

Vicar paved the way

IF ever a cricket club represented a community, it is Illingworth, where the Airedale & Wharfedale League outfit is a central point for the local area, particularly the youngsters.

And according to a new book, that role as a focus of village life is something which has been close to the heart of the club since its early years.

'Start of Play: The Foundation and Progress of Illingworth St Mary's CC c1884-1920 details how, as the name suggests, the fledgling club had its roots firmly in the local church, where the vicar Rev George Oldacres played a fundamental part in the founding and early operation of the club.

The volume, written by Dennis O'Keefe, was compiled as a result of his dissertation on the subject as part of his postgraduate studies, and describes in detail how those formative years saw the club establish itself with the ethic of being a true village side excluding nobody on the basis of faith or social standing.

It also details on the field success and describes the officials who piloted the club through its early years.

"In the late 19th century, the club played a major part in village life and the book aims to bring the key personalities and major issues alive," said O'Keefe, a former Illingworth player who now lives in Northowram.

Copies of the book, which costs £5 and was compiled in association with the Cricket Heritage project at the University of Huddersfield, can be ordered by calling 01484 472405.