

TT No.95: Paul Roth - Sat November 12th 2011; **Old Bradwell Utd vs. Frenford Senior**; Anagram Records Trophy 1st Rd; Res: 0-3; Att: 44; Programme: 12-pager for £1, incl. admission; Altitude and global positioning: Abbey Road, Bradwell Village is 78m (255.905 ft) above sea level: at latitude 52 degrees, 2.9 mins N; 0 degrees 47.5 mins W (position derived from centre circle); Weather: Sunny/unseasonably warm; Club shop: No; Local MP: Mark Lancaster (Con); My days CFL:13.6.

Having been caught up in the flag-waving euphoria in Margate's Old Town on Friday morning, on the occasion of Her Majesty the Queen's visit to the Riviera, I felt compelled as a dutiful citizen to head somewhere this weekend where that frisson of emotional outpouring was still tangible.

What better destination could I possibly have headed for than the UK's principal manufacturer of nipple clamps and WD-40, plus the spiritual home of The Concrete Cow Brewery.....Milton Keynes.

On arrival in the environs of the metropolis, in each of the three public houses I visited before continuing my onward tarriance to my chosen terminus, the never-ceasing crescendo of chitter-chatter was about nothing else than Association Football's two major cup competitions that were briefly coming to town today. November 12th is of course the date of the respective 1st Rounds of The Budweiser FA Cup and The Angiogram Records Trophy, possibly the most auspicious day on the Non-League footballing calendar.

MK Dons had been paired with Evo-Stik Northern Premier Division minnows Nantwich Town, whilst across the city Molten Spartan South Midlands League Division 2 outfit Old Bradwell United faced the might of Essex Olympian League Premier Division club Frenford Senior. My Theatre of Dreams - having already been to the National Hockey Stadium, where The Dons no longer play - being umbrageous Abbey Road, the imperious headquarters of the latter.

Away from the harsh birdlime labyrinthine wastelands of loathsome central Milton Keynes, Bradwell Village can be described as idyllic (an oxymoron if ever there was one. Milton Keynes and Idyllic in the same sentence!), and was where my third port of call of the morning tope-wise was undertaken. The GBG-listed Victoria, around the corner from Old Bradwell United's stadium, in the heart of the village, is about as handy a caravanserai for a thirst-slaking-seeking traveller as it gets. Inside I enjoyed a pint of the appropriately named Hopping Mad Brewery's Brainstorm Best Bitter.

An initial glimpse of the ground from the Abbey Road cul-de-sac is eminently favourable, affording the visitor an elevated viewpoint over the cricket square across to the railed-off-on-three-sides (the fourth is roped) football pitch. Behind this pleasing panorama lies a babbling brook (how whimsically 19th century-like it was to see a suitably-attired fellow armed with a long pole with attached net

contrivance, poised ever-ready to retrieve errant brook-bound mis-kicks - of which, during play, there were 17) that in turn separates the shimmering amphitheatre from a steeping railway embankment. This gloriously countrified vista is only slightly obscured from the raised banking road-side by a row of presently-golden deciduous trees.

The Bradwell Sports Club (which also proffers real ale - I enjoyed a glass of Hydes' Owd Oak Dark whilst awaiting the arrival of the splendidly colourful 12-page matchday programme) is the focal point hereabouts. It provides seasonal functionality, doubling up as both a cricket and football pavilion. The only structure pitch-side itself is a Grade II-listed, graffiti-covered blockhouse-type dugout.

Unfortunately, this one-sided Angiogram Records Trophy clash was never going to be captivatingly enthralling. Perennial strugglers - and currently win-less and bottom-of-the-table Old Bradwell United - were never in the hunt as the rampant, high-flying EOL machine mercilessly rolled them over. The red and white-striped visitors were even able to afford themselves the luxury of a missed penalty-kick on the half-hour mark, before taking the lead by virtue of a headed goal just minutes before the teatime interval. They secured their place in Round Two with a brace of long-range strikes during an unevenly contested second-half.

A splendid day out then, that I was only too pleased to have been able to share with a much more important HRH, namely my wife. I'd dropped her off earlier in Milton Keynes' cosmopolitan shopping district; there aren't words flowery enough to describe how made-up she was at having unearthed an uncommon Jasper Carrott artefact during her afternoon's shopping spree. The star's unwashed, patterned left sock (apparently his DNA is still in it) augments her already sizeable collection of JC paraphernalia.

Sojourns in Buckinghamshire don't come better than this, and to round off what had been a perfect day we arrived home in time to watch 'Journada 7' of this year's Strictly Come Dancing.

FGIF Star Rating: 5*.

07/20