

1987-93 - Steve Booth

The decision had been made. Scholes Cricket Club was to join the highest echelons of local cricket by joining the Huddersfield League in 1988. Notice was duly given and Scholes began their last season as a central league club on 26th April 1987.

How could a small village, all amateur side, with £1200 in the bank, an annual surplus of less than £1,000, an old portacabin with no hot water for changing rooms and a tiny ground make the transition to be able to win, for two years in succession, the championship of the Huddersfield League? Here is part of the story:

The last season in the central league was something of an anti-climax, the 1st XI performed reasonably well finishing championship runners up, the 2nd XI ended mid table and the under 17's, the club's only junior side, led by the talented Anthony Coldwell won the Armitage Cup. There was undoubtedly the talent in the club to do well in the Huddersfield League, but new blood was needed.

Committee men: Steve and Mel Booth (Captain and Vice) and Harry Turner (Mr. Reliable) approached several experienced league players during the winter of 1987/88. Terry Johnson, from Holmfirth; Brian Turner, nephew of Harry; Alan Hinchcliffe from Honley, Daryl Brook returning to the fold, Chas Ponsford, a Channel Islands refugee and Tim (Lumsden) Collier all joined the club.

The committee had made the decision that no professionals should be paid and all club surpluses would be ploughed back into improving the ground and facilities. These improvements were led with a passion by Andrew (Bez) Berry. Another key agreement made by the committee was that the club would attract its players by being the most friendly and social club in the league.

The first Huddersfield League season dawned, history beckoned and the changing room, pitch, walls, tearoom and bar had all been cleaned and spruced up. On 16th April 1988 the first XI played Hall Bower away and the seconds entertained the Castle Hiller's second string at Scholes. A weakened first team, with long serving batsman Paul (Demps) Livesey making exactly 50 and Terry (Dactyl) Johnson taking 5 wickets in his debut match ably supported by Chris Hatton and Brian Turner, won. Other than Slaithwaite in the Sykes Cup the side didn't lose a match until the 28th May when they came up against Indian test player Sanjeev Sharma of Golcar who, coming in at the 26th over proceeded to hit 133 n.o. – welcome to class and the main difference between Central and Huddersfield League cricket!

At the end of the season the 1st XI had finished a creditable sixth in Section B and the second's, captained by Johnny (Hotdog) Roberts achieved even higher status by finishing fourth. Steve Booth topped the batting, Nicky Brook scored over 500 runs and Terry Johnson and Chris Hatton took 43 and 46 wickets respectively. For the two's newcomer Ponsford took the batting honours and legend Donald Ellis captured 57 wickets.

During this mid winter break Captain Steve Booth received a chance phone call

from Linthwaite's Trevor Holmes, 'do you want an overseas player? We've got two and one of them, an Aussie, isn't good enough for us, however I know him - he's a great lad and he's in England'. A few days later in the back room of the Red Lion Inn, Steve and Mel Booth, Harry Turner, secretary Harry Whittle, Duncan Dyson, chairman Bert Hellawell and Steve Oscroft, interviewed a pale, slight, chain-smoking Australian. After protracted negotiations involving no money, many beers, free accommodation and guaranteed building site work, the club had its first overseas player. A very confident 'all rounder': Glenn Howard.

In March 1989 another newcomer to the club, who had played half a season for the second XI, asked if he could present a business and fundraising plan to the committee. H.J.Chadwick convinced the committee that 'The Australian International Castlemain Festival' to be held on Sunday 4th June would be a huge success and make the club its fortune.

Expectations were high for the 1989 season, both teams had strengthened and in addition to Glenn, Mark Guymer a former Dorset player had been added to the squad. Also an under 13 side had been formed for the first time in the club's history. However, minds were very much on the festival and virtually every club member had been allocated a role in planning and organisation on the day. H.J. was driving the event forward with Harry Turner keeping a close control on expenditure. The night before the festival, a hugely successful pig roast and celidh was held. The following day held fine and all the guests including Harry Gratton, Carlisle Best, and the Australian High commissioner turned up; the only missing person was Clive Lloyd, the main celebrity, who appeared on TV in London on the morning he was supposed to be at Scholes. When raffle and sponsorship monies were added to the two day's income, in the region of £5000 had been generated for the club. An incredible effort.

The season itself was mostly a repeat of the previous one. The 1st XI finished in sixth position in section B and the seconds ended fifth. Australian Glenn Howard, after enduring the early season nickname of 'Boomerang' - you send him out to bat and he comes straight back! - redeemed himself by scoring over 500 runs. Nicky Brook topped the batting averages with over 600 runs and Chris Hatton and Terry Johnson took 41 and 45 wickets respectively. For the 2nd XI Paul Livesey and John Edward Belfield won the club's batting and bowling awards respectively. The club's then record score of 307-6 was also set against Thongsbridge at Chapelgate.

In 1990 Simon Kenworthy and Andy Bell were signed to spearhead the first's bowling attack, Glenn Howard decided not the return to Australia and John Belfield was elected second XI captain, heralding a reign of unparalleled success for the two's.

