

DOCTOR Peter Davies, senior lecturer in history at Huddersfield University, has been given a Heritage Lottery Fund grant to research cricket history in Kirkees. Here he tells us something about the history of Thornhill Cricket Club. This is the first in a series of features profiling clubs in Dewsbury and Mirfield.



When women cricketers were 'too anxious to run'!



AND AGAIN! The team with 1975 Heavy Woollen Cup. (NS)

RIGHT: The team in 1952 with the Heavy Woollen Cup. (NS)



THORNHILL'S first ground was situated where Valley Road Estate now stands. The club played here between around 1861 and 1887. In the beginning Thornhill Cricket Club was connected to Thornhill Parish Church.

Indeed, in the 1890s the church magazine made regular mention of the cricket club, and on one occasion actually referred to it as "our cricket club". The club moved to its present ground in 1887. In the early days, the ground covered six acres, one rood and 20 perches, and the club paid a rent to the Savile Estate.

The venue came to be known as The Combs after the former Combs Colliery. Archdeacon Brooke put the club on a sound basis in the early days as

well as entertaining the famous Grace brothers whenever Gloucestershire played at Savile Town. 1887 witnessed a women's cricket match being played at Thornhill Cricket Club - an unusual event for the era. The match resulted in a draw, with each team scoring all-out totals of 27.

INTEREST

The *Dewsbury Chronicle* reported that the "novel cricket match" had generated a "great amount of interest". The loss of wickets and subsequent low scores were put down to the fact that some of the women were "too anxious to run". In 1889 the club underwent the first of its major name changes, from Thornhill Cricket Club to Thornhill

Cricket and Lawn Tennis Club. In 1909 the club embraced the local crown green bowlers - hence the name change to Thornhill Cricket and Bowling Club. This moniker was to stand the test of time.

1911 was a big year for local cricket watchers as the club installed a bar. Spectators could now sit in the sun, have a drink, and watch the cricket.

Like all cricket clubs, Thornhill has had to think of novel ways to raise money.

In 1924 it decided to hold a dance on the cricket pitch! Having competed in the Heavy Woollen Cup since it first started in 1883, and being finalists on four occasions, Thornhill finally won the trophy in 1942, as war raged across Europe. Thornhill beat Morley by 11 runs at Heck-

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mondwike to bring the trophy home.

ELECTRICITY

In 1945 Thornhill's pavilion was connected to electricity... and in 1952 the club scooped the Heavy Woollen Cup again, beating Hartshead Moor by three runs. The 1960s and early-1970s saw lots of money being spent on the ground - with four phases of ground extensions. The opening of the 1978 season saw Thornhill sign Colin Peacock, Staincliffe's opening batsman. He was one of three players who had shocked the Batley club by leaving with only a few days to go before the start of the season. Only one of them came to Thornhill, though. The Thornhill clubhouse was extended again in 1965 - and today stands as a warm, welcoming and multi-purpose facility.

LEFT: Thornhill cricket team pictured in 1893. (NS)



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