

TCC MATCH REPORTS 2008

Saturday April 26th v. Thornhill & Westborough (away)

Double Nelson sees win hopes sail away

For the second successive season the visit to Thornhill saw us coincide with the home team hosting a wedding reception. The role of bridesmaid rather than the bride was once again the allocated role for the first team facing a testing opening to the season with early games against sides finishing in the top three in 2007. After the understandable league cancellation of the previous weekend's opening fixtures it was a pleasant surprise to have spring sunshine as play began. With the departure of John Eastwood to Australia for work reasons and Jack Oldham to Shelley two new signings, Chris Flanagan and Ryan Hunter, were welcomed in making their debuts for the club. The ground looked in decent condition considering the rainfall over the past few days although the top part of the boundary was roped off to protect the dampest part whilst the wicket was pitched at the bottom the square giving a short boundary and the prospect of well struck shots disturbing the revelries of the wedding party.

The first victim of the season went to Jordan Thackray who trapped the consistent scoring Chris Day lbw for 14 and this was the mode of dismissal for Dave Richmond (9), trapped by David Rishton and home captain Nick Finnigan (14) who was Ashley Haywood's first wicket of the new campaign. The slowish wicket meant that anything short was readily punished and Messrs Griffiths (51), Cheesborough (42) and Gommersall (67*) all cashed in with uncompromising pulls and back foot drives. Several overs had four or five good deliveries only for the good work to count for nothing as the other balls were dispatched with relish for four or six.

Just as it seemed that the scoring rate had been slowed down a burst of runs followed so that the total kept mounting in an unexpectedly brisk fashion for the season's opener. Greg Holmes was the honourable exception as he rediscovered the accuracy which deserted him at times in 2007 and his 12 overs saw him finish with 2/24, with ten of those runs coming from his final six balls. Without his sterling efforts the target of 222 for 6 could have been considerably higher. Former first class umpire David Shepherd would have enjoyed the final figure, accompanying it by his familiar skipping on the spot.

Chris Flanagan and Eddie Haigh began the reply watchfully in the face of consistent bowling by Finnigan and Motala although two sumptuous drives for four by Chris and a short arm pull to the bottom boundary by Eddie saw the score to 19 in the tenth over when the latter succumbed, bowled attempting to pull a ball which hurried through a little low but the absence of footwork would have seen early elimination from any version of Come Dancing, whether a celebrity version or one for the lower orders. Tom Sykes briefly threatened permanence before being judged lbw when he seemed to be well forward. Ashley Haywood then joined Chris Flanagan who was mixing watchful defence with some pleasingly fluent boundary shots. Just when the latter seemed set for a half century on his Thurstonland debut he got the faintest edge to one of Chris Leathley's flighted left arm deliveries and departed for 39.

The half way point of the innings came with the score on 81/3 and in spite of the best efforts of Ashley, eventually caught at deep mid also for 39, and Joe Law (19)

who had the misfortune to see two huge blows to long on fall just short of being sixes and then seeing the ball refuse to make any forward momentum after hitting the ground, the innings faded away somewhat. Ryan Hunter managed 12, aided by two thick edged fours all along the ground, but it was left to Lee Booth (7*) to help the team to one point by playing out the last over after last man Jordan Thackray had studiously stifled the final two deliveries of the 44th with fielders clustered round the bat. The final Thurstonland score was 147 for 9.

Team: Chris Flanagan; Eddie Haigh; Tom Sykes (w/k); Ashley Haywood; Sam Oldham; Joe Law; Lee Booth; Greg Holmes; Ryan Hunter; David Rishton; Jordan Thackray.

Saturday May 3rd v. Hoylandswaine (home)

Great effort, shame about the result

For the second successive Saturday the weather was favourable for early season cricket in marked contrast to 2007 when the worst of the elements seemed to be reserved for the weekend. The visit of last year's champions was the second game of a demanding opening programme. The absence at a wedding of Hoylandswaine's Ian Simon was tempered by the return after almost a decade in the Drakes League of Darren Lockwood and our visitors are likely to be at or near the top when everything concludes in September.

The first thirty overs provided a compelling contest. Thurstonland openers Chris Flanagan and Eddie Haigh played watchfully in trying to establish the innings. Initially run scoring was slow against Danny and Tony Mulhall who gave little away. Patience, however, was rewarded as first Chris and then Eddie began to punish the occasional loose ball and the total began to mount. The former again played with a mixture of soft hands in studied defence and well timed off drives and pulls whilst the latter began to show signs of a return to the consistency which marked his excellent 2006 season in a virtually chanceless display. Darren Lockwood bowled twelve overs of spin in place of Danny Mulhall whilst Liam Dickinson and young Perry Youell had turns at the pavilion end. Just before reaching a hard working fifty, Chris Flanagan was dropped on the boundary on two occasions by Scott Marsh but the century opening stand followed soon after. It took the introduction of Ryan Copley to provide the breakthrough for the visitors just after the 30th over when Chris (51) got a top edge to an attempted hook and was caught at square leg by Darren Lockwood. The total was exactly 100. Eddie Haigh also looked set for a deserved half century when soon after he was adjudged lbw, also to Ryan Copley, for 47.

The remaining overs saw Tom Sykes play a good innings of 28 as he kept the score ticking along with some forceful and well timed shots although an early end to Ashley Haywood's knock came when he could not regain his ground at the bowler's end after having been sent back after a change of mind about attempting a quick single. Joe Law was promoted in the order and, in his usual way, was quickly into his stride striking the ball cleanly in compiling a brisk 12 not out leaving the visitors with a target of 152 for 4. It had been a battling performance against one of the best attacks in the league which should give confidence for the games to come.

Even without Ian Simon the Hoylandswaine batting line up was a strong one and the second ball of the innings from Greg Holmes illustrated the way in which there is such a fine line sometimes between good and bad fortune. Liam Dickinson did not quite get into position for a pull shot but the ball looped agonisingly over Dan Peace at mid wicket. If he had been five yards or so deeper then it would have been a relatively straightforward catch. Darren Lockwood (16) gave a quick reminder of his qualities as a batsman with three excellently timed boundaries on the off side but he top edged a mistimed pull off Dan Peace, replacing an out of sorts Jordan Thackray in the attack, and, after a few shuffles and a complete circle to position himself, Tom Sykes secured the catch behind the wicket. Scott Marsh took little time to get into his stride and it was a surprise, and a relief to see David Rishton trap him lbw for 26. Liam Dickinson meanwhile was accumulating runs steadily to reach a deserved fifty after his early fortunate escape. Ryan Copley made just 9 in an untypically subdued innings but in spite of the best efforts of the all spin attack from Lee Booth (1/54) and David Rishton (2/22) the visitors reached their target from the last ball of the 31st over. Dickinson ended on 83 not out.

Team: Chris Flanagan; Eddie Haigh; Tom Sykes (w/k); Ashley Haywood; Joe Law; Greg Holmes; Sam Oldham; Lee Booth; Dan Peace; David Rishton; Jordan Thackray.

Saturday May 10th v. Cumberworth (away)

Greg Holmes in for Thurstonland

Batting first at Cumberworth seems to have been part of the natural order of things for several seasons and 2008 proved to be no exception. Victories at this venue have been hard to come by in recent years with the last decade seeing success only in 2001 and 2004.

Chris Flanagan and Eddie Haigh took sixteen from the first four overs and so avoided what has often been a war of attrition on an unpredictable track but relatively few demons, real or imagined, seemed to have taken up residence this time. With Richard Greaves, long a Cumberworth stalwart, now lying in wait at his new club Cawthorne it was left to another familiar opponent Martin Kilner and regular wicket taking partner Richard Parkes to open the home team's attack. For the first time this season Chris (7) departed early, bowled by Martin Kilner when the ball possibly kept a little low.

Some well timed drives all went to fielders and the scoring rate slowed and both Eddie Haigh (12) and Tom Sykes (6) were both frustrated by this and at 25/3 there seemed to be the possibility of another Thurstonland afternoon of toil on this ground. Fortunes were revived by patient efforts from Ashley Haywood and Sam Oldham who accumulated steadily and their partnership was to prove important in the wider context of the game. Sam had toiled for almost an hour for five when he quickly seized on a short delivery and hit a six well over the square leg boundary. Three balls later, however, he perished when failing to get over a drive to cover. Although departing when the hard work seemed to have done the total of 68/4 seemed a little healthier.

Ashley mixed careful defence with judicious drives and pulls and his innings was vital for the cause. Joe Law scored eight before Greg Holmes, promoted in the order to try

to push the score along as overs began to run out, did just that. Two sixes and a steady supply of singles from both him and Ashley saw 129 reached before the latter was dismissed for 54 after an invaluable and hardworking innings. Greg had time to post his highest first team score (24*) as he and Dan Peace (0*) used the last few balls to get to a total of 134 for 6 in the allocated 45 overs.

