

BOB HAIGH takes a nostalgic look at the history of a local cricket club



Nortonthorpe's 1961 cup-winning side at a celebration dinner at the Crown Hotel. From top left: N Bentley, N Mosley, A Shaw, R England, M Taylor, D Bentley, R Berry, E Bentley (umpire); F Exley, T Kitson, J Battye, R Hardy, K Armitage. Nortonthorpe were always a family club. The two umpires Noel and Ernest Bentley were brothers and Dennis was their nephew. Dennis's three cup final innings produced two unbeaten half centuries and he was unbeaten also on the third. Opening batsman Norman Mosley, who now acts as umpire, was one of four brothers who played for the club during this period.



Nortonthorpe's championship side, 1950. From back left: C Blackburn, E Monkman, J Wilkinson, J Greaves, J Battye, A Shaw, D Tipler, R Bentley, D Blackburn, F Exley, K Bowers, R Hardy, B Hoyle, D Haigh, A Scargill, H Senior. Inset: J Armitage, captain.

Nortonthorpe's glory years

THE DAWN of the 1960s produced a dream for supporters of Nortonthorpe Cricket Club.

A team that had joined the Central League in 1920 had met with limited success. Even the magnificent achievement of Bob Blackburn, who took a record number of wickets in a season, failed to take any silverware to Scissett.

Apart from a championship in 1932 and wartime championships in 1939 and 1940, the only success was in 1950 when the bowling of John Wilkinson helped the club to the championships in a very tight finish that went to the very last match.

The 1960 triumphs were even more significant because the club had closed down for two seasons, in 1957 and 1958, for ground improvements.

It was the 2nd XIs who showed the way in 1960 when they lifted the Tinker Cup in spectacular fashion. Dennis Tipler was unbeaten with 55 when the Scissett side suspended their innings at 151-1.

This proved far too many for Leymoor who were all out for 137. In 1961 it was the first team who took centre stage. There can hardly have been a better exhibition of batting in a cup final than that produced by Ken Armitage and Denis Bentley

Bentley on a sundered Shelley ground. Cumberworth had been dismissed for an all-out total of 151 before the pair came together after their side had lost two early wickets.

Both raced to unbeaten half centuries before the total was passed. Armitage made 56 and Bentley 76. Not only did the pair continue to serve their club with distinction, but both were regular members of the League's representative side.

Mysteriously, 1962 passed without awards. But the following year the club broke all Central League records when three trophies were taken to the Nortonthorpe sports ground.

In the early part of the season few would have expected Nortonthorpe to have achieved a league and cup double. They went down at home to Holmbridge on June 1 — though that proved to be the only time that the club sacrificed all points in a game until well into 1965.

For much of that season they trailed in the wake of both Holmbridge and Scholes, but the final table showed that the championship was theirs with five points to spare over Scholes. As in the League, the club made a stuttering start in the cup campaign. Up against David Brown's for a preliminary round clash, they had just 36

on the board at the fall of the sixth wicket. However a brilliant seventh wicket partnership of 89 between Frank Exley (53) and Roger Bedford (52) brought the smiles back as the all-out total reached 147.

Brown's could muster only 92. Weatherwise, 1962 was an unpleasant summer, and Nortonthorpe had to travel almost daily for a fortnight to Leymoor before they managed to secure a second round Allsop Cup date with Skelmanthorpe.

Ken Armitage as usual was on top form that day, making an unbeaten 69 to enable his side to suspend at 119-4.

Skelmanthorpe had no answer to the wiles of Denis Bentley (5-19) and Rowland Hardy (3-24) and were all out for 84. This set up a semi-final clash with Emley. Nortonthorpe again batted first and reached 150-5 before suspending. The all round nature of the side was illustrated by the fact that six players got into double figures, with Denis Bentley top scoring with an unbeaten 36.

It was Brian Glover's turn to shine with the ball. He finished with 5-36 as Emley's last wicket fell for 128. Against Scholes in the final, Nortonthorpe got off to the worst possible start with both their openers back in the pavilion with only six on the board.

