

ARMITAGE FOLD IN THE SUNSHINE: “THERE ISN’T A BETTER SETTING”

Profile of Mark Roberts by Paul Rai

Wicketkeeper-batsman Mark Roberts, known as ‘Moggy’ to his friends, has taken on the responsibility of being groundsman at ABCC. Club secretary John Bunch said: “There was some concern about the state of the square. An extensive autumn programme seems to have arrested any further decline and at the moment gives promise of a better surface for 2008. The care of this surface on a weekly basis is being taken back ‘in-house’ for next season and the club is indebted to Mark Roberts.”

Roberts said: “I volunteered my services and hopefully I can put a bit more time into it.” Thanks to Roberts, the Bridge can invest money that was being spent on employing someone from outside of the club on looking after the ground.

When asked if he had any qualifications as a groundsman, Roberts replied: “No, not at all.” But he went on to say: “I did it with the now chairman of Broad Oak, Andrew Roebuck. It must be going back 20 years; we actually did it together for one season.”



Armitage Bridge have one of the biggest grounds in Huddersfield. Roberts said: “We have got two squares. We have got the main square which has got 18 strips

on it. Then we have a junior square with four or five strips now.” Anyone would think that catering for such a large ground would be a burden. Credit must go to Roberts for his dedication and commitment. He expressed his pleasure in working on the ground at Armitage Bridge, saying: “Apart from anything else it’s a breath of fresh air and a complete change from the day job.”

Although Roberts enjoys the occupation of being groundsman, there are times when the weather can intervene: “It’s wanting to do something, but not being able to do it because it’s pouring down or there’s been a complete soaking overnight and it’s wet through and you can’t do anything. That’s the most frustrating thing,” he said.

Roberts thinks that the ground is at its best “when we are playing a game in the glorious sunshine and there are cars all around watching - that’s the best thing because there isn’t a better setting.”

Last year Roberts was involved in 14 dismissals behind the stumps, taking 12 catches and two stumpings. This season, on top of being groundsman, he has been appointed captain of the second eleven. Roberts is aiming for “a better finish than last year,” meaning finishing higher than fifth.

ABCC recently suffered the tragic loss of Tim Sugden, who was a very important figure at the Bridge, and 2nd XI skipper Roberts said: “What I would actually like to do is mount a promotion campaign in his honour. I want to lead the 2nd XI into the top section of the Huddersfield Cricket League and do it in memory of Tim.” Roberts said that Tim “started it all about five years ago; he is the guy who finally gave the juniors a chance at Armitage Bridge and I’d like to be the one that carries it on and sees it through for him”