Matthew Dolley and James Senior began the home reply and the former hit the first two deliveries from Greg Holmes for four. Pessimism at tea about the adequacy of the 134 run target seemed well justified at this juncture but Greg's response was to bowl excellently down the slope as he delivered his maximum 12 over allocation under the new rule without a break to take 5 for 31. Matthew Dolley was first to go, bowled for 12, soon followed by James Bower, often a heavy run scorer against us in recent years, for a duck, Tom Sykes taking a good catch behind the wicket low to his right hand. Jason Senior accompanied his namesake for a spell but suddenly the hosts were 70 for 5 after 22 overs.

The introduction of Ashley Haywood, in tandem with David Rishton who had replaced Greg, enabled a stranglehold on the run scoring to be taken. A couple of lusty blows from Martin Kilner briefly threatened but Jason Senior was becalmed and was eventually dismissed for 27 scored off 102 deliveries. James Haigh (14) tried hard to keep things moving but the innings was wrapped up by David and Lee Booth, coming into the attack late in the proceedings. Both ended with two victims, the last of which was Richard Parkes who was bowled by Lee after playing all round a full toss. Nelson had yet again had a part to play as Cumberworth were dismissed for 111 in the 44th over to earn Thurstonland a welcome six points.

Team: Chris Flanagan; Eddie Haigh; Tom Sykes (w/k); Ashley Haywood; Sam Oldham; Joe Law; Greg Holmes; Dan Peace; Lee Booth; David Rishton; Jordan Thackray.

Saturday May 17th v. Old Almondburians (home)

Rain fails to spoil Thurstonland's parade

After the balmy temperatures of the previous week there was a return to stark reality for the first of the weekend's games with the Allsop Cup first round scheduled for the following day. Low clouds and showers had prevailed in the morning but it was possible to make a prompt start. The damp outfield seemed likely to hinder attempted classic cover drives for four whilst the wicket had a decidedly green appearance.

This was the twenty-fifth successive season that we had met our visitors in league competition in the top section but a rather stuttering start by them saw them at the foot of the embryonic table having lost their opening three fixtures outright. Jordan Thackray soon accounted for Tim Taylor who had scored 119 against us a couple of seasons ago. He edged a delivery low to gully where Ashley Haywood claimed the catch. It was encouraging to see Jordan bowling with the lively accuracy which had characterised his efforts last year after the opening games had seen him struggle somewhat to establish a consistent line and length.

Well respected long time adversary Steve Slack soon got into his stride but when he was on 12 he was called for a second run when fleet footed Angus Cox had chased down a straight drive. Those in the know suspected that the odds did not favour the batsman and a swift return to Chris Flanagan quickly in position at the bowler's end saw Steve run out by a stride and then a little bit.

None of the Almondburian batsmen ever really suggested any permanence and a second delay for a shower saw an early tea taken with their total on 52 for 6. Greg Holmes, although wicketless, had bowled with accuracy and fire and got one or two deliveries to lift at the pavilion end. Jordan had a second victim but the steady decline in the visitors' innings was brought about by the persistence of both Dan Peace (3/12) and Ashley Haywood (4/10). The latter polished off the tail unceremoniously. Tom Sykes took three exuberant catches behind the wicket whilst Angus Cox, halfway to the boundary behind the bowler, dealt confidently with a catch when the ball reached a tremendous height. David Rishton also clung on to a chance in the covers by diving forward and rolling over and he later brushed aside all suggestions that a few seasons ago he might have clung on to it in a slightly less flamboyant manner. It was a fine effort nevertheless.

A score of 55 all out was one of the lowest chased in recent seasons. Steve Slack was obviously determined to make a fight of it by bowling with his usual accuracy from the far end. He too exploited the life in the damp wicket and Lee Booth, opening in the absence of the unavailable Eddie Haigh, was caught in the gully for nought off his bowling after Chris Flanagan had already been dropped there. Chris himself was then caught in the covers off a leading edge for 9 and when Tom Sykes played all round the ball to be lbw for 8 Steve Slack had taken all the wickets and the Thurstonland reply was a little threadbare at 21 for 3.

The old saying has it that 'cometh the hour cometh the man' and that person appeared in the shape of Angus Cox who joined Ashley Haywood. Sublimely timed boundaries off his legs and a superb drive for three towards the clubhouse soon settled any jitters. Although dropped off a difficult chance with just two required he had shown a confidence beyond that of any other batsman on a difficult day. His 26* was richly deserved and belied his relative lack of first team experience. It was left to Ashley (14*) to round things off with an excellent square drive for four and bring victory shortly before 6.20 on a rather cheerless early evening.

Team: Chris Flanagan; Lee Booth; Tom Sykes (w/k); Ashley Haywood; Angus Cox; Sam Oldham; Joe Law; Greg Holmes; Dan Peace; David Rishton; Jordan Thackray.

Sunday May 18th v. Almondbury Wesleyans (away)

Allsop Cup – Round 1

No small beer in this cup

Keeping up with the neighbours was the theme this weekend. After entertaining Old Almondburians in the league game the day before, the first team made the short trip to the second of our closest rivals. Those familiar with weather forecaster Paul Hudson on BBC's Look North would readily understand what he means by his occasional reference to a nithering wind. The nethers were certainly nithered as a

numbing chill soon calmed the ardours of all but the most determinedly macho. It was at least fine and so the prospect of a long drawn out cup tie never came into the equation. This was our second meeting with our Section A hosts in successive seasons in the Allsop Cup as we had met in the quarter finals at Thurstonland in 2007 prior to our semi final defeat by Hoylandswaine.

A long contest for the lead took place between the total and the overs bowled in the early stages of the Thurstonland innings and at 18 runs in 16 overs after nearly an hour's play gives some indication of the struggles at the crease. Hales and Rawnsley, opening the host's attack, bowled with accuracy and movement in the air and off the pitch meant that several tentative prods outside off stump kept the wicket keeper and slips on the alert. Chris Flanagan (1), Tom Sykes (4) and Ashley Haywood (0) ,after a watchful 22 ball stay, all gave thinly edged catches to Ian Kenworthy behind the wicket and the hopes of the apparent underdogs were justifiably high.

Eddie Haigh soldiered on with great patience and garnered runs where he could rather like the parish gleaners of old gathering the last offerings from the harvested fields. Once again it was that man Angus Cox, only in the side because of a hand injury sustained by Sam Oldham the previous day, who rode to the rescue. The bowlers had to alter their line to his left handed batting and he quickly dispatched several deliveries to the leg side boundary whilst Eddie gradually began to profit from his patient toil with some good drives and an excellent pull for four. Trying to repeat this shot he was caught low down at mid wicket for 25 and stood stunned for a moment before departing for 25 as he must have felt that payback time had come after his earlier struggles. Joe Law (6) hit a lovely cover shot for four before being caught off a skied shot when aiming for the long off boundary. Lee Booth kept Angus company as gradually the tide began to turn. The latter was eventually bowled for a valuable 39, his second highly significant batting contribution of the weekend. Greg Holmes moved the score along with a well struck 25 and Dan Peace included two big leg side sixes in a rapid 16* at the end. Lee had only two fours in his 32* but kept things moving with good running between the wickets and the target score of 163 for 7 had scarcely seemed possible only a dozen or so overs previously.

Almondbury Wes made a determined contest of it. Jim Bickerdike had a stern contest with excellent bowling from Greg Holmes although Jordan Thackray made the initial breakthrough. Home captain Tom Binns scored a good 28 and fifty came up with only one wicket down. Dan Peace then took charge. Although conceding occasional boundaries, his persistence wore down the batsmen as the run rate required gradually increased. His figures of 4/44 were well deserved. David Rishton also bowled tightly and eventually bowled the obdurate Bickerdike for 47 whilst two overs from Ashley Haywood at the end saw him clean up with 3/14. An all out total of 144 in the 44th over represented a good effort from The Wes and they certainly caused many problems in what was a hard earned win for Thurstonland.

Team: Chris Flanagan; Eddie Haigh; Tom Sykes (w/k); Ashley Haywood; Angus Cox; Joe Law; Lee Booth; Greg Holmes; Dan Peace; David Rishton; Jordan Thackray.

Saturday May 24th
V Azaad (away)

Below par at Lupset

Last season's visit to Lupset, adjacent to Wakefield Municipal Golf Course, had been the final game but this time the game at one of the more distant grounds came early. Kris Thackray was making his seasonal debut after finishing his university course and he opened the innings with Chris Flanagan with Eddie Haigh being unavailable.

