

# FROM SLEDGERS TO VANDALS

## Topical Issues by Matt Ottey

Here we find out about key aspects of local cricket, courtesy of the people behind Nortonthorpe Cricket Club.



### Sledging

Sledging has been a part of cricket for a long time, and it's generally been accepted as part and parcel of the game. But what's it like at a local level? Roger Littlewood gives his views: "I think there's probably too much sledging goes on these days, and what's worse is that it's no longer associated with a sense of humour; it's now just become swearing and abuse, quite frankly."

As Nortonthorpe's umpires, Roy England and Norman Mosley, are exposed to it every weekend, where do they draw the line on sledging? "Certain teams in the league have a very bad reputation for that; we've never particularly liked umpiring these teams, home or away, and it's mainly due to their abusive nature. It's not necessary," says Norman.

Roy adds: "Don't get me wrong, when we were playing we weren't angels, but we certainly didn't take it to the level it's at now."

"Umpires have a devil of a job, and I've got a lot of sympathy for them. I admire Roy and Norman for that, they're both former good cricketers and now well respected umpires; we've got the most respected umpires in the league attached to Nortonthorpe," says Roger.

### Women in Cricket

One of the most overlooked aspects of local cricket is the role women play in the running of the game at local level.

Margaret England has been helping out at Nortonthorpe for almost 50 years now, and on an entirely volunteer basis: "It's all volunteer work so sometimes it isn't easy. For the last five years I've been doing teas for the firsts and seconds, so it's every Saturday. I've been going with Roy since I was 15, making the teas. I went up once and I've been going ever since!"

That sort of commitment is continued by others at the club also, as Roger Littlewood explains: "My wife used to do the teas at Nortonthorpe, so in previous years she's definitely put her two penneth in. Sarah-Jane [Roger's daughter] used to score but Emily [Brian Woodhead's daughter] now does that. So the women play a big part in the running of the club. Take Margaret [England], for example; she's been helping out at the club with various duties since before I was here, and she still does the teas and the bar as well, so I don't think you can take the importance of what the women do at a local cricket club lightly."

### Vandalism

As is the case at many local sports clubs, including Nortonthorpe, rising levels of vandalism are constantly jeopardising the development of their facilities. Adrian Whittaker is Nortonthorpe's hardworking groundsman. He explains the problem: "Sadly the vandalism continues. Apparently the netting on the sightscreen was slashed with a claw hammer, and I can only assume that's how they smashed the scoreboard as well. I can't comprehend why; I don't understand what must be in the minds of these youths at all."

Roger Littlewood's house overlooks the ground, which enables him to keep an eye on it. However, he has a full-time job and can't provide constant surveillance. "The problem I have of course is that I work away quite a lot during the week and I don't get the chance to keep an eye out for any goings-on."

One of the consequences of vandalism is that, if a claim is made to insurance companies, then the premium goes up or the club becomes untouchable when it comes to renewal. Which means any damage costs come out of the club's pocket, and subsequently create an even more serious problem. Roger adds: "If we're not insured we can't play - it's as simple as that. So now we've just got to unfortunately stomach it and hopefully repair the damage."

### The One to Watch

Every club is constantly looking for the 'next big thing', and it seems Nortonthorpe believe they have found it in 15-year-old George Parkes. He has been picked up by Yorkshire but is still playing at weekends for Nortonthorpe, and doing well by all accounts. This is a selection of comments about George from people within the club:

- "He's going to be one for the future, mark my words, watch that name, keep that name in your memory because he's going to be a star as he grows older."
- "His batting technique is superb, very technically correct."

- “He’s a pure cricketer, almost Geoff Boycott-ish, but not as selfish, fortunately!”
- “George is a rising star, I don’t mean for Nortonthorpe, I mean nationally, certainly for Yorkshire and who knows for the future, we’re confident of that.”
- “I mean, if he stays with us, the future for Nortonthorpe is rosy!”