

# LIFEBLOOD OF THE CLUB

## Sponsorship at Nortonthorpe CC by Matt Ottey

For small cricket clubs like Nortonthorpe, sponsorship is essential in guaranteeing their survival. Nortonthorpe have been lucky in the respect that they have managed to secure continual sponsorship from several generous and dedicated people and organisations in the area.

Sponsorship pays for equipment such as shirts, pads, wicketkeeping gloves, batting nets, sightscreens and match balls. It also allows the club to boost their funds for ground maintenance and improvements, as well as enabling them to repair any damage caused by vandalism.

For a number of years the main sponsor at the club has been Adrian Whittaker, who is also club groundsman. Club secretary and player Roger Littlewood reflects on Adrian's role within the club: "It's not just purchasing match balls, it's his time as well, looking after the ground and making sure the field is cut, and the wicket's fine. One of his employees at Solarshade comes up and does the wicket, preparing it for each home game, and Adrian pays him effectively out of his salary. He's also bought all the machinery we need, and he's now got some planned improvements in mind like seating and some fencing material for extending the fence."



Roger explains how the club go about actually finding sponsors: "Each year we have a mailshot to previous sponsors and we also try for every business in the village, but we've never gone beyond the village boundaries unless there's a link between a player and a business."

However, Adrian hasn't always been there to provide sponsorship, so who did before him? "Our most consistent sponsor, who was sponsoring us before Adrian came, is Eric Brook who owns Nortonthorpe Industrial Park. He's always been generous, and he's always put money into local sport. Last year he gave us £400 which paid for the club shirts."

Another of Nortonthorpe's more recent sponsors has been Bagden Hall Hotel, and it seems the partnership is prospering, with both organisations working together on a project at the hotel.

"Our relationship with Bagden Hall has been strengthened. In fact Bagden Hall are creating a new brasserie to be called Norton's, in which they're going to use display boards created and donated to Nortonthorpe CC by Huddersfield University's Dr Peter Davies to decorate the room. It chronicles the history of not only the club but the Norton family as well." Roger adds: "I've donated a shirt to them which they're going to frame and hang up in the room; they want to forge closer links with the club and the surrounding area."

In addition to the financial input of Bagden Hall Hotel, some local businesses are getting involved by sponsoring match balls, which is as important for the unity of the village and the club as it is for purely financial reasons. Roger says: "I think in the past the cricket club and the rest of the village haven't been as close as they should be, and that's something we're looking to repair."

But it's another form of sponsorship that really warms the heartstrings, an intimate bond between the club and the cricket-loving community - one that may not be as financially lucrative as the Bagden Hall deal but is far more personal. "Some of the locals give you a few quid or whatever they can to sponsor a match ball, and that really means something; when you know that they might not have a lot, but they're still putting a bit aside for the club. We just try and give them something back on the pitch!"

Nortonthorpe Cricket Club is indebted and extremely thankful to those people and businesses who have helped the club out during its history.