A hard hitting 39 by Michael Taylor turned the tide somewhat before Stuart Holden and Denis Bentley took control.

Each scored unbeaten half centuries to take the score to 151-3 after only 35 overs.

Scholes never recovered from a bad start and were all out for 95 with skipper Rowland Hardy finishing with 6-35. Wicket keeper Terry Kitson won the League's catching prize that season with 16 victims.

The second team managed only fourth place out of 16 in the League but matched their seniors in the cup competition. Teacher at the village school Maurice Tait distinguished himself with his match-winning technique.

They started their Tinker Cup campaign in spectacular fashion, bowling Cumberworth out for 23 to record a

10-wicket victory. Phil's figures of 5-3 for 6.

They then went on to win through to the final, where they showed the same aggressive style as their seniors, with that man Tait earning man of the match status.

He was unbeaten on 75 with David Carter making 35, when his side reached 152-4 from only 35 overs. He continued his success with the ball with 4-31. John Mosley chipped in with 3-29 leaving Thurstonland all out for 119 and giving Nortonthorpe a unique treble.

Ken Armitage was in superb form with the bat in 1964, winning the league batting average with 72.14. There was no success in the cups but the side were unbeaten in the league and won the championship with 15 points to spare over Skelmanthorpe.

In those days every true nighter, virtually all were Scissett born and bred, and most still live in the area.

Around this time there was an important signing — all rounder John Hall — who was to win the league batting averages in 1965 and 1966 with figures of 33 and 37 respectively.

Little wonder that Nortonthorpe's success continued, with 1965 providing yet another league and cup double. Stuart Holden, then a Town footballer, won the league bowling averages. His 39 wickets cost 5.64 each. Hall Bower, who left the Central League in 1940, had been the only team previously to record a hat trick of championships.

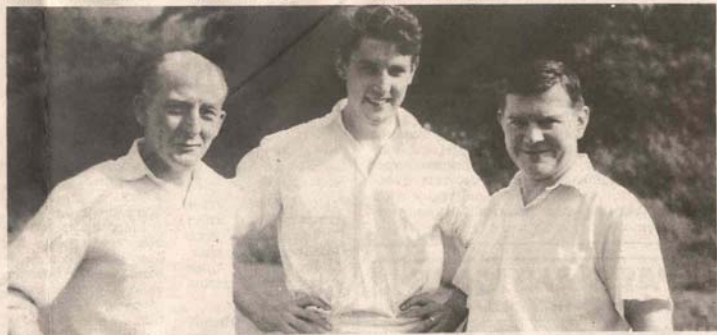
There was yet another record set that season that will be hard to beat.

The cup final, played

at Emley, was the first over 40 overs. Despite an interruption for rain Nortonthorpe achieved an almost invincible total of 261-4.

With one of their key players, Brian Glover, being unfit to play, the club introduced second teamer Robin Wray and he quickly showed a depth of talent. Opening the innings, he went on to top score with 94. Stuart Holden made 68 and inevitably Ken Armitage chipped in with an unbeaten 54. There wasn't a single maiden over in the innings.

David Brown's provided little resistance and didn't help their cause with three early run-outs. Nortonthorpe's most successful bowler was Michael Taylor with 4-46. The last wicket fell at 96 giving Nortonthorpe a 165-run victory.



Three local heroes: from left, Frank Exley, known to all his friends as Mr Nortonthorpe. Not only did he play in all of the successful teams from 1940 to 1965, but he was also a great worker for the club. He took over as 'temporary' groundsman midway through 1949 and continued for 32 years. Robert Norton Hastewell: a part time cricketer from a famous Scissett family. His grandfather George Norton of Nortonthorpe Mills provided the club with its present ground. The club of course carries the family name. Rowland Hardy: for many years the village postmaster, he always epitomised the Nortonthorpe spirit. He captained the side in its 'treble' year but later gave way to Frank Exley.

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