

# Nervous nineties

## 36. Denby C.C. - Denby Lane

*ONLY 39 RUNS: Crane Moor 19 all out, Denby 20-8. One of the most exciting games seen for some time was witnessed at Crane Moor last Saturday, when bowlers on both sides got good figures. In the dismissal of the home team J. Price for Denby took 7 wickets for 11 runs in 9 overs, whilst of the 8 Denby wickets which fell G. Allen claimed 6 for 9 runs in 7 overs. No batsman on either side reached double figures. R. Redmond scored 5, the same score as T. Wigfield for Crane Moor and D. Mosley hit 9 for Denby. Other bowling returns were: for Denby - C. Taylor 3 for 8 runs, for Crane Moor, Redwood 2 for 10 runs.  
[Barnsley Chronicle - 22 May 1954]*

**Denby - the umbrella term** for Upper and Lower Denby (or High and Low Denby) - lies just inside Kirklees' south-eastern border, three miles north-west of Penistone. It is a peaceful West Yorkshire village that attracts its fair share of passing cyclists. Locals are proud to emphasise that Denby is very distinct from Denby Dale, which is situated a couple of miles to the north. According to writer John Spencer, Denby 'dates back to the Domesday Book as the "place or farmstead of the Danes" - in other words one which has been occupied and farmed for well over a millennia'.

Denby was originally known as 'Denebi' and was dominated by the De Denby family. The village was famous, once upon a time, for cock-fighting, cock-squalling, bull-baiting and bull-running. Denby Band, Denby Club and Denby Feast have also been important aspects of local culture. There is an array of interesting buildings: Tenterhouse Farm (where cloth-stretching was the main business), Papist Hall (owned by the Catholic Blackburn family) and Denby Hall (now an arable and dairy farm). And, according to one source, 'It is noted that in the late-1660s there were two famous witches in Denby. Records show their names as Susanne Hinchcliffe and Anne Shillitoe.' Alongside witchcraft, the place is also noted for its tradition of puritanism. In the 1820s Denby suffered a terrible bout of poverty, and actually had to open a workhouse for paupers in 1827. The village school

was opened in 1864, and today approximately one in five villagers are employed in agriculture - with cattle the key local commodity.

**The cricket club is based** in Upper Denby. According to one expert: 'Over the years Upper Denby, with a population of approximately 445 people, has expanded and changed from the typical farming community it once was. More recently, parts of it have become home to those who commute to the cities for their work. Lower Denby has increased very little and still has a strong community spirit amongst its inhabitants.' The local hunt also passes through Denby - an interesting spectacle for curious residents.

The club is a key institution in the village. In his book on Denby, Chris Heath reveals that a cricket team known as Denby United played Craiks at Greenfoot in June 1901. Denby United totalled 48-8 before rain, thankfully for their sake, cut short the fixture. (Incidentally, in 1901 the population of Denby was 1,765).

Historically, Denby is part of the Parish of Penistone, and in these early years, the cricket club were members of the Penistone & District League. As such, they pitted their wits against local sides such as Hoylandswaine, Penistone Church, Silkstone United,

Thurlstone Old and Crane Moor (see above). Half a century on, they still had league fixtures against Crane Moor, but had shifted their focus, and were now mixing with the likes of Greenmoor, Millhouse, Mortomley, Midhope, Thurgoland and Pogmoor Sports.

The consensus says that Denby C.C. was founded officially in 1908. This means that as far as its own history goes, the club is in the 'nervous nineties', only a few years away from its centenary in 2008. Before moving to Denby Lane (its current headquarters), the club played just round the corner on Falledge Lane. Howard Moxon, club secretary, explains: 'I'm not exactly sure how long the club remained at the original venue, but I do know that it has been based at Denby Lane for most of the last century. It was probably around 1920 when the club moved ground.' We know that in 1952 the club charged the following:

Annual subscription for under-18s: 3/6.

Annual subscription for members aged between 18 and 20: 6/-.

Annual subscription for adults over 20: 8/8.

Today, Denby Lane stands as one of the most idyllic venues in the Huddersfield Central League. It has all the hallmarks of a traditional village ground: a parish church - rebuilt in 1845, and then again in 1957 - just over the boundary rope, a pub round the corner, and fields and farmhouses all around (which meant that at the height of the recent foot-and-mouth epidemic, the ground was out of bounds). And when early evening arrives, so do the shadows.

The ground has a couple of distinguishing features: the impressively neat white dry stone wall that acts as the boundary on three sides and the stern notices - DOG OWNERS: PLEASE PREVENT YOUR DOG FROM FOULING THE CRICKET FIELD (at the main entrance) and NO CRICKET BOOTS IN THE TEA ROOM (by the entrance to the said building). The tea room is spacious and the price list says that a full tea costs £2.50. It is home to a TV, a set of black boards displaying 'match sponsor' information, and a selection of team photos - some colour and some black and white (the most interesting is a small pic of 'Upper Denby C.C. - 1927'). An additional notice says that there are no 'local rules' at Denby Lane. The green changing-room block and a pair of blue-coloured garages are sited next door. Moxon knows that the Denby ground is a popular one: 'The church is a lovely backdrop and opposition teams like coming here.'

**Denby have made genuine progress** in recent years. They won the Allsop Cup in 1988, claimed the Championship the year after, and topped Section A in 1998. They currently run a 1<sup>st</sup> XI and 2<sup>nd</sup> XI, and an under-15 side. There has also been a steady improvement in the quality of facilities. Moxon says: 'The changing rooms were put up in 1960, the tea room in 1964, and as the club has acquired modern machinery, the playing area has benefited. Everyone at the club chips in to help the groundsman, and on a fine day we've got a good scoring wicket here. It's not unusual for 500 runs to be scored in a match.'

The cricket club is in fact part of Denby Sports and Social Club (the village football team play their home matches in an adjoining field). And when the overs are up, everyone adjourns to the nearby George Inn, where the landlord puts on a wonderful post-match spread for the Denby XI and the opposition.

The notices pinned to the tea-room wall are also illustrative: one advertises a memorial game, another an end-of-season presentation evening, and a third publicises the forthcoming harvest festival - to be held

at the George. This more than anything emphasises the rural context in which Denby C.C. operates.

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