

100 NOT OUT – AND COUNTING!

Profile of Tom Heaton

By Samantha Shilton

Upper Hopton's club history is one that has been marred by war and controversy.



Upper Hopton CC as we now know it was founded in 1904. In the early years, the club was fairly successful and had a good number of players turning up each week. Eric Conyers, long serving member at the club, remembers these times fondly. "We had a fairly strong side, a lot older than the ones you tend to get these days. And I think that's reflected in the standard of play, I remember the standard back then being higher than it is now".

Originally, the club would play near the Traveller's Rest public house, in an area of land that had to be dug out especially for the cricket team. The club got off to roaring success in its first year, making it to the final of the Dewsbury and District League shield competition. The final was played against Savile Town Wesleyans, and when things finally got running after some poor weather conditions, Upper Hopton came through victorious, scoring 105 to the Wesleyans' meagre 71.

The Dewsbury Reporter hailed the club's achievements, stating, "At this time last year they were non-existent and it was only by hard work and sacrifice of leisure that they were able to provide themselves with a proper playing field".

Hard work and sacrifice seems to be something that Upper Hopton C.C. is synonymous with. However, the First and Second world wars halted play as many of the players were lost to the army, but the club still found the time in the early years of the Second World War to play a couple of charity matches in order to raise funds for the cause. However, the club was forced to close for the second time in its history due to world war in 1942.

Shortly after the club re-formed, Upper Hopton changed its ground from the playing field near the Traveller's Rest public house to a small recreational area situated on Jackroyd Lane. In the time that had passed between the two wars, the club had struggled financially. They had managed to secure a lawnmower for £1 to keep the grass trim on the cricket pitch, but had been forced to sell three of their pieces of corrugated iron to Arthur France in order to raise funds.

The cricket team flourished at the new ground on Jackroyd Lane, and it was even proposed that they would erect a pavilion on the newly acquired land, for the price of £1,850.

"The fields and the recreation area were given to the village by Charles Sutcliffe," recalls Conyers, "who was like the squire of the village if you like". A pavilion was erected on the site in 1963, and saw its first silverware in the form of the Sheard Cup, which was won after the 1st XI beat Birstall Carpets in the final.

In the ensuing years, there was controversy amid more victories for the club. After initially losing the 1974 semi-final of the Sheard Cup, it was discovered that the opposing team, Mirfield Parish, had fielded an unregistered player. The game was replayed and Upper Hopton cruised to victory.

The final that followed, against Howden Clough, was a closely contested one but resulted in an "easy victory for Upper Hopton", according to the Dewsbury Reporter, adding more silverware to the club's cabinets.

The 1978 Sheard Cup saw the 'illegal' appearance of a West Indian cricketer. It was at this time that the club began thinking of switching to another league. This was accomplished in time for the 1983 season, and saw Upper Hopton successfully move from the Dewsbury and District League to the Huddersfield Central League.

The first season in the new league got off with a bang, and saw the club's 1st and 2nd teams come top of their new leagues. At this point, the club made the decision to appoint a Ladies Committee, which was established in 1990. The Committee was responsible for making match teas, as well as helping out with fundraising efforts and any other general duties that the club might need it to perform.

In 2004, the club celebrated its centenary, and produced a book documenting the changes and the many seasons at the club. Conyers has seen most of these seasons at the club. "It is something of an English tradition, playing cricket, and as long as the weather is decent I think I will always come to watch the team play. There have been many changes over the years, but the game is still the same".

Hopefully, Conyers will have the chance to watch many more seasons at the club. With the current number of junior players, there seems to be no reason why the club will not still be surviving in another 100 years.