

Profile of Dave Thompson by Stephen Darwin

Former university student Dave Thompson first became associated with the cricket club in 1991. It was a coincidence that the YMCA team during the time were witnessing a distinct shortage of players, which helped draft the enthusiastic Thompson straight into the team almost immediately. Thompson recalls the moment that himself and a close university friend approached the club about the possibility of training, 'it was a coincidence really that they were struggling for players, luckily my mate went and enquired about the possibility of joining in practice sessions yet the weekend after joining we were put straight into the team!' A place in the team that Thompson ultimately held onto for many years to follow, leaving the club only recently to pursue his career at pastures new.

When quizzed about the rivalry with Birchencliffe, Thompson was far more adamant about its fierce nature as a genuine local derby. Thompson observes that encounters between the two clubs were considerably heated affairs that threatened to spill over at any moment, 'we were a decent side in the 90's and if I'm honest Birchencliffe didn't like it.' Matches against the club in closest proximity to the Birkby Nuffield team were, 'always hostile' and players 'would be in for a fair bit of sledging,' added Thompson. Another important factor that contributed to the meaningfulness of each encounter with Birchencliffe was the apparent dismissal of any consideration of the league table: 'League position didn't matter and I remember a few years ago we made 60 odd all out which we worried wasn't enough and that we were going to get blown away by the Birchencliffe team after tea.' Describing a memorable fixture from the past, Thompson was evidently elated that the club managed to recover from an adverse position and take the victory, 'coming out after tea we were unstoppable with the ball and got them out for around 55 runs, you should've seen their faces, they were gutted!'

The Birkby Nuffield Cricket Club's annual tour to Wiltshire was always held in high regard among the more loyal servants of the team. Every year the club would travel to the historic rural county to revel in a weekend of banter and cricket. The team would participate in two friendly encounters with Market Lavington on the Saturday and Poulshot on the Sunday and as Dave Thompson explains, 'the game against Lavington was always friendly but quite bizarrely the match against Poulshot turned into a 'do or die' type fixture that the players seemed to revel in.' Although the trips to Wiltshire weren't purely centred around the seriousness of cricket and players would often anticipate the social aspect of the weekend.

Although not intentionally, the tour to Wiltshire never attracted the ethnic minority representatives of the club. Financial constraints and cultural beliefs in the consumption of alcohol were perfectly legible reasons for their absence. Maynard Bluff was a keen enthusiast of the traditional tour and paid tribute to its role in building up team spirit, 'it was a real tradition always something that the players would look forward to in September.' Bluff concluded that the tour, 'got everyone together and even the wives came along as well, it was great in terms of the cricket and the nightlife.'

Referring to encounters with Poulshot, Dave Thompson recalls a particularly enthralling spectacle that made the 'old boys tour' of one year extra special. A road runs through the Poulshot cricket ground and is therefore an irreplaceable and active part of the pitch. 'This guy smacks a full toss into the air and it's heading towards the road when one of our lads sensationally caught the ball on the road.' 'We went on to win the match having been considered mere underdogs following the drinking exploits of the night before - it was like we had won the World Cup!'