Chris was quickly into his stride with a four through the covers followed by a pull to the leg side boundary. His first 20 runs all came from fours although there was a moment of good fortune with the third of them which went rapidly between wicketkeeper and first slip from a thick edge at a catchable height. Kris was more circumspect, looking sound in defence but never being able to assert himself. His was very much a supporting role.

Opening bowlers Mahboob and Bukhari soon gave way to Hussain and Ghafoor but the opening partnership was beginning to prosper and the fifty partnership came up after 84 balls and just over three quarters of an hour's play. The total had reached 57 when the event that probably turned the course of the game occurred. A change of mind about going for a single saw Chris, at the non-striker's end, failing to regain his ground. The relief felt by the home team was readily apparent as Chris looked likely to post a large total with the edge through the slips his only error. His 46 looked to have the potential to be increased to something even more substantial.

Kris followed three overs later when he was given out lbw to S Chishti with his score of eight being the fruits of 73 minutes hard graft. Tom Sykes had two fine cover drives for four but there was suddenly a change in the fortunes of the game. Ashley Haywood was caught behind by Ibrahim for six but the sudden collapse really gathered momentum in the 30th over.

Tom was caught by Umar Chishti at mid off and a distinct lack of stickability ran through the Thurstonland team. Angus Cox looked ill at ease after his heroics of the previous two games, playing and missing several times before he was caught by I Mahboob for just a single. Joe Law was lbw to a ball from Ghafoor which hit him halfway up his front leg when not playing a shot, whilst Greg Holmes could not get going although he did manage two boundaries before being bowled by N Hussain. The latter proved to be a thorn in the side of Thurstonland as his figures of 5/15 from 10 overs suggest.

A score of 80/3 became 80/6 in the space of just under four overs and in the end Lee Booth was left high and dry on 7 as the innings collapsed around him and closed on 97 all out. This had seemed unlikely to say the least during the opening stand but fortunes had turned rapidly just as the late arrival of Marshal Blucher's cavalry on the battlefield of Waterloo saved the day for Wellington when it seemed that Napoleon would win the day.

Greg Holmes's shoulder problem prevented him from bowling but he was in spectacular action in the field when he took a catch from a fiercely hit drive at mid on to dismiss T Hussain off Jordan Thackray. Q Khan was caught behind by Tom Sykes off the bowling of Dan Peace to leave the Azaad reply at 12/2 but that was as good as it got. S Chishti and H Mahboob added 53 with the former scoring a pleasing 40 which included a very well executed lofted drive for six over extra cover from David Rishton's bowling. H Mahboob (36*) then saw the home side through to victory, accompanied by S Ibrahim, with the winning hit coming in the 28th over.

Team: Chris Flanagan; Kris Thackray; Tom Sykes (w/k); Ashley Haywood; Angus Cox; Joe Law; Greg Holmes; Lee Booth; Dan Peace; David Rishton; Jordan Thackray.

Saturday May 31st V Mirfield (home)

Maidens, Minto and Mirfield bring an alliterative downfall

A lush looking outfield and a greenish wicket were evidence of the preceding days' mixture of warm sunshine and heavy showers. Sam Oldham became Chris Flanagan's fourth opening partner in what was only the seventh game of the season and the first two overs from Zarif and Saudagar provided plenty of movement through the air and off the wicket with a first ball wide from the former the only score in that period.

A well timed pull through mid wicket for two got Chris off the mark but he was out to the next ball, caught after a juggling act at first slip by Alan Kaye worthy of a new member of a touring circus company. The whole performance lasted for what seemed several seconds with the final diversion of the ball landing neatly in the hands of Richard Griffiths at second slip after he had been a mesmerised close quarter observer of the whole process. Sam Oldham was out in the next over, turned square by a ball moving away but this time Alan Kaye took the proffered chance with a mundane lack of showmanship.

Three for two was not the start hoped for and a process of dogged retrenchment was undertaken by Tom Sykes and Ashley Haywood. A single pull by Tom off N.Saudagar was the latter's only run concession in his first ten overs and final figures of 12 – 9 - 12 – 1 pay tribute to his accuracy and the inability of the Thurstonland batsman to come to terms with the challenge he set. Neil Minto took over at the pavilion end and the score had reached 44 when Ashley bottom edged a full pitch on to his boot from where the ball hit the wicket. His 23 had been hard earned.

Tom Sykes continued to apply himself and now accompanied by Lee Booth the total inched forward but David Longworth, taking over from Saudagar, managed to get some disconcerting lift from just short of a length and eventually Tom succumbed to a rather airy shot off his legs with B Allen taking the catch at square leg. He had battled for 95 minutes for 22. Joe Law only managed three before Greg Holmes, unable to bowl for a second successive week because of a shoulder problem, came in at No 7. He and Lee saw the score from 80/5 to 106 before the latter was bowled by the returning Zarif after scoring 23 in just over an hour. Greg was caught for 13 in the next over which left Dan Peace and David Rishton to squeeze 20 from the last four overs which included a well struck six from the former. Both batsmen were undefeated on 16 and 4 respectively as the innings closed on 129 for 7.

Jordan Thackray and Joe Law opened the Thurstonland attack and a maiden from each of them suggested that Mirfield too might struggle to score freely. Minto had a let off on nine when Dan Peace could not hold on to a chance from Jordan's bowling when the batsman clipped the ball to the left of square leg. It proved to be a costly drop. David Rishton and Lee Booth bowled spin in tandem for a while but Minto's partner Paul Wild proved a more than adequate foil to the fluent stroke play of his partner. The latter eventually fell for 32 to a well taken catch by Sam Oldham after

the ball went over his head. The bowler was Lee who had by now reverted to his medium pace. The stand was worth 78.

Neil Minto reached a fluent fifty soon afterwards and, although Lee induced visiting captain P.Neal to get a thin edge to Tom Sykes, only eleven more were needed. The visitors reached their target in the 27th over with Minto undefeated on 79. With several players unavailable Andy Booth filled in with his first game in the senior team since 2001 and three years after his retirement from regular cricket.

Team: Chris Flanagan; Sam Oldham; Tom Sykes (w/k); Ashley Haywood; Lee Booth; Joe Law; Greg Holmes; Dan Peace; David Rishton; Jordan Thackray; Andrew Booth.

Saturday June 7th V Holmbridge (home)

First ball downfall sets the tone

Greg Holmes, bowling again after his shoulder problem, understandably perhaps delivered a gentle long hop for his opening delivery. David Thorp, Holmbridge's in form opener, probably had time to think of several places on the leg side to which he could send the ball. His shot was a gentle lofted paddle from which the ball looped into the air towards square leg. Angus Cox had scarcely had time to mark out his territory as the ball came towards him but no mistake was made with the catch on offer. Nought for one after one delivery was duly recorded.

That was probably Greg's worst ball as he proceeded to bowl twelve overs, now the maximum allowed, in succession and almost equalled the figures of N Saudagar (Mirfield) bowling from the far end the previous week as he took 3/14 with three maidens. His other victims were Andy Haigh, bowled for 13, and Mark Beaumont the next ball, trapped lbw as he tried an expansive drive. The latter had won a low scoring game virtually single handedly last season. In the meantime, David Rishton had beaten David Holroyd (18) in the flight and bowled him comprehensively and earned the wicket of David Clough (13) well caught at by Jordan Thackray, at mid off, inches from the ground off a well struck blow.

After twice hammering the ball into his foot, Craig Furze (7) was stumped by Tom Sykes as he tried to ignore his suffering by dancing up the wicket in an attempt to drive Lee Booth back over his head. All this meant that the visitors were 62 for 6 in the 29th over and thoughts began to turn towards an early tea. Stuart Whitehead, (38), Robert Parr (22) and James Mosby (24) had other ideas. Lee reverted to bowling medium pace but all three batsmen put bat to ball in an uncompromising but effective manner. Fortune favoured the brave as one or two mishits fell just between fielders but there were also four mighty sixes and hard hit boundaries. Dan Peace dismissed Parr, thanks to a second catch by Jordan Thackray, whilst Lee Booth (4/47) bowled the other two Holmbridge batsmen. He also captured Simon Heppenstall off the first ball of the final over when the latter sent the ball an immense height towards long on where Sam Oldham took the catch confidently. A target of 145 was larger than had seemed likely at one stage.

After Chris Flanagan had carefully negotiated an opening maiden over from Heppenstall, Sam Oldham was immediately off the mark with a lovely straight drive for two from Craig Furze who appeared to be fully restored after his self inflicted

blows to his foot. Sam looked to be getting into his stride with three good boundaries when he was caught half forward to a ball from Heppenstall and given out lbw for 17. Chris Flanagan was beginning to get into his stride, mixing watchful defence with positive attacking shots. On 22 he had a stroke of fortune when he edged a ball for four just past the outstretched hand of first slip. That was about his only false shot.

