

On sale - designer gear!

38. Shelley C.C. - Westerley Lane

While not being unique, [Shelley CC] is certainly one of the few local cricket clubs to own its own ground. The ground, one of the largest in the Huddersfield League, is generally considered to be an ideal venue for both final and semi-final competition matches. With the growth of the new housing development around it, the cricket field has now become more central to the village instead of being on the outskirts.

[A local website]

Shelley C.C. was founded in 1871, and this special date is given due prominence on the welcome sign that greets all visitors to their ground. The club is 132 not out - which makes it one of the oldest in the Huddersfield area.

In 1905-6 Shelley were champions of the Dearne Valley League, and a picture of the victorious eleven hangs in the club bar to commemorate the fact. There are also team photos from the early - and late - twentieth century. The club played at three different venues in the village before purchasing Westerley Lane, high above Penistone Road, in 1921. Since this date they have made steady progress: in 1940 the club put out its first junior side; in 1971 it celebrated its centenary; in 1988 the official history, *Century Plus: The Shelley Cricket Club Story, 1871-1988*, written by Bob Haigh, was published; and in 1995 the new pavilion was brought into use. Plans are now afoot for a massive new 'community sports complex' on Westerley Lane.

Shelley used to play in the Huddersfield & District Combination and the Huddersfield Central League. They were not one of the seven clubs that helped to found the Central League in 1913, but they did join up soon after. Indeed, in 1921, when the 17 member clubs were divided into two pools, they found themselves in Group A along with Clayton West, Cumberworth United, Lepton Highlanders, Nortonthorpe, Rowley Hill, Shepley, Skelmanthorpe and Upper Cumberworth. They left the Central League at the end of the 2000 season and moved into the Huddersfield League. Today, they are viewed as the 'babes' of the competition, with only three years of experience behind them.

Shelley is located six miles south-east of Huddersfield and seven miles north of Penistone. In days gone by, it formed a township in the parish of Kirkburton. In 1831, four decades before the cricket club was founded, it had a population of 1,319. Since then it has become famous for its New Year's Day 'boundary walk', its tradition of Methodism - John Wesley preached in the village - and its cat-and-dog rescue centre.

Its comprehensive school is also noteworthy. Ex-pupils include footballers Ian Lawson and Simon Charlton, actress Lena Heady, and Yorkshire batsman Matthew Wood, who was recently quoted as saying: 'The first thing that struck me about Shelley High was the size of the place...It's the place where you enter as boys and hopefully leave as experienced young men ready for the outside world...I'm looking forward to a prolonged first-class cricket career...I feel the social and academic skills I gained at Shelley have helped me on my travels abroad, where I have lived short-term in South Africa and New Zealand.'

Shelley also has significance for railway enthusiasts. The village is the terminus of the Kirklees Light Railway, and at 511 yards long, the nearby Woodhouse Tunnel is the longest on any 15-inch gauge railway in Britain, and probably the world. In terms of buildings, the place is home to Shelley Hall (a seventeenth-century building) and Gryce Hall (home of the Saville family), and also Shelley Park, a huge area of modern housing and now 'a village within Shelley village'.

A spokesperson for the W.I. sums up the essence of the community: 'A hundred years ago Shelley was just a compact little village on a shelf of land - with small hamlets to the east, west, north and south of it...Handloom weaving has...been a cottage industry for centuries and evidence of it can be seen in the long rows of upper windows in many of the cottages...The 1881 census [told us that] 196 adults were involved in cloth-making, 37 men were miners, 47 were farmers or farm labourers and there were also blacksmiths, railway platelayers, cloggers, carpenters, stay (corset) finishers, washerwomen, servants, wheelwrights, tailors and seamstresses.' In the textile world, Shelley became particularly renowned for the 'Tumble Twist' rug.

If you're approaching Shelley from either Kirkburton or Skelmanthorpe, the landmarks to look out for are the Oddfellows pub and Shelley Stores. When you spot these, you're only a few hundred yards away from Shelley's Westerley Lane HQ. The ground is located just off the A616, which heads off in the direction of Skelmanthorpe, Scissett and Clayton West. On one side, the ground backs on to new houses; on the other, to a well used recreation ground (Shelley F.C. moved in to this field in 1962). It is also close to Emley Mast, which

dominates the skyline as you look out from the changing rooms.

The clubhouse, which backs on to Westerley Lane, is newly built and incorporates bar and tea room. Pinned to the wall is a large noticeboard and a variety of S.C.C. momentos. The building that houses the changing rooms is right next door - and is built in an almost identical style. The playing area is big, slopes slightly upwards from the pavilion and is enclosed on two sides by a turreted dry stone wall. There are adverts for a local garden centre and a tool hire company on the western side of the ground. Also dotted around the perimeter are a maintenance hut, a large blue plastic cover, and a chunky-looking roller. The sightscreens are wheeled and transparent, and in blustery winds can be blown over quite easily.

Today, the club has a membership of 125, and its main sponsor is Perry's, the car-parts specialists, who are based in Northgate, Huddersfield. The club may be small in relative terms, but it gives off a professional vibe. Note, for example, the posters and notices that are on display in the pavilion:

CARS - PLEASE DRIVE TO FAR END AND PARK! DO NOT BLOCK THE ROUTE ALONG BOUNDARY.

SPECTATORS £1 (AS PER DRAKES LEAGUE RULES). APPLIES TO: ALL 1ST TEAM GAMES AND 2ND TEAM CUP GAMES. OR £5 SEASON'S MEMBERSHIP. PLEASE HAVE YOUR £1 READY FOR THE COLLECTOR. THANK YOU!

VERY SPECIAL OFFER! JUST £35 FOR A FULL SET OF 'SCC 1871' CLOTHING! SEPARATE PRICES; CRICKET CAP £10, CRICKET SHIRT £15, CRICKET JUMPER £15. ALL THREE ITEMS TOGETHER - £35!

This last notice demonstrates that Shelley C.C. are very proud of their history and heritage. And as one guide to the village states: 'There is not much nightlife in Shelley - three or four cosy pubs, and a village hall with a busy programme of dancing, bridge, keep-fit, women's meetings, Scouts, Guides and so on. Football and cricket teams are well supported'.

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