

TT No.106: Paul Roth - Sat October 30th 2010; Kent County League Division 2 East; **Swale United** v Malgo FC; Res: 1-0; Att: 25; Programme/Entry: None; Altitude and Location: The UK Paper Sports Ground is 30 m (98.425 ft) above sea level, at a latitude of 51 degrees, 19.9 mins N and a longitude of 0 degrees, 43.8 mins E (position derived from centre circle); Club Shop: None; Weather: Sunny and mild; Local MP: Gordon Henderson (Con).

With the homeless of Thanet having now been deemed 'Accommodated' - well almost - the Birchington-on-Sea and Saint Nicholas-at-Wade CTF is now focussing its philanthropy on those unfortunate sufferers of the debilitating condition, Lupus.

So, as to be able to attend their inaugural 'Luau for Lupus' on Saturday evening, I didn't want to stray far from home in order to be back indoors in plenty of time to pop my Poi Cakes (any excuse to extricate those highly-prized poi ramekins of mine from their above-the-dishwasher defence) and a Lomi Salmon or two in the Gaggenau, don a bright blue Manu Hawaiian T-Shirt and brush up on my Slack-Key guitar playing.

My decision to watch Swale United FC's home KCL Division 2 East encounter with MALGO FC at a ground I first stepped foot on ten years ago may seem an anathema to the purists amongst you, but believe me, there was methodology in my apparent madness, and to be truthful, the choice of venue wasn't altogether predetermined by the evening's fund-raising function.

Factor into the equation that the 2011 GBG annotates establishments in the vicinity that I'd not previously inspected (my metier in life is to 'tick' every Kentish pub that appears in the good book), that neither Swale United FC - founded in 1927 and formerly known as UK Paper FC, Bowaters FC and before that Lloyds (Sittingbourne) FC - nor MALGO FC - Maidstone And Local Government Officers - had ever strayed onto my radar scope before, and that the match was an early-season promotion clash that held the promise of entertainment and goals. Perhaps the reader will now better understand, given all of the above, the somewhat left-field reasoning behind my sojourn to the captivating and effulgent suburbs of southern Sittingbourne.

Since joining the Kent County League in 2004 Swale United have played their home fixtures on the pitch located directly behind the main enclosure - former incumbents Milton and Fulston United FC have since decamped to Bourne Park to groundshare with Sittingbourne FC. Consequently, the facilities imparted to the present-day club at Gore Court Road are unquestionably the finest in the division.

These include an immaculately-kept and manicured pitch that has tubular metallic posts and railings on two of its four flanks - on the pavilion side and behind the roadway end, a wonderful licensed clubhouse that serves cooked meals and

provides punters with SKY SPORTS on Big Screen televisions, and an elevated decking platform that affords advantageous views of the match action.

United's greatest claim to fame however - in the guise of Lloyds (Sittingbourne) FC, and as a founder member of the original Kent League- must be in reaching the FA Cup 1st Round Proper during season 1932-33 (the club's otherwise excellent website incorrectly records this tie as having taken place in 1936), when they lost 8-1 away to Northampton Town, the same season incidentally that Southern League Folkestone reached the 3rd Round Proper (they lost 2-0 away at Huddersfield Town).

This KCL fixture itself was one of two halves - one dreadful, the other downright poor. As a match it somehow never seemed able to get going, with far too many optimistic long hacks forward failing to reach their intended targets. An overly-petty, garrulous and officious referee, who failed to let play flow, added to the prosaic nature of the affair and overall I count myself lucky indeed to have seen a goal at all; that only arrived via the largesse of the visiting club linesman who failed to spot a blatant offside, his side resultantly paying the ultimate penalty. Oh yes, that reminds me, MALGO missed a spot-kick themselves midway through the first half, when their centre-forward shot tamely straight at the home 'keeper.

But what of the day's main event, the charitable Hawaiian extravaganza? A resounding success and a thoroughly enjoyable and colourful evening, that's what, with the added luxury of an extra hour in bed to get over it; one monumental proviso though... there is absolutely NO desire whatsoever on my part to see another living soul, be they male or female, dressed in a grass skirt for at least another year.

As they say in downtown Honolulu- "A hui hou, malama pono" (See you soon, but in the meantime take care).

FGIF Star rating: 5* (for the evening bash only).

07/20