Tom Sykes was also lbw for two and Ashley Haywood joined Chris with the total on 44/2. Six Holmbridge bowlers could not part them in an unbroken stand of 105. Ashley, on 28, survived one of the easier caught and bowled chances when David Clough spilled the ball after seeming to hold it for a measurable amount of time. The batsman even had time to bow his head in anguish and take the first step from the crease before marvelling at his great good fortune. Chris duly came to a deserved fifty and several positively skittish singles were taken from push and run shots and victory came from a pull for four from Ashley in the 42nd over. The batsmen had done a fine job and the six points were welcome after the struggles of the last two games. Chris was undefeated on 84 and Ashley on 41.

Team: Chris Flanagan; Sam Oldham; Tom Sykes (w/k); Ashley Haywood; Kris Thackray; Lee Booth; Angus Cox; Greg Holmes; Dan Peace; David Rishton; Jordan Thackray.

Saturday June 14th v. Leymoor (away)

Lacklustre at Leymoor

For the first time this season the rain intervened during a game but delays amounted to fifteen minutes in total. Chris Flanagan was about to take guard when a sharp shower sent the players dashing off but the shelter of the changing rooms had not been reached by the stragglers when the rain stopped and everyone trooped out again. Two further breaks of seven and six minutes followed later in the Thurstonland innings but that was nothing compared to the wholesale disruptions suffered in 2007.

Sam Oldham was quickly into his stride with two drives for four off Martin Allison but both he and Dean Dyson from the Walkers Arms end got some early movement and for a short period there was the sight of four slips and two gullies in position for the latter. The second of the slips accounted for Chris who had just scored a single when he edged Dyson. Kris Thackray played a patient role in support of Sam Oldham who hit several stylish boundaries through the off side as well as one off his legs. It was just as the second shower began that the latter was bowled by a delivery from Matthew Coulson, who had replaced Dyson in the Leymoor attack, that came back up the slope and kept a little low. He had made a confident 37 and the total was 49/2.

Just as in some previous games this season there was an air of impermanence about several of the Thurstonland batsmen. Hard graft and the slow accumulation of runs was undone, literally at a stroke, and this gave the initiative to our hosts. Kris Thackray (13) was caught by Andy Raw at mid on from an attempted drive, Ashley Haywood (9), after two pleasing cover drives for four, lofted a simple catch to cover whilst Tom Sykes (13) misjudged an attempted hook and sent a steeping catch, once again to Andy Raw. Eighty-nine for six from thirty overs was hardly the

platform from which to build a late innings run chase. Second change bowler Walker had figures of 4/37 in running through the middle order.

Joe Law was bowled for nine the ball after hitting a boundary whilst Greg Holmes in a six ball innings hit two text book fours and then was promptly caught. Lee Booth succumbed to the persevering Coulson (3/25) but was ninth out for 24 when bowled by him. The returning Dean Dyson had accounted for Dan Peace (6) and this left David Rishton (6*) and Jordan Thackray (1*) to negotiate the last two overs when surrounded by close fielders to secure at least a point. Leymoor had a target of 135 for nine.

Martin Allison and Richard Walkden quickly made their intentions clear. Boundaries were the order of the day for both batsmen, neither of whom was afraid to hit over the top, and the score soon reached 43. Jordan Thackray never got any sort of rhythm bowling from the Walkers Arms end and was unceremoniously dispatched for 29 in his three overs. Greg Holmes kept matters quieter at the other end and both Kris Thackray and David Rishton slowed the scoring rate. Greg bowled Walkden for 34 with the total on 52 whilst David had Greg Holmes to thank for two catches in four balls as both Allison (41) and home wicket keeper Adam Smith (0) failed to keep down intended drives only to lob the ball to backward point. At 82/3 there was a glimmer of hope for a Thurstonland comeback but a patient stand between Ian Lockwood (25) and Ian France (19) added 36 before Dan Peace (3/21) bowled both of them in quick succession. Although two Leymoor batsmen fell to Dan and Kris Thackray on 132 to leave the hosts seven down there were to be no late dramas and the winning boundary for the home team was struck in the 41st over.

Team: Chris Flanagan; Sam Oldham; Kris Thackray; Ashley Haywood; Tom Sykes (w/k); Joe Law; Lee Booth; Greg Holmes; Dan Peace; David Rishton; Jordan Thackray.

Sunday June 15th v. Green Moor (home) - Allsop Cup – Round 2

Comeback in the cup

There was a rapid opportunity to get the previous day's disappointment out of the system when Green Moor were the visitors in the second round of the Allsop Cup. Last year at the same stage the torrential downpours meant that it took four weeks to play the game at Denby Dale but there seemed to be no such threats from the weather this time although the welcome sunshine was tempered by a cool breeze and darker clouds made occasional appearances without ever suggesting rain was in the offing.

As the popular song has it, what a difference a day makes. An opening maiden from Greg Holmes was followed by an immediate wicket for Jordan Thackray who instantly put his trials and tribulations at Leymoor well and truly behind him. Julian Bates, a consistent run scorer, got a thin edge to be caught behind by Tom Sykes for nought. This triggered off an immediate collapse. Jordan's next over saw Dan Peace hold on to a low but fiercely hit drive at mid off to remove promising young batsman Harry Howlett for two and when Nicky Bramall also edged Jordan to Tom Sykes in the latter's third over the total was 10 for 3. Dan's catch, incidentally, was his first for two seasons but he would want it mentioning that he has not been dropping many in

that time and he desires it placing on record that his fielding positions these days are not as regularly in the firing line. Huddersfield Central League White Rose player Jake Rogers and the experienced John Hardy began to try to effect a recovery with the former doing most of the scoring. The total had reached 27 when David Rishton trapped Rogers lbw for 18, the umpire deliberating for quite a time before giving the decision.

The afternoon then meandered along at a leisurely pace giving time for contemplating the meaning of life and the universe. Your correspondent in the score box enjoyed a pleasant conversation with ten year old Justine, Julian Bates' daughter, who was scoring her first game for Green Moor and who proved to be neat, competent and enthusiastic. Not many runs were scored to disturb us. It was hard to imagine that this was a cup game as David Rishton and Lee Booth bowled 24 overs of spin in partnership and conceded just 42 runs. John Hardy was run out by a pitch length after a misunderstanding with his captain Nigel Dowkes. His eleven had taken 76 balls.

Kris Thackray took an excellent catch at deep square leg off Lee to dismiss Dowkes for 13. Having already trapped Andy Howe lbw for nine his career total in the first team stood at 499. There was not long to wait for the landmark 500th as Jordan Thackray held on to a firm clip to leg by Chris Beever. A suitable round of applause followed from the home team and no doubt a suitably modest blush made a fleeting appearance on Lee's face. Kris Thackray finished off the visitor's innings by taking two wickets from the only five balls he delivered and the Thurstonland target was just 73.

Just one hour was needed to knock off the total. Sam Oldham continued his excellent form of the previous day in scoring a fluent 27. He was bowled by Chris Beever who also accounted for Kris Thackray, lbw for nought. Chris Flanagan patiently eased his way into his innings and ended matters with a glorious cover drive to the boundary to take his score to 32 not out. Ashley Haywood ended undefeated on 13 with the winning score 74 for 2.

Team: Chris Flanagan; Sam Oldham; Kris Thackray; Ashley Haywood; Tom Sykes (w/k); Joe Law; Lee Booth; Greg Holmes; Dan Peace; David Rishton; Jordan Thackray.

Saturday June 21st
Edgerton & Dalton (home) - Rained Off

Saturday June 28th
v. Green Moor (away)

Cox at the helm

Just a fortnight ago we had had a victory over the opposition in the second round of the Allsop Cup but any thoughts of complacency were quickly dispelled when Eddie Haigh (7), the ball after hitting a three, was bowled by the accurate Noel Bramall who had been the pick of the Green Moor bowlers in the cup game. Kris Thackray joined Chris Flanagan who had already survived a dropped catch and steady progress was made with two or three boundaries racing down the slope as well as a couple

finding a low enough gear to get up it. Chris had reached 15 and the total 44 when he lofted a shot to extra cover where Ben Simpson took the catch to give Bramall his second victim. Ashley Haywood looked in little trouble until, as has seemed to be the case this season with several promising innings from the majority of Thurstonland's batsmen, he clipped a shot off his legs to mid wicket where Bramall was this time the catcher.

Enter Angus Cox at 69 for 3 and the next ten overs were, in retrospect, the key to the whole game. Batting with great confidence he hit six fours and two sixes and, in spite of the home side shuffling their bowling attack, he was fully in control. Anything over pitched was driven summarily and his second six off Harry Howlett soared over long on into the adjacent field and took him to 49. Just as everyone was preparing to greet his half century he tried to guide the next delivery square on the off side and the faintest edge was well taken by the accomplished Green Moor keeper Julian Bates.

