

TT No. 116: *Chris Freer* - Tues December 13th 2011; **Chertsey Town v Barton Rovers**; Southern League Div. 1 Central; Score: 1-5; Crowd: 68; Entertainment value: 4/5.

As someone who is a partner in a business that - amongst other things - produces websites for its customers, I have to admit that our own company site leaves a bit to be desired. That's only because, since we started work on it, we've been so busy looking after our clients that we have never found the time to update it. Unforgivable but true!

Although doubtless there is some company out there desperate to discover us and what we can do for them, by-and-large our website doesn't need to contain too much date-sensitive information. Unlike that of the average football club, you would have thought, with matches coming thick and fast and the fan-base needing to be kept abreast of the latest news, especially postponements. Sadly, it's not always the case.

I discover that whilst standing at Victoria railway station looking at a departures board full of cancellations and delays and wondering what to do for the best. It's 6.00pm, I've just arrived on a National Express 440 from Loughborough having decided to take advantage of a cheap coach deal, and I'm planning on heading out to Chertsey Town who have a Southern League Division One Central home game scheduled with Barton Rovers. Well at least I think they have, with no mention of it on the club website which is still announcing a forthcoming fixture scheduled for December 3rd, some ten days ago. With another one of my options, North Greenford United, already postponed, I'm debating whether to stick to my original schedule and take a chance on Chertsey, or buy a tube ticket to Barkingside to watch Redbridge instead.

I check in again on the Chertsey website. Still no recent update. I ring the club. No-one picks up the phone. I eventually manage to log onto the Southern League website which had gone missing earlier - it has a habit of doing that at times - and there's no sign of the word 'postponement' against the fixture. I take the plunge, buy the rail ticket, and immediately regret it as there are no trains heading out of Victoria due to a fatality on the line near Croydon. So, I join the massed ranks of commuter London all staring hopefully at the boards.

Finally, a train pulls in and I become a sardine for the 10-minute crawl to Clapham Junction, from where everything picks up nicely and I am in Chertsey for just after 7.00pm. Still not sure whether I am going to get to see a game, or end up having to kill time in a pub, I charge off up Guildford Street where I come face-to-face with a young urban fox, obviously out a little too early and in the wrong part of town. I pass inviting-looking hostelrys - the King's Head and the Olde Swan - all showing evidence of hand-pumped ales, but I must satisfy myself that my journey has not been in vain. I turn into Alwyn's Lane and - relief - the sound of players warming

up and the glow of floodlights blazing. Barring a freak hailstorm, we are in business!

The stadium has been home to Town for more than 80 years, and in a rudimentary way is quite well-appointed for lower league football. There is raised terracing all of the way round the ground, albeit just one step in places but up to four in others, and much of it is covered, including a section along one side sporting a very interesting cantilever roof, so low in places I have to duck to avoid getting a headache. The main stand is not particularly large but is still quite tall and upright affording a decent elevated view of the game.

The clubhouse is a good size too, but despite evidence of Fullers in the branding, there are no handpumps or even bottles in the fridge. There may well be a Fullers keg fount, but these are all covered up by towels leading me to think that nobody will be getting a beer of any description tonight. Food is available at the tea bar which is tucked away behind one goal. It stocks all the usual meaty suspects - what is a Burgar, presumably someone from Burgaria? - but nothing for the veggie, so I tuck into the two cheese-and-onion cobs that I prepared in a Blue Peter moment a few hours earlier.

Reading through the programme notes it appears that there has been something of a behind-the-scenes upheaval at Alwyn's Road recently, which might explain why nobody has seen fit to update the website. An influx of new young players has coincided with a slump in current form, whereas visitors Barton Rovers, although below Chertsey in the table, have won four of their last six games. They make the perfect start, going a goal up before Town have even got out of bed. But it's a very open game and with both defences stretched, more goals look inevitable. With Rovers spurning some good openings, Chertsey round off a great passing move with a smartly taken equaliser and at this stage the game could go either way. In added time just before the break, a fine 25-yarder puts the visitors back in front and they are not to look back. A third on 65 reinforces their credentials and another two in the dying minutes confirms that Chertsey have a confidence mountain to climb in the coming weeks.

Not that the stay-away fans will read much about this though. I log onto the Chertsey website and - sure enough - there's a home game coming up on December 3rd. You know, I might just go to that....

There's more on my blog at <http://flynn123.wordpress.com/>

Regularly updated....

07/20