

TT No.27: *Chris Freer* - Saturday October 12th 2013; **Enfield Town** v Billericay Town; Isthmian Premier; Score: 1-2; Crowd: 554; Entertainment value: 2/5.

Due to the fact that Andy Warhol never got around to granting me my 15 minutes of fame, I tend to make up for that by oft recounting my limited reservoir of life-changing moments when I've met somebody remotely famous. You may have noticed the odd name-drop in some of my previous ramblings.

I've been in a car with Derek Dougan, shared a hospitality box at Villa Park with John Wile, once asked Brian Clough a question at a football forum, and ALMOST sat opposite Jack Charlton on a London-bound train. Oh, and my mum says that our Butlin's Redcoat at Skeggy in the 1950s was definitely comedian Dave Allen. Shame HE wasn't a footballer, too...

The nearest I ever came to rubbing shoulders with the 'stars' was in my punk and post-punk days co-running a fanzine and record label in the East Midlands. Concert promoters were happy to let us in early to meet the bands, as they knew they'd get good publicity out of us without having to pay for it. We reciprocated by never failing to turn up. Hence we got to meet and interview the likes of Andy Partridge (XTC), Poly Styrene (XRay Spex), Manic Esso (Lurkers), Steve Severin (Siouxsie & The Banshees - Siouxsie preferred female company), Pablo LaBritain (999), Jimmy Pursey (Sham 69) and a host of other minor celebrities who were at that time filling plenty of column inches in the music papers. Through a mutual acquaintance I also made contact with Algie Ward of the Damned, who mailed me a backstage pass for their gig at Leicester's Granby Halls.

Bear with me, because there's a really tenuous link here to the match I propose to see today, weather permitting. I'm off to Enfield Town - the last Step 3 ground on my To Do list - who happen to be playing Billericay Town. Billericay is synonymous with a well-known track by Ian Dury & the Blockheads, who just happened to be signed to Stiff Records, the same label as the Damned. Hey, I told you it was tenuous! Just to say that the gig was a classic, I watched it all from the wings, occasionally walking out into the auditorium flashing my 'backstage pass' armband, and once disappearing into the dressing rooms where the band's manager caught me dipping into the Damned's rider. Tsk, tsk.

So, I'm expecting a few choruses of Billericay Dickie from the visiting fans today, seeing as that is all the town is famous for. But first I have to emerge from the anti-cyclone of rain blanketing central England into the relative tranquillity, of London, where a tube and rail journey takes me past White Hart Lane to the buffers at Enfield Town. Just around the corner, in the town centre, is a foody pub called the George which looks - and is run - like a 'Spoons' but isn't. So, the choice of cask beer is limited to three, but I'm a big fan of Adnams Broadside and I plump for that at £3 a pint, which is good by London standards. My next hostelry is a bit of a walk, and unusually for a Wetherspoons is not in the town centre - must have

been beaten to it by the George! The Moon Under Water is a tidy little pub, and has several micro-beers on tap, a couple of which are local. Pieces of Eight is a 3.8%abv 'golden-ish' ale brewed by the Nelson Brewery based in Chatham, Kent, and is not overly citrus-hopped, which is a relief.

From here I've another lengthy walk across the suburbs of Enfield to the Queen Elizabeth II Stadium, which has been the home of Enfield Town since 2011. On approaching the ground, you can't help but notice the distinctive Art Deco main stand which incorporates a first-floor cafe-bar and seating deck, and is surely one of the most impressive pieces of antique stadium architecture you'll encounter in the UK. The rest of the ground makes the best use of the problems associated with playing football in the middle of a running track. Ingenuous swing gates allow spectators to populate small covered terraced stands behind each goal, while there is another low-level seated stand on the side opposite the main stand, which is where I set up camp.

Catering is taken care of by a meaty burger van, a pitch level snack bar serving teas and chocolate, and the upstairs Butlers Bar in the Art Deco Cafe, where there is a basket of rolls, although it seems pot luck with what you get. I ask for Cheese & Onion, the barman peers and prods, and I end up with Cheese & Coleslaw - I think! The good news in this bar is the existence of a very busy handpump, serving Redemption Pale Ale brewed in nearby Tottenham. Being pale and citrusy it's not a beer to my tastes but I'm nevertheless thrilled to see a micro get a gig at a football ground.

Match time arrives, and a very boisterous crowd of Billericay fans gather behind one goal, with the (less boisterous) host fans populating the other. The visitors are the form team but they don't show too much of it in an opening half hour during which the home No5 waltzes through the defence to notch an opener. The last 15 minutes of the half sees Billericay come back into the game, and they continue to look the team most likely into the second half although the equaliser, when it arrives midway through, is from a spot kick after a coming together which to me isn't a certain penalty. Even the referee is unsure. The red card also subsequently dished out rubs further salt in the Enfield wounds. Already having used all 3 subs, down to ten, and with a limping centre forward, its credit to Enfield that they push for a winner, but are dealt a sucker blow on 85 when they run out of defenders and a far post header seals it for the visitors.

Unfortunately for me and a few other genuine football supporters, a gaggle of 5 visiting 'fans' decide to sit - or should I say stand - right behind us during the early part of the second half, in which they vehemently dispute every refereeing decision which goes against their team, with some vocal ferocity. Suffice to say there is a decided lack of balanced argument and more than a bit of bad language. When they finally decide to move, urged on by an Enfield pensioner sitting near me who is getting sick of it, it's primarily so they can all go for a fag. As they depart, I feel a song coming on, a kind of tribute to the five in an Ian Dury style - I'm calling it 'Billericay Dickheads'. Cue the hate mail.

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

Gabba Gabba Hey!

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