

Kirkburton CC History by Ian Hodgson

Wherever you're playing in Brisbane down under, at Lords in a C&G Cup final or in a village green at Kirkburton on a Sunday afternoon, your playing for one thing. That one thing is to win, which will help you achieve whatever goals you are aiming for. A win for England down under will put them one step closer to retaining the Ashes, a win at Lords will see your county to be crowned Champions of that domestic cup competition. A win for your local village side will see them a step closer to wherever they want to be, be it securing promotion, avoiding relegation or reaching a cup final.

Nowadays we have competitions or leagues to play in, so win lose or draw we still have something to play for. No leagues were in place when Kirkburton Cricket Club were first founded in 1860. The lack of competition that there must have been may have dwindled the progress of Cricket Clubs in the late nineteenth century. Maybe there was a lack of competition to push players forward to improve but sport back then was much more of a recreation and for leisure.

One of the earliest fixtures to note was against Penistone where Kirkburton CC lost by three runs in an enthralling encounter. Four years later they played a fixture in a local derby against Kirkheaton where Kirkburton won by twenty-seven runs. It was reported that the fielding was outstanding with rarely a chance being dropped, and even unlikely ones were been taken. A pity that professionals cannot pride themselves with such fielding in today's age. The Bowler Brooke for Kirkburton set such high standards by bowling exceptionally well, taking seven wickets.

Games were also arranged against other clubs such as Beaumonts Club of Kirkheaton, Netherton, Shepley, Skelmanthorpe, Wortley, Almondbury, Highburton, Thurstonland and Dalton. There was a second eleven team organised which shows the enthusiasm there was, even at that early stage to get people joining up, becoming involved and competing for places in the team.

A couple of decades on and local cricket in Calderdale and Kirklees had progressed further with a new league being created. Kirkburton CC are one of the founding members of the league which is called the Huddersfield and District Alliance league. Matches became more competitive, without crossing the lines of sportsmanship, putting a real edge on encounters. In each league, everyone got to see who was the best at what, not just who finishes as champions at the end of it. Batting and Bowling averages can be worked across the year as well as fielding contributions.

Eleven years into the Huddersfield and District Alliance league and Kirkburton were champions. Kirkburton had ended the season on the same amount of points as title rivals Linthwaite Hall. A one off match between the pair took place at a neutral ground in the form of Armitage Bridge. A substantial amount of spectators were there to support their respective teams. Kirkburton won the toss but made little use of it as they failed to get a big score. However when Linthwaite Hall came out to bat the game quickly went away from them with early wickets. It was not long before the scoreboard showed half the team out for 2, in which they never recovered to mark a recovery. The star bowler, Barrett captured six wickets in five overs for three runs and Johnson took four wickets in four overs for two runs. This was a landmark in the clubs history that helped

capture the imagination of the town. When the players arrived back in Kirkburton they were greeted with a fantastic reception.

Six years later, Kirkburton won the league again which got them promoted to the Huddersfield and District league. In their first season in the new league they equited themselves very well by finishing fourth. The Second eleven had picked up remarkably well, as while remaining competitive they had always been in the shadow of the First eleven. In 1927 they won the Huddersfield and District Second Eleven Championship and Paddock Shield.

1933 was a vintage summer for the ever growing Kirkburton CC as the First eleven claimed the District League Section B Championship. They finished unbeaten in the season which was a remarkable feat as was scoring 355-9, which at the time was a new record for time-limited cricket.

Over the years from Pre-war time sport clubs developed and progressed gradually into the way they are now. As the Second World War approached the club started to pay players. Two of the clubs own players George Senior and Fred Haigh, signed as professionals. More honours in the league followed by media coverage in the form of the BBC for the clubs Sykes Cup Semi-Final tie against Broad Oak, which was played at the paddock.

The Commercialisation of modern sport started to take place at Kirkburton with Sponsorship money coming in as well as a Grant aid of £3,750 to help improve the ground. The club signed Danny Waugh, the brother of former Australian players Steve and Mark to help turn round

their fortunes on and off the field. The following year former England Test player Phil Defreitas signed for the club to help avoid relegation. Kirkburton started the 21st Century in good fashion winning the Sykes Cup three times and the Huddersfield and District League once.

Kirkburton's progress has seen them rise from playing non-league cricket to winning cup competitions and various league titles. Where can the club go to next? Who knows, but they have the stability that a cricket side needs to improve and remain competitive. They also have the quality to attract overseas players whoever they may be but they must not be complacent, by keeping up with the modern day sport they have the chance to go to the next level.