

## **Kirkheaton Cricket Club-the ground**

Surrounded by breathtaking scenery and unusual features, Kirkheaton is one of the most distinctive cricketing venues in Huddersfield.

The facilities are second to none and recent improvements have further enhanced the reputation of the cricket club. Only last year a considerable amount of money was spent refurbishing the pavilion. Showers have been installed in the dressing rooms along with new sinks and toilets.

The dated bar area has been transformed complete with an electronic till and new pumps. Kirkheaton also boast state-of-art training nets and outdoor covers.

Despite the modern upgrades Kirkheaton still retains some of the tradition features that make it such a distinctive setting.

Kirkheaton's ground is known as "Bankfield" and they moved to their current location in 1883. Previous to that they played at a ground called Fletcher's Croft.

Kirkheaton's clubhouse is perched on Nab Hill. On the horizon is Emley Mast. In the foreground just is the Lascelles cricket ground.

Hills, houses, trees, a football pitch, a road and several telegraph poles form the immediate environs. All in all, it is quite an exposed, isolated and windy venue.

In 1959 A.A Thomson wrote of the Kirkheaton ground.

“The playing surface is shallow; between the level, green turf and the hard rock underneath there is no more than a foot of earth. There are two pavilions: the old one with its high scoring-box has something of the air of a Noah’s ark. The other has a magic name, for it is called the “Hirst and Rhodes”. It was build with the stones of from a disused chapel”.

The ground has come on leaps and bounds since 1959 and today the playing area is flat. The turf is slightly raised and circle patterns on the outfield enhance the overall effect. Like many grounds in Huddersfield it is set at a high altitude level. In fact when looking out over Huddersfield Castle Hill it seems to be perched on the same level. There are not many grounds in Huddersfield that can claim to have such delightful views as Kirkheaton.

The actual playing field is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest in Huddersfield and looked after by groundsman Phil Hanson. He has occupied this position for 5 years and deserves a lot of credit for the superb condition of the pitch

He obviously puts a lot of time and effort into his sole as groundsman and commented:

“Looking after the pitch is a full time job. In the summer the wicket needs to be rolled and treated twice a week. There are also the practice wickets to prepare. It can sometimes take me more than three hours to mow the outfield as we don’t have a sit-on mower.”

The main pavilion at Kirkheaton blends in well with the enchanting backdrop. The old brickwork and windows is a reminder of the steep tradition the club has.

The foundations were laid on the 26 August 1950 and the pavilion is described by some as a “glorified bungalow”. , which pays due homage to George Herbert Hirst and Wilfred Rhodes on it’s wall.

It looks out over the Bowling Green and a “cake rota” is pinned to the notice board near the main entrance. Inside the famous history of the club is there for all to see. The names of former captains are displayed on a wooden plaque hung above the bar. Former great players George Herbert Hirst and Wilfred Rhodes are paid a tribute on walls. The trophy cabinet is pretty full and also displays a copy of 100 years at Bankfield, the club’s centenary history.

The changing room block is separate, a rather cute two story construction, with chairs in front. Again it complements the rest of the ground with whitewashed wall and wooden window sills. A low curved white wall- an excellent wind breaker- runs between the buildings and there are red and blue benches around the ground perimeter.

The ground also provided a spacious car park for the players and spectators. Although there is not much protection if a big hitting batsmen decided to loft one in that direction.

The multi functional score-box is located just in front of the car park. It was donated by Mr M.E Broadbent, club president in 1980. It is also a well-appointed venue, with permanent outdoor nets and sightscreens.

Committee member Eric Hepworth has seen many changes to the ground while he has been involved with the club.

He said, "In the 20 years I have been on the committee I have never seen the ground looking so splendid. It is a credit to everyone involved with the club on how much we achieved. It's now a ground to be proud of."

Kirkheaton C.C is certainly a club that has grown in stature over recent years. They are moving in the right direction and have a ground to compare to any in the league.

Kirkheaton remains a rather distinguished cricking venue, and is 'a pleasant outing for an afternoon's cricket', as one league handbook put it recently. Today it is certainly popular with the local cricket watchers and players alike.