

TT No. 112: *Brian Buck* - Saturday 24th March 2018; **Imperial** v Mendip Broadwalk; Somerset County League Division 1 East; Result: 1-4; Attendance: 30 approx.

Today I was offered a lift, which as always, these days was gratefully accepted. I was dropped off at my game with what I thought was about 90 minutes before kick-off. This was at the impressive looking South Bristol Sports Centre. But after enquiring within, I discovered that this is not where Imperial play and I was redirected to a not quite so impressive venue, a couple of hundred yards away (or metres), according to the barman! As soon as I saw it, I remembered it. This was the place where I had come to watch Imperial play on the last day of the last century. But the game got called off because one of the teams didn't turn up. However, we still got in two other games that day.

Anyway, I returned to the bar for lunch and had the biggest pasty I've ever seen. However, under the pastry there seemed to be a lot of bread. Obviously, they are struggling to make ends *meat* here! Anyway, after washing this down with a few pints, while I watched Tranmere Rovers 3 Eastleigh 1 on the TV, I headed off to the ground, which won't win many awards for spectator viewing from the changing rooms even though there is plenty of it. You can't watch a game from here as the pitch is on a plateau. In fact, while I was waiting for my game to start, which I had now worked out was a 3pm kick off, rather than the expected 2.30pm, I could hear another game going on. So, I climbed the bank and headed towards it. Up here conditions were very wet, following the more than expected overnight rain. There were puddles everywhere. Then as I moved along to try and find a dry bit to stand on, I could hear another game going on. This one was down in a dip.

Eventually my game got going and I watched it in the company of a local Groundhopper whom I'd never met before. This pitch was railed off on two sides and the rest was roped off and although very wet and cutting up a lot, it was quite playable. Imperial are named after tobacco makers of the same name and in 2017 the Imperial Tobacco Group had 33,800 employees. However today after 16 minutes had passed by the home team had run out of puff! They had just conceded three goals in four minutes and a cricket score looked on the cards. But somehow, they didn't concede anymore before the break despite the half of the pitch they were defending looking like a mud bath and the other half almost completely green. The second half was slightly more even and on 54 minutes Imperial pulled a goal back, mainly because I suspect that the last thing on the visitor's keepers mind was a forty-yarder coming his way. Then right at the end Mendip got their fourth goal. Perhaps the Imperial number 4, a defender, might like to ask himself why he came off the pitch almost spotlessly clean, whilst all his team mates were covered in mud though!