Kris Thackray meanwhile had provided excellent support. He scored a patient 33 before being stumped shortly before the dismissal of Angus. With ten overs remaining the total was 136/5 which was raised to 180 for 8 by the close of the innings. Tom Sykes (15*) was helped to keep the score ticking over by Greg Holmes (6), Dan Peace (7) and David Rishton (9*) with Lee Booth missing out as he fell to an excellent catch at extra cover. Noel Bramall finished with well deserved figures of 4/29 but the fourteen no balls and five wides provided by a number of his colleagues proved to be a useful bonus for us. It was not to be expected that Green Moor would bat as indifferently as they had done in the cup game and this proved to be the case for a considerable period of their innings as fortunes went one way and the other in an even contest. John Hardy (10) put on 27 for the first wicket before Jordan Thackray took a catch at third man off Greg Holmes who continued in the fine form he has shown all season.

Julian Bates and promising young player Harry Howlett then batted the home team into a strong position. Both seemed determined to make up for their cheap dismissals at Thurstonland in the cup. The latter was particularly severe on Ashley Haywood with front foot drives very much in evidence. David Rishton made the batsmen work for their runs but eventually he dismissed Bates (21) well caught at deep mid on by Kris Thackray. The latter then took the key wicket of Howlett who was bowled for a very good 57. An excellent throw from Angus Cox saw Mark Sykes run out for 5 and when Tom Sykes stumped Ben Simpson for 1 off David Rishton the score had subsided to 99/5. Home captain Nigel Dowkes curbed his usual attacking instincts as he and Noel Bramall gradually edged the total forward. Their stand lasted for the best part of an hour and with the score on 153/5 just 28 were needed from eight overs. Greg Holmes and Jordan Thackray were now back in the attack and the former bowled Dowkes for 29. In the next over a direct hit on the bowler's wicket by Lee Booth saw Jake Rogers run out for nought, Noel Bramall was stumped for 17 and suddenly an excellent running catch by David Rishton off Jordan Thackray to dismiss Ben Askey ended matters on 154 all out.

Team: Chris Flanagan; Eddie Haigh; Kris Thackray; Ashley Haywood; Angus Cox; Tom Sykes (w/k); Greg Holmes; Lee Booth; Dan Peace; David Rishton; Jordan Thackray.

Sunday June 29th

v. Cawthorne(away)

Allsop Cup – Round 3

Wry smiles for catchers

Five minutes to two, umpires prepare to walk out, the heavens open, followed by steady downpour for forty minutes. Sawdust in abundance is placed on the wicket ends, intriguing spiking devices have their moment of glory, sweeping, mopping and brushing are carried out by earnest volunteers as amazingly the sun appears and the temperature increases rapidly to allow play to start at 3.35.

A single each to Chris Flanagan and Eddie Haigh off Liam Wiles' first over and then Richard Greaves limps out of the action after one ball which brings Darren Lindley into early action. In his second over Eddie hits three resounding boundaries in four balls and all seems set fair. With the total on 24, however, Wiles brought a ball back into Chris who was caught on the crease and given out lbw for 4.

Kris Thackray got off the mark with a four and looked to be carrying on from his confident performance of the previous day when he was sent back by Eddie when going for a second run which looked a fair option. A needless run out was the inevitable result and Eddie himself followed shortly afterwards, bowled for 25 trying to force a ball through mid wicket. Thirty-six for one had rapidly turned into 36/3 and Ashley Haywood and Angus Cox had to set about rebuilding the innings.

They had added 19 when three wickets fell in two overs. Ashley (9) was bowled by Craig Holderness, an opponent last seen when Dodworth left our league in 1998, to be followed by Angus caught at mid wicket, also for nine, and then Lee Booth was bowled by spinner Gary Kilburn for a single trying to make room to force through the off side. At 56/6 we were certainly not on top but then Greg Holmes took charge. In facing just twenty balls he raced to 31 with Tom Sykes (4) being a spectator for most of the time. The latter was then dismissed by a brilliant catch by Craig Holderness who looked to have no chance as the ball went over his head at cover. He stuck out his right hand, however, and the ball stuck, even surviving the fall to the ground. That was 97/7 and three overs later the innings ended on 99 all out. Greg was the last to go, lbw for 34 and it remained to be seen how important his valuable contribution was going to be.

Jordan Thackray made an early breakthrough having opener Osborne caught behind by Tom Sykes for one and he followed this up by trapping Matthew Roebuck lbw for 5. Liam Wiles looked in good form, striking three powerful boundaries, before Greg Holmes bowled him, the ball just clipping the off bail. Long time opponents Dale Skelly and Adrian Wilford took the score to 43 before the former was caught and bowled by Dan Peace off a difficult chance. His duck had taken 56 minutes and he faced 44 deliveries. Wilford soon followed, caught for 32 by Lee Booth off Dan's bowling and then David Rishton claimed four victims. He bowled Phil Wiles and both Ashley Haywood and Kris Thackray, at cover and long on respectively, took good catches to reduce the hosts to 70/8. The best was yet to come. First Holderness was well held by Ashley off Kris's bowling before the latter claimed the last wicket when Gary Kilburn hit a steeping shot off David towards long on. It seemed to be in the air for an eternity but Kris looked calmness itself as he clung on and a low scoring but tense game had been won by 24 runs (Cawthorne 75 all out).

Team: Chris Flanagan; Eddie Haigh; Kris Thackray; Ashley Haywood; Angus Cox; Tom Sykes (w/k); Lee Booth; Greg Holmes; Dan Peace; David Rishton; Jordan Thackray.

Saturday July 5th v. Cawthorne(away)

No happy returns to Cawthorne

A quick return to Cawthorne, currently second in the table, saw the rain play a part in proceedings at the start. Just one over had been bowled as the game began at the scheduled time of two o'clock when a heavy downpour sent everyone dashing off the field. A forty minute delay then followed but, although menacing clouds kept looming up from time to time, there were to be no further interruptions.

There were two changes in the Thurstonland line up from the one which had done duty in the cup game six days previously. Chris Flanagan and Tom Sykes were unavailable and replaced by the returning Sam Oldham and eighteen year old Russell Mottram, the second team wicket keeper, who had one previous first team game to his name at Denby Dale late in the 2006 season. In the seventh over the score was 12 for two with Phil Osbourne catching first Sam Oldham for six at cover off Liam Wiles. This wicket was quickly followed by that of Kris Thackray whose attempted on drive from Darren Lindley was eagerly taken by the same fielder. Ashley Haywood also survived a difficult chance shortly afterwards as he and Eddie Haigh tried to restore Thurstonland's fortunes. Once again the slow wicket and occasional unpredictable bounce did not make scoring easy and home spinner Gary Kilburn only conceded five runs in his first eight overs. It all seemed a long way from the pyrotechnics of the first class 20/20 game and the recent exploits of Graham Napier of Essex.

Both Ashley and Eddie perished in quick succession, the former lbw to Lindley and the latter taken off a top edged drive at cover. The return to the pavilion of the batsmen had the air of Marshal Ney's retreat from Moscow in 1812 with damage limitation seeming to be the key tactic. Angus Cox played patiently as did Russell Mottram and the two of them stayed together for ten overs and took the total to 59/4 before Craig Holderness bowled Russell for 7, a model of circumspection until then, as he attempted a pull shot. That is not always the most judicious choice at Cawthorne but his determination had prevented what could have been a collapse of disastrous proportions.

Angus then produced two glorious fours to take his score to 25 off the first two balls off Gary Kilburn's next over but two deliveries later, as though suddenly remembering he had left a pan on to boil and must get home at once, he sashayed up the wicket, missed the ball and Dale Skelly had an easy stumping. The final eleven overs saw nineteen runs added with last pair David Rishton and Jordan Thackray, both finishing on three not out, surviving the last twenty deliveries to gain at least one point. A target of 86/9 had been set and the excellent Cawthorne tea was accompanied by much philosophising as the innings was reviewed.

Matthew Roebuck and Paul Osborne chipped away at the target and Greg Holmes in particular gave little away although his quest for his 100th first team wicket was to be a fruitless one. David Rishton, who began with five successive maidens, and Dan

Peace replaced Greg and Jordan Thackray and it was Dan who got the breakthrough when Osborne lofted a drive to Kris Thackray at mid off. Liam Wiles scored twelve before David had him lbw. Cawthorne were now 55/2 from 25 overs but Adrian Wilford (28*), playing the role of the quaffer of a yard of ale compared to the studied sips and slurps of a vintage wine taster, suddenly ended matters with three sixes and two fours in nine deliveries to leave everyone wondering whether the toils of the other batsmen had been the stuff of dreams. Matthew Roebuck's 34 not out for our hosts had been a real team effort from a very promising young batsman.

