

TT No.206: Paul Roth - Saturday April 3rd 2010; East Cornwall League Cornish Guardian Premier Division; **STICKER AFC** vs. WADEBRIDGE TOWN RESERVES FC; Res: 1-1; Att: 54; Programme: 16 pp for £2 including admission; Weather: COLD & SOGGY!!; Altitude: Burngullow Park is 104m (341.207 ft) above sea level.

Earlier in the season I mentioned that during last Summer I'd compiled a prioritised list of the top one thousand clubs I'd most like to visit. Well, that tabulation has now been augmented to just over three thousand, sub-divided into 10 categories. ie. by GBG density entry per square mile, by country, by county, by altitude over 500 metres and so on.

Unusually entitled clubs also constitute their own category, so with that in mind and following Alan and my sojourn to Perranporth FC for the initial game on Saturday of this year's SWPL hop, coupled with the fact that we had together 'done' Godolphin Atlantic FC last Easter, the opportunity presented itself to 'tick-off' one such-named side from this list.

My friend hadn't previously been to Truro City FC's Treyew Road stadium but was keen to do so whilst in the area. The offer of a lift and a chance to watch their Zamaretto Premier League home match versus Didcot Town was just about to be undertaken by himself, when news broke that that fixture had fallen foul of the seemingly never-ceasing precipitation.

So, fingers very much crossed that their pitch was playable, we headed for the enigmatically-entitled Sticker AFC.

I recall a conversation with Martin, our esteemed web-host, during a West Country hop some years ago, when he commented how he'd fancied watching a game there, for the novelty-name value alone. Well, here we are!

It was all rather convenient actually, as this ECLCGPD match didn't kick-off until 3 pm, affording us the time to sample an ineffable Cornish ale or two, en-route to Burngullow Park. Afterwards it was simplicity itself, to retrace our steps and travel the 3.227 miles back to Goverseth Park, the home of Foxhole Stars FC, to attend their 6 pm SWPL Division One West fixture against St. Austell FC.

Neophytes best describes both of us when it comes to the East Cornwall League, neither of us having ever watched a game in the competition before. On the Tuesday prior to my visit I had spoken to club secretary Chris Osborne (who paradoxically was away watching all the hop games!) and, via the auspices of their excellent website, electronically contacted gregarious clubman Ray Cackett, who I was fortunate enough to meet on the day. Both gentlemen made it patently obvious to your correspondent that this is an exceptionally friendly and lovingly cared-for football club.

Located as near to the topically named hamlet of 'Pothole' as it is to the larger collective of Sticker, the club's beautiful and well-appointed ground is set amidst

agrarian splendour with reminders of the china clay and tin mining industries looming large on differing horizons. Its history can be traced back almost one hundred years, to 1911 with a full résumé of the club's many ups and downs appearing on the aforesaid website.

Found down an un-signed track, Burngullow Park is fully posted and 'wired' around its perimeter, has a small covered structure on its furthest extremity, a newly extended (the only way you'd know this is by the absence of lichen on the newer roof tiles) and refurbished clubhouse which sells the most tasty pasties for just £1.20 plus the best range of bottled beers I've ever come across at non-league football and has an appreciable slope on its playing surface, that falls away towards the covered area, aiding drainage (most necessary today!). The finishing glory is striped goal netting in the club's colours of yellow and blue.

Astoundingly for this level, a superb matchday programme is produced for all home 1st XI games. 16 pages of news, information and well reproduced colour photographs was welcomed with unmitigated glee by the splash(!) of 'hoppers taking a break from the main event.

After a lot, and I do mean an awful lot, of forking by hard working club devotees, an intelligent referee quite rightly allowed the game to go ahead, the renowned playing surface coping magnificently with the gallons of rainwater that had been previously dumped on it. Although by no means a classic, play was always interesting; two goals in the 90th and 92nd minutes, one for each side, was the reward for spectators' stoicism on what was otherwise a miserable afternoon weather-wise.

Rightly or wrongly, I award my star rating for my experiences on the entire day, after visiting any given club.

But Burngullow Park is different, something very special indeed and worthy of my highest accolade regardless of whatever else took place on the day. An unforgettable, serendipitous adventure, my short stay at Sticker AFC will quite literally 'stick' in the memory forever.

As you might well have guessed, Wadebridge Town Reserves FC doesn't feature anywhere on that three thousand-strong hit list, so I'd better initiate a category for clubs that I don't ever want to visit, though I suppose that's every other team that I'd not previously itemised or thought of! My god, this groundhopping malarkey can be mighty complicated at times, can't it?

FGIF Star Rating: 5*.

06/20