

In the Vicinity: Friends and Foes

By Matt Elston

Skelmanthorpe sits almost equidistant from Huddersfield, Wakefield and Barnsley. A place with what sometimes sounds like its own charms and characteristics, Skelmanthorpe enjoys the company of numerous cricketing neighbours. These adversaries have locked horns on numerous occasions in both cup and league competitions yet the desire to get one over on one another is unflinching.

Rivals Shepley were founded in 1871 and have since enjoyed 136 years of local cricket. Shepley have seen greats such as Leonard Battye drive the club forward to where it sits today. Shepley have a strong squad of players today, enhanced by the signing of 20-year-old Australian all-rounder Trent Copeland for the 2007 season. Shepley hopes will hang on the performances of this young Aussie who in 2005-2006, while still with St. George Cricket Club, was named player of the year.

Around the same time as Shepley CC was born, other clubs round Skelmanthorpe were finding theirs. Shelley were founded in 1871 and Nortonthorpe in 1877. Shelley has seen the likes of Bob Haigh, ex-player and club official, Frank Wadsworth and Harry Metcalfe develop the reputation of their club. Nortonthorpe clinched a hat-trick of Central League titles in 1965. Their greatest player is widely considered to be Bob Blackburn who took 101 wickets in 1923.



The Kirkburton pavilion

Kirkburton, or 'Burton as they are known to their fans, have a good relationship with Skelmanthorpe. The Betty Trigg Memorial 20-20 has helped build this friendship. Kirkburton among others have been keen to get involved with this fundraising effort for the late Betty Trigg. In 2003 'Burton became Sykes Cup winners for the third time in four summers. They also famously used an old corporation bus as a pavilion after a fire destroyed their current pavilion during 1960.

Denby Dale, another local rival, recently developed a new state-of-the-art pavilion which was opened in August 1999. In 1982 Dale's ground collapsed after railway sleepers supporting the ground from a nearby river gave way. Messrs Lucas and Owen are well known figures around the ground at Denby Dale.

Cumberworth United, it is thought, were formed after a merger between the Young Men's Bible XI and the Foresters Arms Inn around 1890. Completing a hat-trick of Central League titles in 2004 has been a highlight for this village side. The hero around Cumberworth is Friend Allsop. A cricketing colossus in the early twentieth century, the Allsop Cup is named in his memory 'to perpetuate the memory of a great sportsman'.

Spectators at SCC can expect a ferocious encounter should any of these rivals step out onto the wicket. Shepley's nail-biting win at Skelmanthorpe in 1993 was just such a match. Losing to a six from the last ball of Ronnie Irani's over was a bitter pill to swallow for the Lidget Laners - but that's the cutting edge that local derby matches often carry.