

# Vital - and that's official!

## 39. Shepley C.C. - Marsh Lane

*Members and visitors are assured of a warm welcome at Marsh Lane, even if there is often a sneaky breeze to sharpen the breathtaking views to be enjoyed from one of the finest grounds in the local area. Individually, or as a family, the club's membership fees are modest, the beer is good (and cheap!) and the teas on matchdays are acknowledged to be among the best in the league. The acres of space at the ground offer a recreational facility which the village and its many organisations might well use to a much wider mutual advantage.*

[Shepley Guide]

In the middle of Shepley, between the library and post office, and just down the road from St. Paul's church, stands a small noticeboard. At the top, it says simply: SHEPLEY CRICKET CLUB: A VITAL PART OF VILLAGE LIFE. Underneath these words is a short list detailing the club's forthcoming fixtures. In metaphorical terms, the club may well be the focal-point of village life, but the ground itself is slightly hidden, set back behind a row of attractive houses on the sloping Marsh Lane close to the Farmer's Boy pub.

Shepley - there is also a Nether Shepley - lies seven miles south-east of Huddersfield. Once upon a time, Shepley was known as 'Sheepley' and 'Seppelleie' after Matthew de Sheepleye/Shepleie and Thomas and John de Scheplay. Shepley's railway station is sandwiched between Stocksmoor and Denby Dale on the pretty but meandering Huddersfield-Sheffield line. Its other claims to fame? Shepley Races, the Gothic-style parish church (St. Paul's - which dates from 1848), the Co-op store in the middle of the village, sandstone, quarries, yarn manufacture and real ale (CAMRA would be very proud of The Outfitters pub). In the nineteenth century the population of Shepley was only 1,000, but it still possessed 30 tailors' shops and 20 sweet shops.

Today, all villagers receive a copy of the Shepley Village Magazine - a publication which is nearing its 400th edition. A glance through its pages

reveal much about the personality of the place. So, look out for Shepley Bowling Club, Shepley W.I., Shepley Evergreens, Shepley & District Naturalists Society, Shepley Guild, and Shepley Bird & Wildlife Group. In centuries gone by, before cricket arrived in Shepley, the village was noted for its tradition of bull- and bear-baiting, as well as knur and spell.



**1973**

Shepley play in the Huddersfield League and their ground is interesting on a number of counts. When you stand in the middle of the playing area, you are struck by the fantastic view out over Shelley and Kirkburton and far into the distance, with Emley Mast dominating the view. The immediate environs are also pleasant: behind the pavilion, Marsh Farm (lots of cows and lots of machinery); at the other end of the ground, a footpath that runs perpendicular to Marsh Lane (and that is very popular with dog-walkers). And all around, houses - old and new - and odd bushes and trees.

In addition, Shepley is one of the few grounds in the area to have three separate buildings devoted to a) eating, b) changing, and c) drinking. 'TEAS AVAILABLE - PLEASE ORDER', announces a notice in the window of the tea room. The dressing rooms are next door - with the scoreboard upstairs - and the bar third along. Each building stands alone on the

southern side of the ground. There's also a small covered area (which fits eight white seats and a table) and an umpires room which is adjoining.

The ground is above-average in size and the square mightily impressive in quality. The sightcreens are both transparent, and dotted round the boundary's edge are benches, picnic tables, flowerpots and blue plastic bins with 'S.C.C.' marked on them in large white lettering (they're obviously very tidy at Shepley). The 'S.C.C.' gates which welcome all visitors to Marsh Lane are extremely handsome, and it is also a fact that the ground used to be home to grass tennis courts.

A partly whitewashed dry stone wall runs round most of the ground's perimeter, and just for good measure, there are 10 neat advertising hoardings at the north end, close to the footpath. The playing area does not take up the full ground space, so there's room for a small car park on the west side (this facility is advertised in big bold letters on the whitewashed wall in that corner of the ground). This has the effect of making the whole arena seem very spacious. (But a warning sign at the main entrance says: NO GOLF).

Today, two stalwarts of Shepley C.C. are remembered around the ground. An inscription on one of the benches near the pavilion reads: 'Herbert Lockwood - A good companion to all and a trusted and respected friend to many' (Lockwood died in 2001). Meanwhile, a bench dedication just in front of the tea room honours Gordon Moorhouse, another wonderful club man. Incidentally, the prices are very reasonable: Full tea - £2.50; tuna/cheese sandwiches - £1.45; egg sandwich - £1.30; meat sandwich - £1.60; cake - from 30p. Also on sale - ice cream! As the impressive club website puts it, 'Welcome to Shepley C.C., heart of a rural West Yorkshire village community...The Marsh Lane ground has panoramic views over the glorious surrounding countryside...Groundsman Ray Horrocks won the 2002 Huddersfield League's Tom Walker Award for the excellence of the playing area. On the field, the club has been a regular member of the top division...Distinguished players of the past include England's Darren Gough...'

Shepley C.C. is the oldest sporting organisation in the village. It was founded in 1871 when the population of the place would have been around 1,500 (today it is approaching the 3,000-mark). Mr Kaye Armitage - a local mill owner - 'played a prominent and active part in the club's formation'. Throughout the 1880s, the club took part in friendly matches. This early period also witnessed 'workshop cricket' - where local firms would

challenge each other on the cricket field (20 overs a side, two overs per player except for the stumper, and the convention was that the losing team bought the winners a pie-and-pea supper). We are also told that Shepley had a women's XI in this period.

The club's first HQ was on Lane Head Road, adjacent to where Cliffe House was built. In its early days, it also played at Stag Fields (167-169 Abbey Road) - which hosted soccer and rugby matches too. In 1889 the club lost its ground, and it had to fold temporarily. It was re-formed in 1897, moved into Marsh Lane in 1898 and joined Section A of the Huddersfield & District Combination in the same year (where it played teams such as Cartworth Moor, Cumberworth, Hepworth, Netherthong and Scholes).

Shepley then joined the Dearne Valley League (winning the Championship in 1912), and thereafter they were founder members of the Huddersfield Central League (winning the title in 1925). They were admitted to the Huddersfield League in 1932/3, replacing Friarmere C.C., and in their first years played 'with refreshing vigour'. In 1951 a local writer observed: 'During recent years the members have put a deal of hard work and endeavour into the ground, which may be regarded as a credit to the League.'

One of Shepley's most successful decades was the 1980s: it won the Section A championship in 1982 and 1984 and the Section B title in 1988. Today, Shepley run two senior teams and three junior sides. As the club website says: 'The club has a wonderful record at junior levels, with the current crop of youngsters proving exceptional.'

Extract from P.Davies, *Pennine Pitch* (2004)