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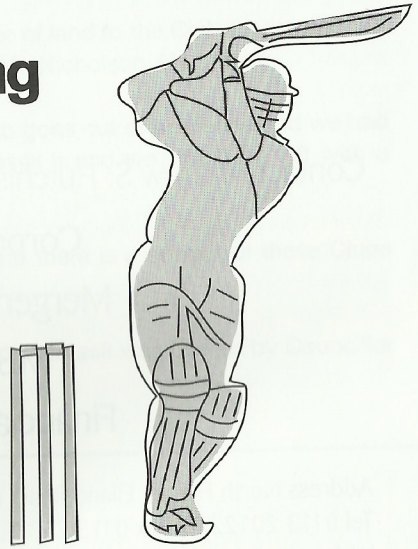
History in the making

Celebrating 120 years of Scholes Cricket Club.



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1920 - 1970 - Paul Ibbotson

One dark December night last year, I found myself snuggling up to Clifford's ancient gas fire, listening to his crystal clear memories of a lifetime's involvement with Scholes Cricket Club. As I glanced round his cosy 200-year-old cottage, I wasn't surprised to see his Life Vice-president Award and a photo of Clifford with the Byrom Shield, taking pride of place on the wall alongside his treasured old family photographs. Scholes C.C. has been an important part of Clifford's life for over 80 years, and I was there to try to get at least some of his remarkable recollections down on paper and share them with readers of this booklet.

Clifford was born in Scholes on 4th May 1913, and he says he has a vague recollection of his Dad holding him in his arms dressed in his First World War uniform. His home was then 21 Chapelgate, the very house, adjacent to the ground, which Clifford and his friends sit against at the bottom of the field today. The Oldroyds lived at number 21 for his first twelve years, and although Scholes had no Junior teams at the time, Clifford still spent most of his early summers playing and watching cricket at Chapelgate. Of course in those days there were no motorised mowers and he thinks the council came to cut the outfield once a month. The square, however, was the club's problem, and although I'm sure they did their best, the low scores of those days surely reflect wickets that were, in Clifford's words, 'shocking – it were flying at your face!' The wicket was cut with the help of 'Dobbin', the Ellis's family horse, after the four large leather shoes that were kept at the club were put over its hooves. The horse then traipsed up and down the square pulling a shaft with a cutter on the end, and two men hanging on for dear life trying to guide the device. The Ellis family, by the way, gave the club many fine players down the years, including Gordon, Eric, Charles and Stanley, who, despite those dodgy wickets, made more than 10,000 runs for Scholes in the Central League. Clifford himself took on Groundsman duties for several periods and remembers doing one year alongside Stanley Mellor, when their joint fee for the season was all of £2-10s! In those days they had no expensive marl to repair the wickets and Clifford used to go down to Scar Lane and pile enough sods into his wheelbarrow to get the job done!

It seems that fundraising was as big an issue 80 years ago as it is now for local cricket. The club had to raise the funds to pay for everybody's kit, unlike today, and there was no bar to provide a steady income. Clifford recalls walking round the village aged 16 with a friend, knocking on every door they could find, asking for contributions to keep the club going. 3d – 6d – a shilling or two bob were all gratefully received, and half a crown got you a Vice-presidency! By then, the family had moved to his home at 12 Paris and Clifford had followed his father into the textiles trade at Graham and Potts in Cartbridge. Aged 14, his first wage was the princely sum of 7/6d! Going back to the cricket, you have to wonder how the pampered prima donnas of today would have coped without beer, having to bring

their own tea and having no water for washing. Indeed, Clifford clearly recalls the Denby Dale players washing in the dyke by the ground after games!

Clifford stayed with his first employers for 24 years and as he grew up he developed into a decent left-handed batter; he averaged a very respectable 18 in 1944 (remember those spiteful wickets folks). He suddenly recalled the First XI being a man short at Clayton West, and Clifford ended up 'borrowing somebody's specs to play in – and we tied t'match!' In the earliest days of his career, he remembers 10 men going in a large taxi at a shilling a head to away matches, while the more well to do Herbert Armitage took the team's tackle in his car!