Team: Sam Oldham; Eddie Haigh; Kris Thackray; Ashley Haywood; Angus Cox; Russell Mottram (w/k); Greg Holmes; Lee Booth; Dan Peace; David Rishton; Jordan Thackray.

Saturday July 12th
Thornhill & Westborough (home) - Rained Off

Sunday July 13th
v. Azaad (home)

Allsop Cup Semi - Final

All's up for the Allsop

After the abandonment of the previous day's league fixture at home to Thornhill & Westborough because of a waterlogged ground, it was a pleasant change to see bright sunshine for the cup game. This is the first season that this stage of the competition has been played as drawn rather than on a neutral ground which now applies to the final only. Thurstonland have appeared in eight finals and, curiously, won the first five of them but lost the next three, the most recent of which was a defeat at the hands of Clayton West, now in the Huddersfield Drakes League, in 1999. Our visitors were having a good season and occupied third place in the league and with a win against us already on their ground on May 24th.

A leg bye off the second ball bowled by Greg Holmes brought Qasim Khan to the striker's end from where he unceremoniously dispatched his first delivery to the square leg boundary. His partner Tariq Hussain soon followed his example with two successive fours off Jordan Thackray and 13/0 from the opening four overs suggested a busy afternoon of fielding for the home team. The openers continued to prosper and David Rishton replaced Jordan in the attack. Greg Holmes, however, made the breakthrough trapping Hussain lbw with the total on 38. This wicket was his hundredth in the first team in league and cup games and it is hoped to do some research to see if he is the youngest Thurstonland player to reach this landmark.

Lee Booth came into the attack shortly afterwards and gradually the scoring rate slowed. A well judged catch at long off by Dan Peace saw David dismiss the experienced and free scoring S Chishti for 21 and Sajid Mahmood and Imran Mahboob soon followed, the latter to a second good catch in the deep by Dan saw the score slump to 70/4. A six and a four excepted, David Rishton (3/20) was a model of consistency and with Lee also keeping things tight the visiting batsmen struggled to keep the runs flowing. Qasim Khan batted for two and a quarter hours for 43 before the returning Greg Holmes (3/33) had him caught at long off and only

Qasim Ziyarab (20) of the later batsmen looked likely to cause problems. His innings included two excellent shots for six to the extra cover boundary. Tariq Mahmood was run out following great confusion between him and his partner and only a brief late flourish brought seventeen in the last three overs to set Thurstonland a target of 131/9.

Imran Mahboob and Tariq Mahmood bowled accurately from the first ball and neither Chris Flanagan nor Eddie Haigh could take any liberties. A single boundary by the latter was the only respite although both batsmen looked reasonably comfortable. An attempted on drive saw Eddie's downfall as a low catch was taken by S Chishti at mid on off Mahmood and when Kris Thackray was lbw to the same bowler for a duck shortly afterwards, the visitors were on top. Ashley Haywood and Chris Flanagan continued to play watchfully in taking the total to 45 before the latter was bowled for 19 by Tariq Hussain. Angus Cox managed one classic on drive for four before he was caught behind off S Chishti whose leg breaks never let the batsmen settle. His final figures of 3/14 from his 12 overs tell their own tale. Lee Booth (19) and David Rishton (17*) made a belated attempt to raise the scoring rate and a thick edge for two by Jordan Thackray meant that ten runs were needed from seven balls. The latter was bowled from the first of these to leave us 122 all out thus putting our visitors into the final.

Team: Chris Flanagan; Eddie Haigh; Kris Thackray; Ashley Haywood; Angus Cox; Tom Sykes (w/k); Lee Booth; Greg Holmes; Dan Peace; David Rishton; Jordan Thackray.

Saturday July 19th v. Hoylandswaine (away)

Short but not so sweet

Any knitters at Hoylandswaine who looked to follow the example of the French women who practised their craft at the foot of the scaffold as aristocratic heads rolled during the revolution would have scarcely had time to cast on let alone complete a row or two before all was done on a breezy July afternoon. The hosts, currently league leaders and favourites to win their second title in succession, soon got the upper hand. Danny Mulhall bowled with pace from the pavilion end and immediately extracted some disconcerting bounce from the wicket. Chris Flanagan managed a pleasant leg side boundary from a well controlled shot off his legs and followed this with a single. Sam Oldham was comprehensively bowled from the second ball he faced but survived as it was a no ball. Ian Simon shared the new ball. Movement through the air and off the wicket induced a thin edge from Chris who was caught behind for five. Danny Mulhall then trapped Sam lbw for nought and when Eddie Haigh also got an edge to an Ian Simon delivery the score was 6 for 3 from 16 balls.

Ashley Haywood deflected a ball from Mulhall on to his jaw via his shoulder and there was a short delay for ice to be applied and for helmets to be worn. A full set of medieval armour might also have been the clothing of choice had the opportunity been there. Nevertheless Ashley, in partnership with Kris Thackray, began to lead some purposeful resistance. He dealt with short pitched deliveries with calm watchfulness and produced some useful boundaries on all sides of the wicket,

including three in successive deliveries from Tony Mulhall who replaced Danny in the thirteenth over.

Kris has been a little out of sorts with batting form so far this season but he defended resolutely and, helped by two good cover drives and two fortunate edges for four, the partnership began to prosper. After 67 had been added in about an hour and a quarter Ashley was lbw although, as my fellow scorer suggested, the attempted shot to leg might have got the decision as he was hit on the front pad taking a decent stride down the wicket. His 42 runs had been priceless. As so often seems to happen after a long stand his partner was dismissed soon afterwards. In the next over from Darren Lockwood, Kris was bowled for an obdurate 19 leaving the total on 73/5.

Mark Hill making his seasonal debut in the first team along with Tom Sharrock because of holiday absences made 12 including two cover driven boundaries before Danny Mulhall bowled him with a yorker. Lee Booth and Greg Holmes battled hard but survival took priority over runs. Greg was bowled for nine leaving Lee (13*) and Dan Peace (4*) to negotiate the last five overs to end the innings on 116 for 7.

Ninety-five balls later, including a no ball and a wide, it was all over. Liam Dickinson hit an immense six over square leg from his second ball and unceremoniously added three more before Greg Holmes bowled him for 30 with the total on 50 in just the fifth over. Darren Lockwood and Scott Marsh, who both finished on 40*, were a little more circumspect and dealt mainly in fours with an occasional single to add a little variety. As well as Greg, Kris Thackray, Dan Peace and David Rishton had no impact in trying to stem the onslaught and matters came to a conclusion just in time for a gin sling on the verandah round about six o'clock. At least there had been the sterling efforts of Lee Booth to admire in his unaccustomed role as wicket keeper in the absence on holiday of Tom Sykes and his deputy Russell Mottram.

Team: Chris Flanagan; Sam Oldham; Eddie Haigh; Ashley Haywood; Kris Thackray; Mark Hill; Lee Booth (w/k); Greg Holmes; Dan Peace; David Rishton; Tom Sharrock.

Saturday July 26th

Cumberworth (home) - Comfortable 6 point victory, AP on holiday

Saturday August 2nd

v. Old Almondburians (away)

and

Saturday August 9th

v. Azaad (home)

All dressed up and nowhere to go

The two games in question coincided with your correspondent's holiday but little action was missed as only half a game was played against basement side Old Almondburians whilst the following week, just when it seemed that the hard work in drying out the ground might enable a shortened game to take place, the rains returned with a vengeance and not a ball was bowled.

Visits to Old Almondburians have seen a few struggles for Thurstonland over the past few years and the home team must have been hopeful of a first win at the tea interval.

A summary of details after consulting the scorebook show a decent opening stand between Chris Flanagan and Sam Oldham before the former was bowled for 12 by Steve Slack with the score on 26. When Sam Oldham was caught by Will Atkinson off Tim Taylor for 20 the total had reached 40/2. This subsided alarmingly quickly to 45/6 with the fragility of the batting, a feature of most of the 2008 season, again in evidence.

Kris Thackray and Tom Sykes restored a measure of respectability by adding 25 before the latter was bowled for 12. After the quick departure of Greg Holmes it was left to Kris and Lee Booth (13*) to battle to add an invaluable 32 for the ninth wicket. In the final over Kris was stumped for 24 but Dan Peace (2*) dealt competently with the last three deliveries to leave a target of 107/9.

Heavy rain began during the tea interval and it was soon apparent that no further play would be possible which must have frustrated the home team who must have felt that their first win of 2008 was a realistic prospect.

