

VILLAGE CRICKET CLUB OPENS NEW INNINGS

Batting into next century

VISITORS to Southwram will be well and truly bowled over this season thanks to a transformation which is set to take the village cricket club into the 21st century.

Renovations over recent years have knocked the archaic Ashday Lane ground for six — but new seating, a new scoreboard and an improved wicket have already scored highly with regulars and rivals.

Now the costly improvements are set to be capped next month with the completion of a new £30,000 pavilion.

The single-storey building — complete with changing rooms, showers, tea hall and bar — is a far cry from an old pavilion which did not even have running water.

Southwram Cricket Club committee chairman Mr Dave Hirst said the old pavilion leaked, and had been long past its sell-by-date!

"The club had bought the old shed for £5 from Barkisland Cricket Club in 1981 when it first came to Ashday Lane and was still in the Halifax Amateur Association," he said.

"It had originally been taken to Barkisland from an old cricket club in Southwram more than 60 years ago on the back of a horse-drawn cart and it was not in a very good state at all."

Mr Hirst said when the club were elected to the Halifax Parish League's second division in 1988 it had been decided that extensive improvements were needed to update the ground — with the pavilion a priority.

Fund-raising was stepped up, wicket improvements made, a £6,000 new scoreboard and store built — replacing an old hamburger stall bought from Halifax Town Football Club as a score-

By CHRIS LEAVER

box in 1982 — and new ground seating installed.

But with an estimated £30,000 needed for a new pavilion, the club — which was formed as a team for the Cock and Bottle pub in Southwram in 1977 — batted on with their leaning landmark until last year.

Mr Hirst said the committee decision to replace the pavilion was taken at the end of last season after the offer of stone to build a new one from Southwram firm Marshalls.

The club successfully applied for grants totalling £16,000 from the Yorkshire and Humberside Sports Council and Calderdale Council's Fair Shares committee. Planning permission for the new building was granted last June.

The old pavilion, which was built for the disbanded St Anne's Church Cricket Club in the village, was put to the torch last December.

"For many people it was sad to see it go — but not for me. It was virtually falling down and if we had not have done something soon it would have come down on our heads," said Mr Hirst.

But almost as soon as construction got under way workers — including many committee members and players who were helping out on the project in their spare time — hit a sticky wicket.

The ground, a former quarry and council tip, was found to have a problem with underground methane gas and a special base had to be made before building work could start on the new pavilion.

The hitch put work back at least a month and the club was left with a £3,000 bill it had not planned for.

But first team captain Mr Mick Pollard said the village responded magnificently to the pavilion appeal.

"The support we have had from the pubs, clubs and local business in the village has been great and we have raised £3,000 very quickly. We are still about £10,000 short but hopefully this will come in with further fund-raising and another grant," he said.

"At the end of the day we will have some of the best facilities around Calderdale, should be able to attract some of the best



Getting ready for a new season... Southwram Cricket Club members, from Jowett, Dennis Walton, Rodney Veal, Dave Hirst and Tracy Pollard.

players around the district and get into the first division. It will be the start of a new era."

The new pavilion is due for completion next month ready for the start of the Parish League season at the end of April.

It is hoped to organise a knock-

out contest involving teams from all over Yorkshire as part of the official opening celebrations.

A signing-on night will be held on Thursday at Southwram Social Club for players for the club's first, second, Sunday and junior teams and more fund-rais-

ing events will take place next month including and race night.

For further information contact the Liberal Club on Broadway, Southwram, Halifax SO6 3JN.