

TT No. 12: *Chris Freer* - Tues August 21st 2012; **Greenwood Meadows** v Barrow T; East Midlands Counties League; Score: 1-2; Attendance: 46; Entertainment value: 4/5.

During the conversation with a fellow blogger at Rotherham on Saturday, the discussion inevitably got round to the number of 'ticks' we'd recorded and I casually mentioned some of the overseas guys who claim several thousand grounds. Without wishing to cast aspersions as to the integrity of our European cousins, I have often wondered where they draw the line. Is it criteria like mine, primarily an enclosed ground, or one that issues a matchday programme. Or is it simply sufficient to go to a city park, hop from pitch to pitch, and record multi-ticks? I'm sure I've read on one of the forums about some German guy claiming over 7,000 grounds. That's one a day for 20 years! Feasible yes, but hey, get a wife err... sorry Life! or maybe both.

Now I've gone over the 500 mark, maybe I've fallen into that bracket. I'm certainly looking a bit closer to home this year, targeting the four Step 5 leagues with teams on my doorstep, as well as The East Midlands Counties League (Step 6) whenever Barrow Town are playing somewhere new that's close by. Jaunts to Scotland and Holland could well have to go by the board, and other parts of the UK might have to fit in with business trips. With two teenage kids, there are alternative demands on my wallet!

My English teacher at school said I should read more. She'd be proud of me now. I'm hardly ever far away from poring over a fixture list or a rail timetable. I wonder if that's what she meant? My reading skills today have deduced that Barrow Town are tonight playing in Nottingham, in an East Midlands Counties league fixture against Greenwood Meadows, who I have never heard of. A quick web check indicates they are playing on Lenton Lane. Hang on a minute, don't Dunkirk from the Midland Alliance play there? Have I been there before?

Same road, different ground, and to further complicate matters, Central Midlands League side Bilborough Pelican FC also have two pitches on the same road. It's more congested than the centre of Dundee!

As we arrive in the car park, the gathering dark clouds that have tracked our 20-minute drive from Long Eaton start to grumble a bit. In fact, they grumble a lot and we barely have time to make it through the turnstiles and into the clubhouse before the heavens open and its stair-rods outside. The clubhouse is comfortable and spacious and boasts a little snack hatch doing a roaring trade in trays of chips. The lad eyes them up ravenously, so I remind him he only had his tea an hour and a half ago. He makes do with a J20 whilst I, noting the lack of a handpump or anything interesting in bottle, settle down with a glass of the black stuff.

I'm conscious of the rain outside and although it's not quite as relentless when we emerge to take up position, it looks like there's still plenty up above. The pitch is

soaking it up well, probably due to the sheer amount of grass on it. Bowling green it isn't. The spectator facilities consist of two shallow covered sheds, one with single bench seating, and the other with two rows of tip-up seats. As the teams emerge on to the pitch, the rain sweeps in again and it looks like everybody could be in for a thorough soaking, with some threat to the match actually running its course. There's also the paradox of a low-setting sun sending powerful rays through the rain, making visibility a little difficult. That's probably the excuse the home defence gives the coach, as they go missing in the very first minute, allowing any one of two Barrow strikers in the six-yard-box to tap home.

The rain begins to ease and a surprisingly open first half develops into a fairly one-sided second, with Barrow spurning numerous opportunities to kill the game. Greenwood are playing on the break, and make the visitors pay on 75 minutes when a hopeful punt from the back finds the feet of the lone striker who lobs the keeper for a long-range equaliser. Us Barrow lads can't quite believe it. It looks likely to be the final score until, deep into injury time, the Town strikers finally convert one of the many crosses that have been eluding them all night, and justice appears to have been done. 2-1 to the visitors it stays.

And so, I leave my second ground on Lenton Lane (having ticked Dunkirk back in 2010) and wonder if I may well be back soon to take in Pelican. In fact, if they keep adding new grounds further down the lane, it will make my life a whole lot easier. I'll be up to 3,000 Grounds & Counting in no time at all...

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

Keep right on to the end of the road....

04/20