

TT No.070: 04/04/05 Easter 'hopping news and recent travels - 25th March to 2nd April 2005: Dave Reed

Along with a couple of hundred others, I spent Easter weekend in the West Country, attending the Devon Hop and thanks must go to Phil Hiscox for his usual excellent organisation.

Friday saw us visit **University of Exeter, St Loyes and Budleigh Salterton**, (the first and last being revisits for me). Since my last visit to **Budleigh**, the pitch has been rotated through 90 degrees and floodlights and a small stand erected. Saturday saw us travelling down the A38 to visit **Plymouth Parkway's** new ground and then, like several others, I deviated from the official itinerary to beat a (very) hasty retreat up the A38 to **Bovey Tracey** where the home side produced a very good programme available from the clubhouse for a donation. This is a regular issue of 40 pages inside a colour cover and contained all relevant details for the South Devon League game against East Allington and also for the reserve game which followed after. The same referee officiated for both games. After this, it was a much more sedate journey for the last official game at **Cullompton**, once again a revisit for many.

A good majority who had attended the official games then went on Sunday to a game at **Axminster** where the home side from the Devon & Exeter Premier Division were entertaining Sidbury United in the local hospital charity cup. A programme was included in the £1.50 admission, once again apparently a regular issue consisting of 24 pages and produced on a colour printer. As the visitors were usually matched against Axminster Reserves in Division Four of the League, the outcome was pretty predictable. A comfortable win for the home side of 8-0 although the *Non-League Paper* gave it as 9-0 so perhaps, I missed one!

Monday saw me doing a revisit at **Wellington** and then driving on to **Bideford** where the home side overwhelmed Corsham 5-1 in the Western League cup. Tuesday was an awful day weather-wise so I passed up an evening revisit to Cullompton but in complete contrast, Wednesday was a beautiful day which I spent as a tourist before making for **Newton Abbot's** game against Ivybridge. Since my previous visit, seats have been installed in the impressive stand so I was able to watch the game in comfort. The only disappointment was the lack of a programme, the chap on the gate said that he only knew about the game a couple of days before. Rather strange this, as I saw the fixture a couple of months ago!

I returned home on Thursday and Friday night saw me at **Thamesmead** to watch the London Intermediate Cup Final between Cray Valley and Metrogas, local rivals, the latter winning 2-1. On Saturday, I 'tidied up' the South Midlands League Premier Division with a trip to **Bedford United** where the small crowd were given a good afternoon's entertainment, not least by visitors Broxbourne's larger than life manager Peter Theo who spent virtually all the game bellowing from the back of

the stand. The visitors held a comfortable 2-0 lead until the 74th minute when Bedford pulled a goal back from the penalty spot. The visitors then went straight up the other end to restore their two-goal lead. Goals in the 77th and 85th minutes brought Bedford level again only for them to concede another to lose vital points in their relegation struggle. There was so much added time that the game didn't finish until five o'clock. Some finish to the end of what had been quite a hectic eight days football - twelve games, 54 goals and umpteen pubs!

03/20