Team selections for the two games:

v. Old Almondburians: Chris Flanagan; Sam Oldham; Ian Short; Eddie Haigh; Ashley Haywood; Angus Cox; Kris Thackray; Tom Sykes (w/k); Greg Holmes; Lee Booth; Dan Peace.

v. Azaad: Chris Flanagan; Kris Thackray; Ashley Haywood; Angus Cox; Lee Booth; Tom Sykes (w/k); Joe Law; Mark Hill; Greg Holmes; David Rishton; Dan Peace.

Saturday August 16th v. Mirfield (away)

No short measures in Greg's seventh heaven

Although fine weather enabled the game to start promptly the forecast indicated that rain might arrive by late afternoon or early evening and anxious glances at the clouds were made from time to time on an afternoon of rather cool temperatures for the middle of August. This was very much a mid table clash with the hosts in sixth place one point and one position ahead of Thurstonland. Both Eddie Haigh and Greg Holmes reached the 100 appearance mark in the first team in this game.

The large ground and the damp and rather lush outfield suggested that boundaries would be hard earned. Eddie Haigh managed a well timed pull for four in N. Saudagar's opening over after Chris Flanagan had got off the mark with a single but after that ones and twos were the order of the day for quite some time. The patience of the opening pair saw the score mount slowly and the breakthrough for Mirfield only came when David Longworth replaced Saudagar. Chris was the victim when a cover drive was not quite timed and Neil Minto took an excellent low catch. He had made 21 out of the opening stand of 42. Ian Short timed the ball well from the start of his innings and had reached eight when Eddie Haigh (19) gave Minto his second

catch at cover from a lofted drive. Once again a mini collapse followed as Ashley Haywood went for three, Angus Cox for six and Kris Thackray also for three as the innings seemed about to implode at 82/5.

Fortunately Ian stood firm managing two fours as well as a huge six over mid wicket. He was dismissed in an unfortunate way when, after a routine forward defensive shot, the ball spun back and just clipped his leg stump. His 32 had been a valuable contribution. Tom Sykes managed a rather fortunate ten, surviving several close calls when hitting the ball in the air. Ian departed on 92 for 6 which became 96/7 when Greg Holmes was caught for a single and it was left to Lee Booth (12*) and David Rishton (8*) to add some welcome runs at the end. The final total was 128/8.

Greg Holmes soon bowled Richard Griffiths for two as Mirfield began their reply but the prolific Neil Minto who had scored 79* at Thurstonland looked in good form again with good footwork at well timed drives in evidence. He was given a chance when a shot to mid off just cleared the fielder's head but the score reached 41/1 at the end of the 14th over with Minto on 31 and A. Kaye, looking to bed in for a long stay, on three.

There then followed one of the more remarkable three overs of play that even those with a long association with the game must have witnessed. Greg Holmes had Minto lbw, P. Wild followed first ball, also lbw, and after hitting two from his first delivery, David Bolt was bowled. It was now 43/4. A single by Kaye from David Rishton who had replaced Kris Thackray in the attack brought F. Amjad on strike and he also was adjudged lbw for nought. In Greg's next over, just for a change, S Riaz was caught behind by Tom Sykes before the next two Mirfield batsmen also fell lbw to their second deliveries. Greg had taken six wickets in eleven balls without achieving the hat trick and a shell shocked home team were 45/8. The game had 28 overs to go but there was another twist in the tale as A. Kaye who had watched the procession at the other end and N. Saudagar survived to the end in spite of the efforts of Greg who finished his allotted twelve overs with career best figures of 7 for 22, David Rishton (1/20), Lee Booth and Dan Peace who bowled his last five overs off a short run as the first rain drops began to fall. Mirfield ended on 85/8 at the end of a game with few spectacular shots but with many twists and turns.

Team: Chris Flanagan; Eddie Haigh; Ian Short; Ashley Haywood; Angus Cox; Kris Thackray; Tom Sykes (w/k); Greg Holmes; Lee Booth; David Rishton; Dan Peace.

Saturday August 23rd v. Holmbridge (away)

David provides the link

With Lee Booth bolstering the second team in their battle against relegation and with Sam Oldham's withdrawal from the team for personal reasons, David Rishton linked this game at Holmbridge with a home fixture against Flockton almost exactly seventeen years ago to the day. The game referred to, on August 24th 1991, was the last occasion before the Holmbridge match on which the Thurstonland first team had taken the field without either a Booth or an Oldham in the line up. David is the only player to appear in both fixtures.

After the seemingly incessant rain in August the field was showing the effects of the weather but a start was made in pleasantly warm sunshine. Ian Short was Chris Flanagan's latest opening partner and both batsmen found the boundary regularly in the first seven overs. A total of 32 was quickly amassed and Chris (23) looked to be ready to tuck in to a state banquet's worth feast of runs when he played on to Richard Parr in a dismissal very similar to that of Ian the week before at Mirfield. Tom Sykes was restored to the No 3 slot and he settled in to playing a patient innings, reining in his attacking instincts. Ian also looked in good form with several cultured off drives in evidence.

Just on the verge of the mid-innings break for drinks Tom lofted an attempted on drive and was caught by Elliot Wills off Darren Holroyd for 25 leaving the score on 81/2. Ashley Haywood, captain in Lee Booth's absence, soon survived a dropped catch, one of seven or eight of varying degrees of difficulty put down by the home team, but it was Ian who was the next to go. He played a little early at an attempted on drive and skied the ball off a leading edge to depart for an excellent 40. It just seemed a pity that he did not go on to a deserved half century. Angus Cox took no time in getting into his stride although he could have been caught twice just before and after he reached double figures. Those errors were costly for Holmbridge as he then played a series of powerful shots for both four and six, being particularly quick to punish half volleys. Ashley was caught for 22 in the 36th over having been the junior partner in terms of run scoring in a stand of 59 for the fourth wicket. The total was 151/4.

This was at the start of the last ten overs and 200 seemed a realistic target. Angus reached 50 with a huge six but fell three balls later, caught for an entertaining 51. Greg Holmes was bowled first ball and, apart from one boundary from Mark Hill (8) and a flamboyant six over cover by Dan Peace, the scoring rate fell away and the target set was 189/8. There had just been time for fifteen year old debutant Jonathan Mudd (1*) to have a brief appearance at the crease as he and David Rishton (2*) saw out the last ten balls.

Greg Holmes was quickly amongst the wickets as Holmbridge began their reply. Duncan Clough shouldered arms to the second delivery only to see his off stump rock back. Dan Peace, who bowled his twelve overs in one stint in his best spell of the season, had Darren Holroyd caught behind also for a duck. Elliot Wills was run out going for the second after a good throw from Mark Hill to Chris Flanagan on duty at the bowler's end. Craig Furze scored 38 of the first 45 runs in a determined counter attack before he was smartly stumped by Tom Sykes off Dan Peace. David Rishton picked up three middle order wickets although the scoring rate was being stepped up as well but with the game reaching an interesting stage the rains came at seven o'clock precisely to put an end to proceedings after 32 overs with Holmbridge on 116/7. With Mark Rishton also making his first team debut there was the sight for a short period of father and son bowling in tandem.

Team: Chris Flanagan; Ian Short; Tom Sykes (w/k); Ashley Haywood; Angus Cox; Mark Hill; Greg Holmes; Dan Peace; David Rishton; Jonathan Mudd; Mark Rishton.

**Saturday August 30th
v. Leymoor (home)**

No smoke without fire

Drifting smoke from a fire in a hay barn, smouldering for a long time after the initial blaze, was an irritation on and off for players and spectators in the final Saturday game of the season. Our visitors had defeated us back in June but still needed the points to get out of next to bottom place in the league whilst revenge for Thurstonland would make relegation a statistical impossibility and probably ensure a mid table finish.

Sam Oldham returned as Chris Flanagan's opening partner and both batsmen played several air shots outside off stump as both Dean Dyson and Colin Johnson found some early movement. Chris departed in the fourth over caught in the gully off Johnson for seven and Ian Short played watchfully after joining Sam. Dean Dyson bowled eight accurate overs before being replaced, only conceding 19 runs which included four boundaries. Colin Johnson also kept the run rate down until Sam hit two sixes in succession over extra cover and mid wicket and followed this next ball with a four.

By now Richard Oakley and Paul Walker were in the attack and the latter dismissed both batsmen in his first over, bowling Ian for 8 and then, after a final boundary, Sam for an excellent 36 as he got the faintest of touches to wicket keeper Smith. Forty-nine for one had quickly become 54/3 and a batting struggle which has often been a feature of the 2008 season again seemed on the cards. Ashley Haywood and Tom Sykes patiently set about restoring home fortunes although the former had a let off when dropped at square leg off a sharp chance when on 20.

