

If it's Tuesday it must be a cricket match for pals Tony Hutton, Mick Bourne and Brian Senior.

Though such is the enthusiasm the trio have for the game that every day of the week usually revolves around the clatter of wickets and thwack of leather on willow.

The three friends have spent years travelling to grounds up and down the country in their search for cricketing action.

Last year their season began in January in Appletreewick in the Yorkshire Dales and ended on Boxing Day at North Leeds CC.

In between they travelled here, there and everywhere in search of village cricket, minor counties cricket, league cricket, county cricket and schools cricket.

They have chronicled their experiences in a new book.

Off The Beaten Track: Three Men and a Cricket Season follows them as they dart around Yorkshire and the rest of the country in search of fine weather and a decent game of cricket.

Their travels put them into contact with dozens of cricket clubs in and around Leeds and sides playing at every level of the sport.

"I've always watched and played cricket but since I retired it's become a full time job," says Tony Hutton, who lives in Adel, and keeps the scores of each game he watches.

"It's a nice way of seeing the country and I take my wife Diana with me.

Three all out

Summer is a busy time for three cricket lovers from Leeds. **Grant Woodward** reports.

She's not really a cricket person but she's quite happy to sit in a deckchair when the sun is shining.

"We go to all the National Trust places as well," he adds. "I'm not totally obsessed with cricket, although it may seem that way!"

After retirement, Brian Senior took a part-time job working nights for a local taxi company so that he was free to watch cricket during the day.

Being a non-driver he relies on public transport, friends and his own two legs to get him from game to game.

Living in Headingley, he can often be found watching Yorkshire, though he is also a regular at nearby St Chad's.

"I can usually find someone I know wherever I turn up," he says. "I often have my back to the play when chatting away

— my catchphrase has become: "That's another wicket I've missed!"

"I do enjoy the social side of the game and swapping stories and experiences with other cricket people."

Former teacher Mick Bourne preferred playing football when he was a lad, but when his son started playing for a club in Leeds he was asked to help out with the coaching. Soon he was being roped into becoming an umpire, then managing teams and even serving on various committees.

He even got talked into becoming secretary of the Leeds and District Junior Cricket League for five years. But he says he is uneasy about what he calls the politicisation of the game, preferring to speak up on its behalf as an independent.

"For me, what goes on off the field of play at clubs

appeals as much as what happens on it," says Mick, of Moortown.

"I spend a fair bit of time writing letters to the press, MPs and others at the top end who profess to support the game. And then there are all those interesting characters I meet

on my travels and the fascinating tales each one has to tell."

The book follows each of them as they take in games around the county and beyond — all three are seldom at the same match — and was put together by Dr Peter Davies of Huddersfield University's Cricket Heritage Project. Sales of the book will help fund research into the history of the cricket clubs in the Calderdale and Kirklees leagues.

Tony says the trio's travels take them to some magnificent grounds, Cartworth above Holmfirth being one of his personal favourites but it is

impossible to pick out just one.

For the most unusual venue, he recalls a match between Scotland and the USA played on a specially-developed, all-grass ground in the middle of the Dubai desert. But as far as the three friends are concerned,

a game of cricket anywhere is enough to keep them happy.

"I suppose it's therapy of a kind," says Tony, who admits he longs for the day when a Yorkshire side is once again made up of eleven Yorkshiremen. "It's an escape from the real world."

● *Off The Beaten Track* is out now priced £6. To order a copy send your name, address and a cheque made payable to University of Huddersfield HEC to: Dr Peter Davies, School of Music, Humanities & Media, University of Huddersfield, Queensgate, Huddersfield HD1 3DH.

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