

TT No.197: Paul Roth - Sat March 24th 2012; **Bungay Town v Sprowston Wanderers**; Anglian Combination Div. 2; Res: 4-0; Att: 40; Entry: £2 incl. 24-page prog; Altitude and global location: Maltings Meadow, Pirnhow Street, Bungay is 7m (22.965 ft) above sea level; at latitude 52 degrees, 27 mins N; 1 degree 26 mins E (position derived from centre circle); SAT NAV: NR35 2RU; Weather: Sublime; Club shop: N/A; Local MP: Richard Bacon (Cons); CFL :13.6.

Fun has been an integral part of my life since infancy. Of course, one's perspective of what constitutes 'Fun' is constantly evolving, and drastically differs with the passing of time. As childhood wanes, and with the waxing of adolescence, the world's temptations quickly present themselves; wanting to indulge in those previously unknown seductions is a natural, almost God-given rite of passage. The North American Amish's Pennsylvanian Dutch word "Rumspringa" concisely describes this pubescent time of life.

Long-legged, nubile young ladies; real ale; sports cars - how I wish I still owned that RS2000; tobacco - although I've long-since given up the dreaded weed, I still find the aroma of a mellow stogie intoxicating; the joyous companionship of close friends; laughter - at times too much - and my serendipitous attraction toward Association Football's plethora of stadia constituted many of my iniquitous, fun-filled teenage years (my penchant for the latter is inexplicable, given my parents were non-sports-minded dilettantes).

In all the years I've been groundhopping I cannot recall a week when I've found it so difficult to decide where to go.

That's not because of the paucity of games I had a predilection for; quite the opposite. The magnanimous response I received from nearly every club secretary to my electronic communications rendered me stultified to such a degree that choosing one particular destination in favour of another was nigh-on impossible. Only eight of the thirty-seven clubs I emailed during the week failed to reply; four offered me lifts to the ground if I was arriving by train, three food and drink (they don't know me, do they!), with West Sussex League Division 2 South outfit Wittering United FC inviting me to be their Man-of-the-Match adjudicator!

Ultimately it was Norfolk club Bungay Town FC (the town itself is in Suffolk, but the football ground is in Norfolk) that won the day - email No. seven. Why? Well because it's been a while since I headed into the Arcadian interior of our beloved web master's domain - Suffolk that is.

The county - synonymous for artist John Constable's portrayals of a bygone pastoral epoch - is such a delightful destination, where 'hopping opportunities, for me at least, are relatively limited. That my most favourite thoroughfare - the A143 - comprised part of my route, coupled with the day's vernal prospect, went a long way in predetermining my selection: the numerous entries annotated in the Blessed Book also nudged me Bungay-ward!

Positioned on the market town's northerly edge, the Black Dogs' (the club's nickname is derived from the ghostly apparition of Black Shuck, a giant dog that supposedly still haunts the banks of the nearby River Waveney) Maltings Meadow stadium belies the level of football at which the team currently plays - namely the Anglian Combination 2nd Division.

A large car park adjoins the all-in-one changing room block and modern-but-cosy clubhouse - real ale in the form of Waveney Brewery Lightweight was proffered at the time of my visit, augmenting even more cosiness - which in turn leads onto a series of differing sports arenas, one of which is Bungay Town's floodlit enclosure. This splendid edifice has a wooden fence and tarmacadamed pathway around the manicured playing surface, with a cosy grandstand providing bench seating for around 200 souls in situ on its easterly flank. Modern-style goal furniture is adorned with blue and white striped goal netting. The whole is overlooked by the imposing ruins of Ditchingham Maltings.

I paid £2 for an informative 24-page programme, which I'm informed is the only such tome produced by any club in the fifteen-team division.

Bungay raced into a three-goal lead courtesy of a brace of well-taken strikes from striker Dan Andrews and another from Tom York, effectively ending the game as a contest within the first 20 minutes. To be honest at that point I was expecting a repeat of last week's Sturry goal bonanza, but it never materialised. In fact, the yellow-clad Norwichites enjoyed the majority of possession from there on. They created numerous chances, but the truth was on the day they were so woefully inept up front they never looked likely of raising their score above zero. A Nathan Ling glancing header following a last minute in-swinging corner, made it four and rather flattered the homesters: the result keeps the club firmly second place, nine points behind league-leaders Aylsham, with two games in hand.

So endeth another glorious, fun-filled day. It does occur to me that my personal "Rumspringa" is still ongoing - long may it last. I am so lucky.

FGIF Star Rating: 5*.

Addendum: On bank holiday Monday, May 7th, the club is hosting a rather extraordinary match.

The game will feature players that all have the same surname. Not only that, the referee, his assistants and the mascot will also share the name 'Bungay'. Influential city tycoon Shaun Cole has managed to obtain the services of the legendary John Motson, who will commentate on the most straightforward brief of his distinguished career.

All monies raised will go to charity.

07/20