Clifford joined John Shaw's Munitions during the Second World War in 1943 and ended his working days at Copley Marshall in New Mill. Although he has lived in Scholes for all of his 88 years, he's no stay-at-home professional Yorkshireman. He's travelled to Spain, Greece and Switzerland, and once took a cruise on the Oriana, when the legendary Ena Sharples was a fellow passenger. He has of course seen the village grow rapidly, and looks back fondly to the time when 'you knew all your neighbours'. Adam Shaw's working farm was directly opposite his house, the Post Office was a bustling Co-op and there was a third pub on St George's Road alongside the Boot 'n Shoe and the Working Men's Club. He's been a Trustee of Scholes WMC for the last 20 years and a member for an incredible 70 years.

When I asked Clifford about the best players he's seen at the club, he of course came up with a list of names central to the history and development of Scholes C.C. The aforementioned Herbert Armitage first came to mind, he was a director at Copley Marshall's, a fine batter and he had a car! He became Club President and was a fine servant to the club. The names began to roll freely off Clifford's tongue – Percy Lee, James Arthur Tinker, Tom Turner and Herbert Thackery. Jeff Kaye was an excellent all-rounder, George Holmes a deadly bowler (just ask Mel Booth!), and Ronnie Smith and Harry Schofield were much feared by opponents in their day. Ted Booth was a leading all-rounder in the 50's and he also remembered a superb pro by the name of Raymond Hallas. He mentioned a superb century in the Sykes Cup by the older of the Booth brothers, Dave, as Scholes took on the big boys from the Huddersfield League for the first time and beat them, and then a new generation of talent arrived in the 70's. Mel Booth, Daz and Nicky Brook, Chris Hatton and Martin Brown all grew up together at the club. Steve Booth became Chairman and suddenly the club was clearly going places. By Herculean effort the new changing rooms were funded and built, and entry to the Huddersfield League achieved. Clifford clearly recalls Steve Booth telling him he'd signed Paul Wharton from Huddersfield and Lockwood and how significant his arrival proved to be for the club, as 'Henry's' superb strokeplay and astute captaincy propelled us onwards. Clifford fondly recalled our first overseas player; Aussie Glen Howard and he rated Indian pace bowler Rashid Patel, who did a fine job until going home injured. And Clifford enjoyed the company of the classy Indian international Chetan Sharma, whose superb all-round skills first kept us in Section A, and then were crucial to the

fantastic Sykes Cup winning campaign of 1996. All the time we were improving the old ground and the facilities and wisely recruiting new players to slot in alongside homegrown talent such as the legendary Coddy, as Dave Weston followed Paul Wharton for four fantastic years as skipper, and was himself succeeded by Ashley Pamment, the present incumbent. Of course the final piece of the jigsaw finally arrived in 1998, in the shape of one of the very best young batsmen in the world, the truly brilliant Wasim Jaffer, who often seems to be 'out of this world' as Clifford calls him. And now we're two-times champions of the Huddersfield League. Clifford can hardly believe how far we've come – but my it's been a long road – for Clifford especially.

As we came to the end of our long chat, I noticed a graze on Clifford's forehead and was instantly transported back six or seven years to a game at Kirkheaton. I was only five yards away when Chetan Sharma, unable to stop on the gravel surrounding the pitch, careered into our frail octogenarian at full pace and Clifford hit the deck with a sickening thud. An ambulance whisked the stunned and bleeding Clifford off to the Infirmary and we were all worried sick in the clubhouse later that night. We needn't have worried – Clifford strolled into the clubhouse at 10pm with stitches inserted and a big bandage round his head, merely complaining of a slight 'heedwhack' (that's headache folks!), and ordered his customary pint of Tetleys. His great friend (who sadly passed away a few years ago and whom he still misses) Tom Booth, had brought him back to his beloved Scholes, and Rex Cartwright, our scorer, was mightily relieved to stump up for Clifford's first pint of the day.

Many thanks to Keith Bonney for his generous support in the production of this commemorative brochure.