

Looking back

with Margaret Heward



In the fourth of his features on Cricket and the Community in the Spen Valley **DR PETER DAVIES** looks at the history of Scholes CC

Centre of life in village

IN THE 1860s and 1870s cricket was extremely popular in Scholes. Local historian David Wilding tells us that a cricket team attached to the local Victoria Institute was founded in 1868. The institute was akin to a local community centre and in many ways the centre of village life. But the cricket team that eventually came to be known as Scholes CC was formed as Scholes Albert Mills CC around 1870.

The Albert Mill Company was formed in 1860 as a friendly society and company mill. According to Wilding, the team was named the Albert Mill Co but was mainly made up of Firth Holdsworth's employees. Firth Holdsworth's specialised in weaving and worsted spinning.

In 1882 Scholes Albert Mills were drawn against Roberttown All Saints in the first round of the inaugural Heavy Woollen Cup, staged in 1883.

It is probable that Scholes Albert Mills CC played all their home games at New Popplewell Lane, on a patch of land that was once a quarry.

The land came into being as a cricket ground when between 20 and 30 workers filled and levelled the ground using nothing but picks, shovels and wheelbarrows.

In 1894 Scholes joined the Spen and Calder Valley League - one of the many localised cricket competitions that were in existence in this era.

In Scholes's third round Heavy Woollen Cup tie against Heckmondwike in 1897, there was amazing controversy surrounding the climax to the game.

Scholes defeated Heckmondwike. However, the losers protested because the Scholes players had left the field of play before the final batsman had had chance to appear.

The result stood, as the umpires agreed that at least two minutes had passed. Heckmondwike still needed 17 runs to win at this point.

In 1906 the club was a founder member of another local competition, the Spen Valley and District League. They finished the season in seventh

place. Scholes Cricket Club displayed its ambition and aspirations when, in 1916 - as war raged across the globe - it was accepted as a member of the prestigious county-wide cricket competition the Yorkshire Council.

According to David Wilding, there is evidence to suggest that knur and spell - an early form of golf - was played in the village in this period.

"Behind the Rising Sun," he writes, "in May 1916, Dan Smith, landlord of the Rising Sun, was granted permission by the Bradford Justices to sell intoxicating liquor provided he undertook not to have any rabbit coursing or knur and spell matches."

"In addition locals engaged in illegal cock fighting, arrow throwing, pigeon shooting, dog racing, and 'pitch and toss', nearly all these sports being occasions for heavy betting." In 1919 the fields in the village that were used for sport, and two adjoining fields, were put up for sale.

It was decided that the community would purchase the land in order to use it for cricket and other games. A former playing member, Thompson Jowett, was generous enough to donate £550 towards the total cost of the land (£1,000).

In 1921 two tennis courts were erected adjacent to the cricket field. The year after a football pitch was created, thereafter used by Scholes Old Boys AFC.

A year later, in 1922, a pavilion was built at an estimated cost of £850. Viscount Cowdray presented the trustees with a cheque for £3,400, which enabled the work to be started.

In 1929 Scholes played Batley in a Heavy Woollen Cup semi-final tie. Frustratingly, the playing area was partially flooded by rain

match! Scholes were eventually defeated by Cleckheaton in the final. In 1944 the club joined the Central Yorkshire Cricket League, six years after it was formed in 1938.

1956 stands out as the club's best season in the aftermath of the Second World War. In fact, it was the start of a string of successful years. The club won division two unbeaten under the captaincy of JK Binns. They were also



ABOVE: The Albert Mill Company Cricket Club. LEFT: The Scholes line-up from 1938. BELOW: A programme from the sportsman's dinner. BELOW RIGHT: A write-up of a match in the Guardian from 1976.



with Scholes needing only 16 runs still to win. The Batley captain, JS Barritt, did not wish to return on another evening, instead opting to put on a raincoat and continue the

runners-up in the Yorkshire Council; however, they were bowled out for 38 in the play-off final.

The following season, 1957, the 2nd XI became division one champions under the captaincy of D Asquith.

The current clubhouse was built in 1980, with the help of a loan from Tetley's Brewery. This loan, though generous, did not please everyone as there were two Methodists on the club committee who opposed the offer of aid from a large brewing company.

A new scoreboard soon followed as

well. In 1965, under the captaincy of Dr C M Raynor, Scholes shared the Bradley Trophy for the most points picked up by the 1st XI in the last six matches of the season with Morley.

In 1997 the club received a grant from the Lottery Sports Fund for over £150,000. The money was used to extend and improve the pavilion.

Scholes netted the division one title in 2004, finishing 21 points above the second-placed side. In doing so they also scooped the Bradley Trophy. They thus entered the Premiership.

The icing

SCHOLES ALBERT MILLS v. STAINCLIFFE BRITANNIA (Second Elevens). - Played at Staincliffe, on Saturday last, and resulted in a victory for the home club with four wickets to fall. Score: -

SCHOLES - Robertshaw 0, Asquith 2, Eastwood 1, Buttersfield 6, Gomersall 2, Hargreaves 1, Squire 0, H. Buttersfield 0, F. Squire 1, Hanson (not out) 1, Balastrick 2, extras 14; total 30.

STAINCLIFFE - Ertley 1, Smith (not out) 9, Haalam 21, Pickering 0, T. Robinson 4, R. Clarkson 1, Ertley (not

on the cake came when the club also claimed the best-kept ground award, a fantastic tribute to hardworking groundman Andy Spencer. In October 2004 the club welcomed speaker Graham Lloyd (Lancashire and England) and comedian Zak Stevens to a special sportsman's dinner.

Today, Scholes are an ambitious and progressive local league cricket club, with an attractive ground and a range of supportive sponsors.

Dr Davies and Rob Light have co-written three books about the history of local cricket and the series is called *180 Not Out*.

They are part of the £50,000 Cricket Heritage Project sponsored by the Heritage Lottery Fund and copies are available from Dewsbury Books at Crackenode Lane, Dewsbury.

The books are published by Sigma Press. Call 01484 473405 for more information.