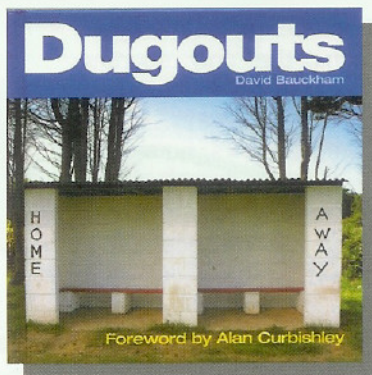


Are You Sitting Comfortably?

DUGOUTS

By David Bauckham, 96 pp, hardback,
New Holland Publishing, £7.99

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Mainstream publishers are not known for their patronage of non-league football, and a book centred around colour photographs of 77 sets of dugouts spanning the alphabet from Aberford Albion to Wolverhampton Casuals might seem an odd venture for a major publishing house to undertake. However, turn the book over and at the bottom of the cover next to the barcode one sees the words Gift/Humour, and everything is explained. Not that Groundtastic readers will see it that way of course, because rather than a light hearted bit of fun highlighting the micro-architecture of football at its most parochial, many will view the book as a serious work of reference; and they won't be far wrong.

Most of you reading this will be familiar with Groundtastic contributor David Bauckham's excellent Nomad Online and Pyramid Passion websites, which feature a wealth of pictures and information about non-league football grounds in Sussex and beyond. He took to photographing dugouts because at some of the grounds he visited there was nothing else to photograph. Out of this grew a fascination and an appreciation of these structures, which because they are small enough to be improvised, often come in a variety of designs and tend to be made out of whatever materials were handy at the time. What is more, they often have an interesting tale to tell, so David Bauckham began to 'collect' dugouts, conscious that they were much more than just cubby holes for managers and substitutes to take refuge in. The book begins with a foreword by Alan Curbishley, who describes the dugout from the manager's perspective, and is followed by some characteristically perceptive 'Notes From An Expert' by Simon Inglis. After an entertaining essay by the author on the origins of dugouts and their evolution from the single person boltholes of yesteryear to their present elongated dimensions, one gets to the main gist of the book. Each set of dugouts gets a page to itself with a large colour photograph and all the relevant information supplied. Though not short of witty comment or two at times, the author makes no attempt to conceal his affection for the subject under review, and therein lays the book's considerable charm.