

Celebrations doused by £20,000 fire

PART of Slaithwaite's cricketing heritage went up in smoke in the early hours of last Saturday morning.

Their scoreboard was burned to the ground and the fire also destroyed a motorised roller, practice equipment and fertilisers for the field. The damage was estimated at around £20,000 and was caused on the day the Hill Top club were celebrating their return to Section "A" for the first time since relegation in 1979 with a match against champions Elland, writes **Robert Gledhill**.

Slaithwaite's scoreboard had been at the ground since August 11, 1945.

It had previously graced the private ground of Sir Julian Cahn at Nottingham and was presented to the club by the family of the late Slaithwaite president, James Gartside, in his memory.

At the opening, Slaithwaite officials expressed the hope that the purchase would help get them a Sykes Cup semi-final, while league president W H Bolt said it would be a credit to any cricket ground in the county.

The scoreboard was kept merrily clicking over for the rest of the summer by Slaithwaite professional and West Indian Edwin St Hill.

Hill Top officials seem unlikely to launch an appeal for building funds at this stage but they have expressed thanks to the clubs who immediately offered help on hearing the news.

Primrose Hill, whose second team match had been switched to ICI on Sunday because of ground problems, loaned their scoring tins for Saturday's match and Kirkheaton offered a spare set for the rest of the summer. Local firm Rogers Rollers, of South Crosland, also stepped in with the offer of a motorised roller for a nominal rental until a new one is bought.

At this week's league meeting, president Jim Dawson said:

"It's really grand to hear that people do rally round and help when a club has problems and the incident underlines my point about making sure that you do get adequate insurance."

Although a temporary scoreboard has already been erected, Slaithwaite cricket chairman Stephen Hirst said: "There is no way we will have a new scoreboard ready for this summer and if anyone has any spare practice nets we could borrow they would be welcome."