

WIND, RAIN AND DRAINAGE PROBLEMS...

Profile of Hill Top by Mark Edmonds

One of the highest grounds in Kirklees, Slaithwaite is one of the more picturesque locations at which to play cricket, especially on a fine summer's day.

Situated at the appropriately named Hill Top, players and spectators are afforded an unobstructed view of the Colne Valley in all its glory, with villages visible from many miles away, even on a less than clear day. There is a distinct slope from top-right to bottom-left when looking out from the pavilion - something that gives the home side an advantage in knowing who to bowl from which end. The position of the ground itself is also the envy of neighbouring sides. Being so high up, and as open as it is, allows the ground to be bathed in sunshine right up until sunset itself, so most games are completed.

Another factor teams have to contend with is the ever-present wind that swirls around the ground. At times it can get very blustery, causing the ball to swing when it normally wouldn't, while at the same time making catching a real art form. Of course, this prevalent wind can also lead to a sudden change in the weather with rain clouds on top of the ground before they can even be seen in the distance!

With this in mind, Hill Top has two sets of drainage pipes in order to let the pitch dry as quickly as possible after any rainfall. It consists of an outer ring of drains around the perimeter of the ground as well as an inner ring around the main cricket square. In recent times, however, the drainage hasn't been as effective as usual. On a hill to the right of the pavilion a new set of homes overlook the ground. There is something impressive about this sight, but the new housing development has led to the silt in the land being washed downhill and, in some cases, into the drains at the ground.

Chairman Chris Payne says: "Last summer was a bit of a freak in terms of all the wet weather we had, but luckily we didn't lose any more games to it than other teams. All we hope for now is that not too much silt has got stuck in the drains. But until the 2008 season starts, and we see the weather that comes with it, we just won't know how much effect it will have on the drainage of the pitch."

One part of the ground that doesn't suffer from the elements quite so much is the bowling green, situated to the right of the pavilion. It is a neat and tidy green, and preparations are currently underway for a bowls tournament at the

start of May to celebrate the club's centenary year. Of course, on some weekends, there will be both cricket and bowls taking place, allowing spectators to take in both sports, providing a busy, vibrant scene for all involved. Let's just hope there's not too much rain!