the Rose & Lion on New Road (excellent pork pies here, plus an estimable range of mustards to accompany them).

It's fair to say we've not always had the best of luck when travelling together of late; no programme but a good match at the end of last season at Ludlow Town FC. In a horrible twist of irony, no match but a good programme at Southall FC last October! On arrival at the club, at 14.56 hrs, the hint that a programme hadn't been produced for today's match almost turned into a ghastly verisimilitude. Geoff's erstwhile ebullient mood momentarily vanished. With trepidation, I could sense the whiff of bluster proximate; no, something stronger; more the stench of apoplexy.

Briefly, another of his bull-like, incandescent rages, was rearing its ugly head. Fortuitously detente prevailed and we obtained the last two remaining copies. We had come that close to melt down!

Let it be known, I like the Delahay Meadow. Found in the Jewish quarter on the Stourport Road, It's easily espied below, driving towards it from the elevated town; blue-coloured railings with a big "Bromyard Town Football Club" hoarding on them instantly connotes a well-loved club. Follow the lengthy driveway around and parking is easy with bountiful space available. Entry to the stadium is gained via a newish-looking turnstile block, where that precious reading material was so luckily gleaned. A small covered area for standees is positioned on the arena's furthest flank, the main structures - clubhouse, smart Meccano-esque black and blue seated covered stand and changing block, in situ on its nearest. Posts and rails encompass three sides with floodlights and blue goal netting completing the already pastoral setting.

I'm not going elaborate too much about our welcome, suffice to say it was frosty. Perhaps Groundhoppers, definitely these ones, aren't esteemed here. Incredibly, I was even asked to move away from behind the town-end goal, my photography apparently distracting the home 'keeper, yet at the other end I could almost touch the fellow and was allowed to click away to my hearts' content.

AFC Wulfrunians, previously known to us all as Old Wulfrunians FC, top the WMRL table whilst Bromyard Town FC occupy bottom spot, so with this polarity in mind, an easy away win was expected. That's what transpired but the match itself and scoreline in no way portray the true nature of this entertaining game. Yes, the

visitors had most of the play, but it wasn't until just before teatime that they found a way through their hosts' obdurate defence.

After the break Town actually equalised but ran out of steam late on when inspired substitutions saw Wulfs rattle in three late scores to wrap up a just-about deserved victory. Given our earlier greeting, our usual neutrality had long since gone out of the window and I'm none too sure who was the happier; the visiting supporters or ourselves!

The long homeward trek was punctuated with a 'Wee' stop-off in lovely Alcester. Mein host's culinary skills were to the fore once more upon our arrival back in Hertford; an amazing, if somewhat spicy, Caribbean chicken gumbo dish was served up for our evening refection, enhanced no end by his powerful (9.6 per cent) home-brewed, treacle-like Leeward Island Porter. I would very much like to try that mighty elixir at a later date and as luck would have it, the indigestion it has afforded me means I'm doing just that, at regular ten-minute intervals!

A truly remarkable, sensational and unforgettable day spent for the most part in a beautiful area of the country.

FGIF Star Rating: 5*.

* In a quest for healthy living, please note that fried bread was not supplied.

06/20