

TT No.85: Paul Roth - Sunday November 8th 2009; Charlton Athletic Valley Express Kent Youth League, South Division; **DOVER FC Under 18's** vs. HOLLANDS and BLAIR FC Under 18's; Res: 4-1; Att: 35; Programme and Entry: N/A; Weather: Chilly and Overcast; Altitude: The Tilmanstone Welfare Ground is 46 metres (150.918 ft.) above sea level.

I must thank fellow Groundhopper Steve Crawley for pointing me in the direction of this venue, following his visit there a few weeks previously. Located off Adelaide Road in Eythorne, a small village with long standing mining connotations laying 4.33 miles northwest of Dover, the Welfare Ground is the former home of Tilmanstone Colliery Welfare FC and the current domicile of Eythorne Rovers FC.

A narrow, easily missed, track leads one down to the spacious car park below where a vast expanse of green then opens up before you. Walking past the modern pavilion, housing lots of old photographs of the colliery itself and the long-disbanded football club, you come to the main pitch, used currently by Dover FC U 18's for their home Charlton Athletic Valley Express Kent Youth League fixtures. It's an atmospheric place, being posted and railed on both flanks; in fact, the lichen-encrusted posts bear testament to their longevity. The fragmented village encompasses most of the area with farmland occupying easterly perspectives.

My wife had wanted to visit the De Bradelei Wharf shopping outlet in Dover, so today was an ideal opportunity for her to do that whilst I escaped to something more salubrious. After an hour's play, I've got to be honest, I was wishing I was back with her, fumbling through the extensive hosiery section, so poor was the footballing fare.

Admittedly, a heavy pitch wasn't commensurate with flowing, passing soccer but that said...! Then, out of the blue, Dover raised their game and hit four quick-fire goals, totally misrepresenting how the match had hitherto unfolded, leaving the visitors from Gillingham completely dispirited. At least they rallied themselves and managed to snatch a consolation in the final minutes but this defeat still leaves them winless and pointless at the foot of the twelve-team division, albeit on an inferior 'GD' to Borden Village U 18's.

You may well believe that football at this level is conducted with 'Respect' for the officials and little swearing, played with a certain 'Esprit de corps'. Let me take a moment to put you right. Dover had their manager sent off midway through the second half, four players were booked, the Lilywhite's No. 8 was stamped on by the thug-like 'Blair centre half long after the ball had left his feet, rendering him unable to take any further part in proceedings and a barrage of swearing filled the air from start to finish, both on and off the field of play.

Penning this and on reflection, I must say I did actually and eventually rather enjoy my sojourn to Eythorne and the dipping of my big toe into the KYL. Once again, cheers Steve!

FGIF Star Rating: 4*.

06/20