

TT No.74: Ian Brown - Four game Malta Football Trip (20th - 22nd February 2014).

Flying into Malta from Liverpool, we had free bus journey from the airport to our hotel at the St Julian's end of Sliema, the bus driver had no ticket machine on the bus. Bus travel around Malta is excellent value for 1.50 Euro can use the bus all day.

Our first game on Thursday 21st took us to the Centenary Stadium, Ta' Qali, for a Youth Cup Tie - **Valletta** v St Andrews. As mentioned in an earlier thread, we took the bus from Valletta and alighted the Ta'Qali Interchange... and walked to stadium through the Craft Village. You didn't know the stadiums were there as we could see no visible signs directing you there. The Centenary Stadium was inaugurated by the Malta Football Association to commemorate the 100 years since its foundation. The Centenary Stadium has a state-of-the-art FIFA 2 Star artificial surface with the dimensions of 100m x 65m; a single stand holding 3000 spectators; dressing rooms and a press area. It also houses a large conference hall and is the headquarters to the Youth Football Association. Admission of 2.50 Euro covered this and other quarter final to take place after the Valletta/St Andrews tie. Refreshments were available at the end of stand. Valletta won 3-1. We left at the end of the game, in order for us to catch a direct bus back to Sliema, the 222, from close to the entrance of Craft Village.

The following evening, we attended the 1st Division Clash between **Dingli Swallows** and Siggiew, played at the Luxol Sports Club. The previous day we had a look to find out where it was, and also to have look at other grounds in the area Melita FC & Pembroke Athletic. Pembroke Athletic is situated right on the shoreline, closer than what Arbroath's Gayfield Park is to the North Sea. We got the 12 bus from Sliema up to Pembroke and alighted at a bus stop opposite the ground. A ticket was purchased from the ticket booth at cost of 5 Euro. The Stadium was officially opened in 2006. It can hold up to 800 spectators (doubt if there was more than 80 there for the night's offering) under a main stand cover and has all facilities that one would need to enjoy the game. A team sheet was not readily available for the game but the smooth talking Scouser amongst us managed to obtain one. Not the best of games. Siggiew won the contest with a scrappy goal from a corner.

Saturday's offering was a double header in Paola, home of **Hibernians FC**. Hibernians' Stadium is a multi-use stadium in Paola. It was inaugurated on 09/11/1986, when Hibernians became the first Maltese Club to have their own pitch. The ground consists of two grass pitches: 1 full-size and a smaller one which is half the width of the main one. The clubhouse is behind of the goals - consists of 5 dressing rooms with showers, physiotherapy rooms and a boardroom. The stand at the ground has a capacity of 2000, with 3 sections - two sections for the paying

punters and the centre section reserved for the VIPS. The ground has an electronic scoreboard as well as floodlights.

The first game on offer was **Floriana** v Qormi. I felt sorry for Floriana up until recently the club had been run by the Vaughan's (Junior with Senior in background the ***** who killed/mutilated Chester City FC) - (wouldn't even wish them on Wrexham). With it now being a V... Free Zone, seemed to have a desired effect as they run deserved 3-2 winners.

The second game was between **Mosta** and Hibernians. Even though it was being play at Hibs' ground it was a designated home game for Mosta who won the game 2-1. The final ball let Hibs down a lot. An unsavoury incident occurred when Mosta scored the second goal and celebrated in front of some of the more fervent Hibs Ultras who were enjoying their post half time liquid refreshment and then decided to get rid of their liquid refreshment on the celebrating players over the Perspex sheeting!

Refreshments were available, no paper was seen, 6 Euro covered both games and a Hibernians Badge was 4 Euro.

04/20