The returning Johnson accounted for Tom who skied a drive to mid off to be dismissed for 18. Angus Cox scored a rapid 20, batting with great confidence in hitting three fours and a six, but rather gave it away when lofting the ball to mid on. Mark Hill (5) was also caught off the persevering Johnson with the fielder in each case being James Ruscoe. Greg Holmes had two balls, playing a lovely on drive for four from his first and then promptly hitting Richard Oakley's next delivery straight to Dean Dyson at extra cover.

Lee Booth joined Ashley at 141/7 and the last eight overs proved very productive as no scoring opportunity was missed by either batsman. Lee's scampered singles were mixed with some powerful shots from his partner. At one point Ashley hit five fours in seven deliveries to reach a well deserved half century and the end of the innings saw him undefeated on 72. Lee had 11 not out. They had added 49 and the Leymoor target was 190/7.

A visiting side, a little below strength because of late holidays, was quickly in trouble. Lee Booth opened the bowling in Dan Peace's absence and he bowled Andy Raw in his first over to set in motion a collapse which saw Leymoor reduced to 15/5 and then 26/6. Greg Holmes kept up his excellent form by taking 3/22 whilst Lee had figure of 3/19. Only Dean Dyson with a defiant and well struck 25 hinted at any permanent resistance. David Rishton (3/2) took three late wickets whilst Under 15 player Johnny Mudd (1/15 in four overs), mixing a few good deliveries with others where his radar was a little astray, had Dyson taken at second slip by Ashley Haywood to give him his first wicket in the first team. The visitor's final total of 63 made this a comprehensive win for Thurstonland, now able to enjoy the final three fixtures in September and endeavouring to get as high in the final table as possible.

Team: Chris Flanagan; Sam Oldham; Ian Short; Ashley Haywood; Tom Sykes (w/k); Angus Cox; Mark Hill; Greg Holmes; Lee Booth; David Rishton; Jonathan Mudd.

**Sunday September 7th
Edgerton & Dalton (away) - Rained Off**

**Sunday September 14th
v. Green Moor (home)**

Bowlers leave their mark

The ground was barely fit for play and only the fact that everyone felt a dose of cricket lag coming on with it being the penultimate game of the season led to play starting promptly. After only two or three overs the bowling approaches left marks which would have been ideal for a basic test in tracking for those taking up a career in espionage but shortened run ups and a suitably measured tread by the bowlers meant that there were no safety issues. Tom Sykes became Chris Flanagan's sixth opening partner of the campaign and he settled to his task with determination on a wicket which had variable pace and bounce at times, understandable when taking into account the limited time available for preparation during the week leading up to the game.

Noel Bramall bowled his left arm over the wicket tidily throughout his uninterrupted twelve over spell and conceded just two boundaries, the second of which was a six despatched high over the leg side wall by Tom. It was also a no ball as it came at over chest height, a rare example of a loss of control by the bowler whose final figures of 0/27 were well earned. The partnership prospered beyond the break for drinks taken at 65/0 in the 23rd over. Chris readily accumulated ones and twos and took full advantage of anything more wayward by driving stylishly through the off side for four and pulling a couple of short deliveries to the leg side boundary. One straight shot fell just a couple of feet short of what he later alleged would have been a very rare straight six. Chris Beever eventually broke the stand by trapping Tom lbw for 30 in the 29th over when the stand had reached 84, the second highest opening partnership of 2008. Chris followed four overs later, lobbing a gentle catch to square leg after a watchful 56, an innings of class in less than ideal conditions. He had enjoyed a brief first partnership at the crease with Angus Cox whose after burner style acceleration when running is a vivid counterpoint to his own rather more restrained method of progression.

Angus quickly made it clear he was looking to get on with things and was a little fortunate to survive two lofted shots before he had reached double figures. After that, however, he kept things moving by taking well judged ones and twos and rarely allowing more than a couple of balls to pass without a scoring shot. Ashley Haywood (15) also kept things ticking over after a cautious start before being caught with the total on 130. Angus stayed long enough to bring up the 150 in the 43rd over before lofting a catch to Nigel Dowkes. His 41 was another invaluable contribution in a series of good scores. Mark Hill added an uncomplicated 13 before being stumped when several feet down the track. Greg Holmes on one and Tom Broom (0*) in his debut first team innings were undefeated as the innings closed on 162/5.

Greg opened the attack from the pavilion end in an attempt to avoid the worst of the damp areas with Lee Booth operating as his partner. The latter bowled Harry Howlett, Green Moor's young White Rose player for three and quickly followed by having Chris Matthewman lbw for two. Jordan Thackray replaced Greg and gave little away whilst Under 15 player Tom Broom took over from Lee. Tom's first ball in senior cricket was hit unceremoniously for six by Mark Sykes, another of Green Moor's youngsters, but after that he bowled with great accuracy during his permitted five over spell which included two maidens to end conceding only eleven runs. Opener Jake Rogers was at the crease for almost ninety minutes for 13 before he was bowled by David Rishton but it was Jordan Thackray (4/13) who rapidly dismissed the visitor's middle order and just missed out on his hat trick after having Andy Howe caught behind first ball. The experienced Nigel Dowkes and usual opening bat Julian Bates came together at 47/8 but survived the last 18 overs with few alarms to take the total to 80/8 by the end of proceedings.

Team: Chris Flanagan; Tom Sykes (w/k); Angus Cox; Ashley Haywood; Mark Hill; Greg Holmes; Tom Broom; Lee Booth; David Rishton; Jordan Thackray; Jonathan Mudd.

Sunday September 21st v. Cawthorne (home)

Another one bites the dust

The warm sunshine on the autumnal equinox was most welcome but rather ironic for the last game of the season after all the damp, grey days which had been the order of the day since the beginning of August. This was the third time in six seasons that we had entertained our visitors in the final fixture although this year the match should have been the opener in April but it was rearranged because not a ball was bowled on that day.

Cawthorne were already virtually assured of the runners up spot whilst Thurstonland were about to finish fifth, a higher position than had seemed likely at the mid point of the campaign. Matthew Roebuck and Billy Raynor opened the innings after the visitors won the toss but Kris Thackray soon had the latter taken at slip by Lee Booth for a duck. Liam Wiles then came to the wicket and the youthful pair dominated proceedings for the next hour and a half. Greg Holmes had to be played with care as he continued his fine 2008 form to the very end but neither he, Kris Thackray, David Rishton or Tom Broom managed to achieve the desired breakthrough although neither batsman was ever able to cut loose.

Tom bowled five tidy overs and can be pleased with his efforts in his two games in the senior side. His progress next season will be watched with interest. Matty Roebuck was eventually the one to be dismissed when Tom Sykes took a thin edge off Dan Peace's bowling. Paul Osbourne (15) was bowled by Greg Holmes as he returned for his second spell whilst long time opponent Sam Wilford (17) hit one huge six before providing Lee Booth with his second catch at mid wicket and Dan (2/51) with his second victim, his 334th which moved him to eighth position in the list of wicket takers for the first team going back to 1954.

Liam Wiles, after a good innings, eventually succumbed, lbw to the persevering Greg Holmes who thoroughly deserved his figures of 3 for 20 from his twelve overs. A few

brisk runs were added as the final overs arrived and the target set for Thurstonland at tea was 174/6. It was, interestingly, only the sixth time in the 2008 season that we had batted second.

In the absence of Chris Flanagan, Tom Sykes opened with Eddie Haigh whilst teenagers Billy Raynor and Liam Wiles led the Cawthorne attack. The former bowled well in his two spells and looks to be a good prospect for our visitors. Both Tom and Eddie played watchfully and the total mounted without ever reaching the rate required to mount a serious challenge to the target set. The introduction of Sam Wilford saw the breakthrough when Eddie, having made 19 patient runs, was caught by Dale Skelly. Yet again in this season of batting frustrations, the first significant misjudgement led to a dismissal when the batsman seemed well set.

Kris Thackray, also a little short of runs in 2008, then joined Tom and the two of them soldiered on without ever managing to seize the initiative. The total had got to 82 when Kris (18) was caught by Richard Greaves to give Sam Wilford the second of his six victims. Angus Cox began in his usual style and drove one ball uncompromisingly to the boundary but when he had reached 8 he was given out stumped when he felt that his back foot had remained anchored behind the crease. The score was now 91/3 but the middle order seemed ready to start the winter hibernation as quickly as possible and wickets fell at regular intervals. Tom Sykes was run out during this period after a watchful 37 and it remained for Lee Booth (3*) the stay to the end to salvage a final point. In the last over David Rishton drilled a catch to Dale Skelly off occasional bowler Tom Barker, leaving Neil Booth, nursing a hand injury sustained following an attempted catch in the deep, to fend off the last three balls of the season with the total on 116/9.