

TT No.20: *Chris Freer* - Sat August 27th 2011; **Graham Street Prims** v Barrow Town; East Midlands Counties Prem; Score: 3-6; Attendance: 40; Entertainment value: 4/5.

I very rarely venture into the world of Level 10 (step 6) football but when I do it's invariably to watch Barrow Town. I recalled in a post earlier this year how some of my formative football years were spent in the Leicestershire village of Barrow upon Soar when the local team - the Old Boys - were setting the pace at the top of Senior League Division Two. That was an era when virtually the whole population turned out for every game on the local 'Rec' and where all the players were treated with reverence around town, never having to dip into their own pockets to purchase a drink.

Their brief spell in the top division ended on a low one Spring night at home to title-chasing Enderby. Needing to take three points to ensure survival, they dared to go a goal up and the assembled masses, which I'd estimate at not far short of four figures, began to believe. Sadly, it proved to be a false dawn and the visitors thumped in six to send the Old Boys back from whence they came.

Since then the re-named - for whatever reason - Barrow Town have tasted renewed success and now reside in the East Midland Counties League, just one step behind old rivals Quorn whose continuing Luke Varney legacy nevertheless still sees them becalmed at the lower end of Northern Premier South.

My day starts with a decision. Do I drive down to Coventry Sphinx in the MFA as originally scheduled, or do I save my day's ale sampling in 'Cuvven-tri' for a rail trip later in the season? What else is on? Ah, Barrow Town at Graham Street Prims, just down the road from my Long Eaton base and a 15-minute car trip, allowing me to see some of Leicestershire's T20 finals day on Sky. Decision made.

The Prims share their Asterdale Sports Ground site with league rivals Borrowash Victoria. But they don't play at the same ground, separate enclosed stadiums having been developed on either side of this large sports complex. The Asterdale Club itself, a large bar and function venue which overlooks the site - and where I once won a Christmas hamper at my lad's football team's Christmas party - closed a couple of years back and lies derelict, as do the adjacent tennis courts. But the football clubs continue.

Prims' stadium consists of a small covered seated stand set behind and to the side of one goal, with the rest being uncovered flat standing. The refreshment portacabin backs onto the changing rooms, and although offering no alcoholic beverages, sells a mean can of 7-up and a variety of meaty pies. Cuppa-soups and pots of peas are also to be had, at a reasonable price. A little TV in the corner sits unused, despite the elaborate aerial construction attached to it. Two bustling tea-ladies chat away about the team and world events.

With the home team wearing red, it falls upon Barrow to don their garish away-kit. In the days of the Old Boys I had my Subbuteo players painted up in their all-white strip with red trim, and I seem to recall an all-blue attire when playing away. Nowadays the Town change into green and white stripes with green shorts. Horrendous! Despite this obvious handicap they take a 15-minute lead through Phil Miller in an even but messy first half where first touches are non-existent on a bumpy surface and the brisk swirling breeze does its best to hinder individual judgement. It's no surprise when Prims equalize from a long-range free kick, and then score twice in the first two minutes of the second half.

At 1-3 down, playing into the wind and suffering the indignity of appearing in green stripes, it doesn't look good for Town, and I start to rehearse my epitaph for what is developing into a bad day at the office for my village heroes. That is until substitute Ade Adalakun enters the fray. How can one man change a team? I'm not sure, but those around him immediately sense that he has a mission to turn this game around and we start to count the goals. Ade makes it 2-3 after a scramble, he turns sharply in the box to blast the equaliser, he wants to take the penalty for the fourth but is outranked by strike partner Miller who slots that and then a fifth, and Ade finishes off following up his own shot to make it six. What I would call a good comeback, and two hat-tricks into the bargain.

Poor old Prims. Older fans of Barrow can remember what it's like to be on the end of a six-goal thumping. Today, we can savour the boot being on the other foot.

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

Not wearing green...

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