In the end, the 1st XI finished third, just missing out on promotion, the seconds ended a disappointing sixth, but they did reach the club's first Huddersfield League final, narrowly losing to Broad Oak in the Paddock Shield final in September. Individually there were some outstanding performances: Steve Booth and Glenn

Howard both scored well over 1000 runs, Anthony Coldwell hit 44 sixes and Simon Kenworthy took 55 wickets. Mel Booth and Chris Hatton took the second XI batting and bowling awards.

One major highlight of 1990 was a glorious summer tour to Guernsey and Jersey where a party of 43 players, families and supporters enjoyed, what has been described as the best tour/ holiday ever. This tour was the precursor to several others that followed: the Isle of Wight in 1991, Guernsey again in 1992 and Ireland in 1993 and 1994.

Off the field, building on the monies raised at the festival, the committee had established the finances; approximately £30,000, through sponsors, grants and loans to build a new pavilion. Immediately after the last match of the 1990 season the old changing rooms were ceremonially bulldozed and fired. Led by John Belfield, Simon Kenworthy and Dave Booth (with a lot of help from Ivan Conroy), the club began to build a new, large pavilion and score box. This was achieved through the winter months and the pavilion was officially opened by the mayor and local MP during the 1991 season. This event was also coupled, on 14th April 1991, with a commemorative centenary match against a Holmfirth/Yorkshire side to celebrate the first game that had ever been played at Chapelgate, one hundred years before. The start to the 1991 season was tinged with sadness due to Harry Turner's untimely death. A kind and hardworking servant of the club he was mourned and sadly missed by all at Scholes.

The club had strengthened further, Paul Wharton joined from the Huddersfield club, with him came pace bowler Ervin Clarke. Doncaster batsman Phil Clarke also joined along with Ritchie Howarth from Holmbridge and former town footballer Ian Bray. Steve Booth and John Belfield were retained as captains, the juniors had full contingents and the season looked set.

However, things are never dull at Scholes, and, unbeknown to the club, Glenn Howard the overseas player had well outstayed his visa, by about three years. The police and special branch were after him, and, after several attempts they caught him, hiding in the pavilion that was due to be officially opened the following day. Within 24 hours he was deported back to Australia. Glenn had become one of the most popular men in the valley.

Glenn was later replaced by Ritchie Webb a fellow Australian. For the first eleven the season was disappointing, finishing ninth in Section B, the worst performance to date with what had promised to be the best side. Paul Wharton topped the batting with over 500 runs and Simon Kenworthy once again headed the bowling with 60 wickets. The Second XI however were going great guns and comfortably won the section B championship and promotion. Chas Ponsford averaged over 50 and former first eleven left-armed Terry Johnson took 61 wickets and the second XI league bowling prize.

1992 saw the club elect a new captain, the experienced campaigner from Shepley, Stuart Greaves. He took over from Steve Booth, who became chairman. Paul

Wharton was appointed vice captain. John Belfield and Dave Wild led the seconds and an excellent committee was formed, including Mabel Marsh, Neil Gledhill, Sue and Bob Joynson, Graeme Dodgson and Duncan Dyson – new blood to achieve what was now seen as crucial for the club – promotion to Section A. Brian Cartwright remained as the club's avuncular president. Another overseas player Neil Fletcher, the club's first New Zealander had been recruited to strengthen the challenge.

The club also had established 20 friendly fixtures, ensuring that all at Scholes could be guaranteed a game. The usual array of social events was also in place.

It was the second eleven who led the way, winning the double. An outstanding achievement, that brought acclaim and honours to the club. Ashley Pamment and Dave Wild had starred in a tense final, beating Skelmanthorpe away, and Mark Guymmer, averaging over 60 with the bat and Ervin with 42 wickets led the way towards the Section A title.

The firsts finished a moderate fourth, six points behind the promotion place. Only Paul Wharton excelled, scoring 950 runs at an average of 52 and also winning the bowling prize with 21 wickets. Paul was also selected for the Huddersfield league side – an honour not bestowed on any previous Scholes' player.

The close season before April 1993 saw a flurry of activity. The club now had the will to succeed as a Premier league team. Paul Wharton was appointed first eleven captain; understandably John Belfield retained his second XI position. The committee made the decision to appoint their first overseas professional, Indian test player Rashid Patel, and he proved the catalyst, taking over 80 wickets, in winning promotion in 1993.

This article is about the transition from central league club to a competitive section A Huddersfield League team. What are the main factors in this achievement?

The vision, plan and will to do it, held during these 6-7 years by the club and its committee.

Understanding what type of club Scholes was to be and ensuring that the fine balance between social and playing strength are essential to any club's future.

Making sure that the ground, the facilities, the management, the finances and, most importantly, the heart of the club are in place, and sound, before paying players.

Establishing a social and family club atmosphere second to none; genuine spirit, friendship, fun loyalty and love of the game.

Building a whole club, a strong ethos of belonging at all levels, ages and abilities. Hard work by a large number of people, several mentioned above but many many more who have contributed in many ways.

And, finally, some luck – what if it had rained on 4th June 1989?