

**TT No.282: Paul Roth** - Sat May 14th 2011; Kent County League Prem; **Charlton Athletic Community** v Woodstock Park; Venue: Played at The Oaks, **Eltham Town FC**; Res: 2-2; Att: 20; Entry and Programme: N/A; Altitude & location: The Oaks is 48 m (157.480 ft) above sea level; at latitude 51 degrees, 26.6 mins N and long 0 degrees, 3.7 mins E (position derived from centre circle); Sat Nav: SE9 2EH; Weather: Warm/Sunny; Club shop: None; Palpable effect of Osama Bin Laden assassination on club: None whatsoever; Local MP: Clive Efford (Lab); Carbon footprint legacy: 13.75.

Science-fiction as an entertainment genre isn't something that I'm overly enamoured with per se - my last dalliance with such material was probably the initial episodes of the X Files, and that was more to glimpse the multifarious attributes of the much-vaunted Gillian Anderson! I've never watched a Star Wars film in my life, and didn't subscribe to comics or magazines of that ilk as a child.

That said, my appreciation for the original series of Star Trek (which incidentally is presently being repeated in entirety on SKY channel 148 thrice daily) and the early Dr Who adventures can be vouched for by my tolerant, but utterly non-understanding, down to earth wife.

Surely the world would be a worse place today if Gene Roddenberry and Terry Nation, respectively, hadn't introduced us to superheroes such as the pointed-eared, logically-fixated Mr. Spock and the morally-correct Captain Kirk; those war-mongering Klingons; the doyens of 'ex...ter...min...a..tion', the Daleks; those frosty, sibilant Ice Warriors; the odd Yeti or two, and my all-time favourites, those West Country-based, tin-plated despots, the Cyder Men.

Today's TV and film spin-offs might be far better productions visually, but they are unquestionably, shadows of their former incarnations; I personally wouldn't hit the 'on' button of our remote to watch them. It's subjective of course, but Sci-fi nowadays has in my opinion become just too far-fetched! The latterly-mentioned programme, Dr Who, really used to intrigue me though, often setting me wondering about the seemingly implausible. Wouldn't it be amazing if you could actually travel backwards, or for that matter forwards, in time, through space?

Retrospectively, my first FGIF 'TT' of the 2010/11 season, back in August of last year, that featured Llandiloes Town FC, was as though I had indeed arrived by Tardis, in an altogether different time quadrant. For certain, that club's glorious Victoria Road home belongs to an era long since passed.

How fitting it is then that my last article of the campaign should feature a club so redolent of another dimension too.

Let me at this point quickly thank my pal, Alan Beecham, whose eagle eyes spotted that this KCL fixture had been relocated from the Samuel Montagu Youth Club facility in Kidbrooke (because of cricket), to the historical Oaks set-up, in the

heart of Eltham's Icelandic quarter. Not many other travellers apparently knew of the switch either, hence only five Kent-based 'hoppers in the know were amongst the miniscule attendance of 20 - thus my ochlophobia bent was mercifully averted!

Graphically portrayed in Mike Floate's *Football Grounds of South-East London*....a visual history, the ground is little changed from how it must have looked when originally constructed. Except nowadays, it is sans the home-built wooden stand, illustrated in glorious Technicolor on pages 72 thru 75 of the aforementioned publication, and is in an even more parlous state of decay than the 1992 photographic imagery conveys.

Buckled, bent, twisted, higgledy-piggledy and in places reclaimed-by-nature white metallic posts and railings encompass the playing area, which is surrounded by tall trees and lush (that's SE9-speak for overgrown) vegetation on three and a half of its four flanks. The one open area allows access to and from the car-park and well-appointed and surprisingly large clubhouse - on the day it had been commandeered by a sizeable Jewish gathering, celebrating, I believe, a Bar Mitzvah - which in turn boasts an unexpectedly comfortable beer garden.

But it's the two pitched-roofed dugouts abutting the Royal Blackheath Golf Course that are the structures that instantly take centre stage and focus the eye. In Floate's book they're painted blue and white; today their fascia boards have acquired an asparagus-coloured hue. Nonetheless, the two strangely dissimilarly sized edifices, still with the same seating arrangement in situ as in 1992, are fully worthy of the epithet 'Iconic'. The whole just drips with nostalgia.

For an end-of-season affair, the entertainment proffered by these two mid-table sides was pretty impressive also. Played on yet another dustbowl, the first-half was when the match's four goals, and to be honest most of the action, occurred. Two scores to the good, and seemingly cruising, the men in red rather let the Sittingbourne-based side back into proceedings, despite thinking they'd gone 3-1 up on the half-hour mark. They hadn't - a home forward had apparently encroached into an offside position - and by virtue of a twice-taken penalty, Woodstock Park earned themselves a deserved share of the spoils. In truth, the teatime whistle rather spoiled the up-to-then pleasing cadence of play, and the post-refreshment period never recaptured the verve of the first.

To summate, the Oaks is, simply put, a unique, charismatic football stadium. I for one never imagined I'd be lucky enough to witness a game there, especially given that Eltham Town FC's departure from the Spartan League in 1993 heralded a period of Sunday morning football-only at the ground.

But let me be the conduit of wondrous news: Charlton Athletic Community Association Football Club announced on last night's Al Jazeera eight O'clock news bulletin, that they will be playing all their Vandanel Kent County League Premier Division matches at the club during the 2011/12 term. What a fabulous, glorious and breath-taking treat is in store for you, lucky people.

Alas, another wonderful season draws to its inevitable conclusion; but what a serendipitous way to finish! There's now really only one thing left for me to say..."Beam me up Scotty".

FGIF Star Rating: 5\*.

07/20