

AROUND THE WICKET

with historian Peter Davies

THURSTONLAND CRICKET CLUB: the 14th in a fascinating series of cricket histories

Men From the Hill's proud cup tradition

THURSTONLAND Cricket Club was founded in 1874.

A year later, in 1875, important work was carried out on the ground prior to the season starting, with £2 12s being spent on labour (3s per person per day).

During the 1875 season the club received a total of 2s 10d in gate money.

Before moving to their present HQ on Marsh Hall Lane, the club had two other homes: Haw Cliff Lane, in the centre of the village, opposite the Rose and Crown pub and close to the post office, and Disney's Field, a local farmer's field.

The first references to cricket matches involving Thurstonland appear in the local press in 1876.

Take, for example, the fixture against New Mill on 6 May 1876 (the scorecard for this match is still in existence, somewhere).

Star bowler W Thewlis took 5 wickets or more on seven occasions during that season.

Special challenge matches started to be played in and around 1878, with the loser buying supper for the victor!

At the same time, top players W Thewlis and W Coldwell were taking part in single-wicket matches.

The year 1900 marked the dawn of the twentieth century. It was also a significant year for Thurstonland Cricket Club. They appeared in the Lumb Cup semi-final, but lost to the holders St Andrews.

They also moved into what would become their permanent home, Marsh Hall Lane.

Once they were safely installed, the more energetic members of the club set about levelling the playing area.

The testimonies of former players indicate that you weren't allowed to play for the village team unless you'd chipped in to help the groundsman.

We are told that, 'In addition, the Rev Jerome, the local parson, was on several occasions able to give assistance with a wheelbarrow to move the large mounds of earth.'

Thurstonland first appeared in the Alliance League in 1902. They were inspired by Beau Charlesworth, who won the League Bowling Medal that summer with an average of 29.15.

In 1909 they won the Huddersfield and District Alliance League, beating Kirkburton in a 'deciding match' after both clubs had finished the season with the same number of points.

In this early period the local newspaper used to refer to the Thurstonlanders as the 'Men from the Hill'.

Teams from the Colne Valley often complained about playing at Marsh Hall Lane 'because of the inconvenience of getting to Thurstonland and doubts were also raised about the suitability of the field and changing accommodation'.

Thurstonland switched to the Huddersfield and District League in 1910 - and spent four seasons in the competition. They left on the eve of the First World War, 1913.

Following on from their short spell in the Huddersfield and District League, the club played one season in the Dearne Valley League (1914), and then joined the Huddersfield Central League at the end of the Great War (1919) - at a cost of 10 shillings!

In 1920 Marsh Hall Lane played host to the Huddersfield Central League 2nd XI final - a huge accolade. Unfortunately, though, the club made a loss of 7s 8d on the occasion.

Around this time, the club had connections



Thurstonland Cricket Team - 1906
Back Row - B. Charlesworth, J. Hall, B. Kaye, S. Walker, G. Hirt, J. Maddy Row - E. Gill, J. Penistone, F. Lee, J. Lodge, W. H. Potter, Front Row - C. Mitchell, S. Fox.

with Stockmoor Ladies cricket team, and actually lent them cricketing equipment.

In 1921 Thurstonland reached the Huddersfield Central League final, played between the leaders of each section. But they lost to Rowley Hill.

Two years later, in 1923, a fire at the local joinery works of Albert Gill was a major blow because inside was parked the wagonette which used to convey the team and its kit to many of its matches. The fire occurred on the Monday morning, before the kit had been removed from the previous Saturday's match.

Some cricket clubs are a bit tardy in paying their annual ground rent, but not Thurstonland.

They pay theirs as smartly as they can, because for almost three-quarters of a century it has remained constant: in 1928 the Norton Trust demanded a 'pepper corn' payment of five shillings.

So, today the club treasurer writes out a first-class, the stamp costs more than the actual rent payment!

The club celebrated its Diamond Jubilee in 1934. They staged a special carnival, which enabled debts of £50 to be cleared, and a profit of £33 accrued.

On 5 September 1936 Thurstonland forfeited league points for failing to raise a team, and in 1937 the club protested about the new law!

The 1st XI won the Huddersfield Central League knockout competition, the Holden Cup, in 1938.

They were also runners-up in the league, losing to Penistone Y.S. in a play-off after finishing level on points.

In 1959 considerable work was carried out to help improve the drainage of the ground. This included laying pipes, phosphate and slag.

A year later, in 1960, Gerald Oldham won the league bowling prize, taking 42 wickets at an average of 6.45. He, fittingly, became the first recipient of the Geoffrey Booth Trophy which had been donated by the club.

The 1960s saw important developments at Marsh Hall Lane:

A new tea hut was purchased from W Townsend and Sons of Shelley for £50 and planning permission was sought to erect it next to the pavilion.

Delays in securing planning permission meant that the wooden hut could not be erected as it had begun to decay.

The council was asked if a similar structure built with 'rock faced concrete blocks' could be erected on the same foundations. This tea hut was subsequently built over the next three years.

A 'one armed bandit' was installed in the

THURSTONLAND clinched a Huddersfield Central League double and Capt. Hagan took the Section 'B' title as was announced the preliminary stages of matches.

ALSO: Capt. Hagan... (text continues with details of the match and player statistics)

Wesleyans fail to avoid drop

First title triumph for Thurstonland

... (text continues with details of the Wesleyans match and Thurstonland's victory)

MEMORIES: Thurstonland cricket line-up from 1906 and how the first championship was reported in 1987



'tent', profits being shared with Walters on a 50/50 basis.

Club funds were also significantly enhanced by the commencement of a 'Forecast Pool' weekly draw which cost 6d per forecast and raised £253 3s 6d.

Brian Kettlewell signed as professional and was paid £36 for his services in his first season. In his second summer, in addition to his playing duties, he was asked to coach one night per week at the club at a rate of 10 shillings per session.

In 1967 the 1st XI won the Allsop Cup - the Huddersfield Central League knockout competition.

Thurstonland netted the Section B title in 1980 and also in 1982. They then went on to bag the Tinker Cup in 1985 and the Allsop Cup in 1985 and 1986.

The year 1987 turned out to be the most successful season in the history of the club. The 1st XI won the Huddersfield Central League Section A title, for the first time, and also the Allsop Cup, the 1st XI knockout competition. Meantime, the 2nd XI finished top of Section D.

'The Men from the Hill' scooped the Tinker Cup trophy in seasons 1989, 1992, 1995 and 1998 - a memorable sequence.

In 1996 the 1st XI finished as Premier Division Champions, while the 2nd XI claimed the Section 'B' title.

The Thurstonland C.C. website, designed and edited by 1st XI skipper Lee Booth, must be one of the most impressive cricket club websites in the country, and in 2005 the club was the subject of a special Radio 4 documentary on village cricket.

So things look very bright. Club secretary Andrew Pearson comments:



TRIUMPH: Top: The Thurstonland side which clinched the Allsop Cup in 1967 and Above: the club's attractive pavilion and changing rooms

'The club is now an integral part of village life. The ground hosts the annual village gala, school and church events and meetings of the local playgroup.'

'We've even catered for 90th birthdays and wedding receptions. For a small village club, I feel we've got very good social facilities.'

'We've got 1st and 2nd XIs, plus teams at under-17, under-15 and under-13 levels, so things are very healthy at the moment.'

● Readers are asked to contact Peter Davies on 01484 472405 or via p.j.davies@hud.ac.uk if they have any more photos or information relating to local cricket history.