

KIRKHEATON CRICKET CLUB

History

Kirkheaton Cricket Club is an amateur cricket club in the heart of Huddersfield.

Today they play in the Cedar Court Conference in the Huddersfield and District League but their journey to where they are today is an intriguing story.

It is widely thought that Kirkheaton Cricket Club came to existence in 1860.

However, this is a matter of debate as some researchers have claimed that it was in fact a few years later. At this stage they played their cricket at Whitley Hall but by 1883 the club moved to its present ground at Bankfield, then called Fletcher's Croft. It was not until 1880 that the club became known as Kirkheaton Cricket Club. Up until that time it was Kirkheaton Beaumonts.

In 1889 Kirkheaton won their first major cup competition, the Lumb Cup. They beat Cliffe End by 5 wickets in the final. One of the heroes was George Herbert Hirst who, along with Wilfred Rhodes, is the most famous and successful player in Kirkheaton's history. It was with the help of these two that Kirkheaton won the Huddersfield and District League in 1896, having only joined in 1893.

In 1921 the progress the club had made and the success it had enjoyed was reflected by being able to buy their ground at Bankfield outright. In 1926 the club carried on this success by winning the 'double' – the League and the Sykes Cup. They became only the third team in history to achieve this. Kirkheaton Cricket Club's Treasurer, Eric Hepworth claims, "Winning the 'double' was massive for a club like ours. It

really put us on the map.” The club then won another trophy for the first time in 1932 – the prestigious Paddock Shield.

When the Second World War came along in 1939 it had major repercussions for Kirkheaton Cricket Club. Firstly, it meant that the new pavilion’s construction could not be completed until 1953. However, more importantly, it placed the club in serious financial difficulty. A Special General Meeting was held to discuss the matter and appeals were made to the whole of Kirkheaton. The financial difficulties had come about as a result of many of the members being called up to the Forces and the War making it impossible to hold fund-raising events which they had always relied on. The club was on the brink of extinction but the appeal worked. The village rallied to lend their support and by the time the War had finished in 1945 Kirkheaton had won the Sykes Cup for a second time. Administration Secretary of the Huddersfield League and former Kirkheaton Chairman Philip Earnshaw explains, “This was a really special thing to happen to such a small village. It was before my time but my father would always tell me about how great it was to be part of such a tight-knit community. This really demonstrates how everyone was pulling together in those post-war years.”

The erection of the new pavilion, which is still in use today, in 1953 was a significant achievement for the club. There were many problems, post-war, that had to be overcome. The scarcity of manpower and building materials meant that no new timber could be used in the structure and no building labour employed during working hours. Also, the building was originally priced at £1,000 but eventually cost £2,000. These rising costs meant that the ground had to be mortgaged to the Co-operative Permanent Building Society.

The popularity of Hirst and Rhodes at Kirkheaton can be seen by the fact that they laid the foundation stones for the pavilion. At the opening of the pavilion they were presented with silver trowels.

1969 may be known to most people as the year that man landed on the moon, but to anyone who resides in Kirkheaton it is known as the year that their cricket club won the Hopkinson Trophy for the first time. This was very important for the club as they had not won anything for a long time, other than the 1st XI Section 'B' in 1953 and 1960 and the 2nd XI Section 'A' in 1962. At last they were beginning to rebuild their reputation.

The years between 1973 and 1984 were very important for the club in terms of the extension of the ground. First they built a new tea room near the pavilion and then they followed that up with a new scoreboard. They then extended the pavilion by adding a new lounge, toilets and stock room. Also between these years they won the Sykes Cup and Hopkinson Trophy again and the F.E. Greenwood Ground Trophy for the first time.

Kirkheaton's recent history has been fairly non-existent. Other than winning the 1st XI Section 'B' in 1997 and the 1st XI Conference in 2002, nothing of real note has happened between 1984 and the present day. Former player and Chairman Hepworth said of the club's recent plight, "Kirkheaton is a sleeping giant. We just need something to come along and wake us up. And soon!" Having seen the ambition of the club first-hand it is safe to say that the glory days are not far away.