

1976: A NEW LEAGUE — AND ANOTHER NEW NAME

At an AGM held on 23rd January 1976 the Chairman, Colin Richmond, announced that the club's application to join the South Lakeland League had been accepted. At the same meeting, there was a long debate following Tom Rickerby's proposal that the name should be changed to "Shireshead & Forton Cricket Club", and this was eventually, though rather reluctantly, agreed.

In the immediately preceding years, Shireshead had become one of the most successful teams in the Lancaster & District League, and it must have seemed like a demotion to be placed in the 3rd Division of the new league. Frank Cox was the captain, and he led his team forcibly and with determination to achieve rapid promotion. They did so emphatically, and at home against Milnthorpe 2nd in early September, achieved a score of 323 (Colin Richmond 72 [with five 6s and seven 4s], Rodney Ward 59 and Frank Cox 80) which remained a Division 3 record for 24 years. Two months earlier on 3rd July, in a home match against Ibis, Shireshead & Forton had reached 203/2 with Keith Thornton 98 not out. We believe this was the first score above 200 in the club's history, but unfortunately Keith just failed to make the first century before the overs ran out. These rapidly falling records were a tribute to the excellence of the pitches being prepared by Allan Twiname, and also to the mown outfield — no long grass had to be retained for the cows any more!

Keith Thornton scored 552 runs in 1976 at an average of 32.47, but close behind him in the averages was a young player with special talent who was to play a major part in the club in years to come. 16-year-old Colin Twiname could only play in 10 matches because of his school commitments, but he scored 169 runs at 28.1 including 52no at Ambleside.

1976 also brought success in the divisional cup, the Provincial Challenge Trophy. This win in a cup competition marked the beginning of a long sequence of successes in this form of the game involving 25 8-ball overs per innings, with an allowance of up to five overs per bowler. Shireshead beat Westgate by eight wickets in the semi-final, and then took less than 14 overs to overwhelm Coniston in the final at Cartmel on 15th August, Keith Thornton hitting a rapid 47no. In these early years in the new league, there were many good contributions in the 2nd XI from experienced players such as John Yates and Hilton Walker.

The first few weeks of the 1977 season may have suggested to onlookers that now, having risen to Division 2, the team were at their appropriate level in the new league. At the beginning of June they were in an uncomfortable ninth position, and after ten games at the end of the month they were still in the lower half. Then a sequence of emphatic wins brought a steady climb upwards. A new Division 2 batting record of 274/7 [held for 16 years] was set in a home game against Morecambe OB (F Cox 65, R Ward 58no, H Murphy 55). This brought a new feeling of confidence and, by the end of the season, not only had second place and promotion been achieved, but also the divisional KO, the Tartan Keg. In the cup semi-final Shireshead & Forton made 127/7 (F Cox 50no), then Ted Longton (5/19) and Tom Rickerby (5/21) dismissed Carnforth A for 88. In the final, Shireshead scored just 118 (Brian Danson 38), but Ambleside struggled against tight bowling and could only manage 100 in reply.

After the rather uncertain form of 1977, the successes that followed could hardly have been predicted, for 1978 became one of the most outstanding in the club's history. On April 15th at Staveley, Terry Oliver (73) and Harry Murphy (63no) contributed to 165/3, the league's highest on the opening day of the season, and after a sequence of wins Shireshead & Forton sat at the top of the table. The most notable of these victories was at home against Burneside, who were pre-eminent in the league at that time. But Burneside won comfortably on their own ground, and defeat at the hands of David Cocker against Trimpell proved crucial, and there was no recovery from the slip to second place in August.

There was much to celebrate, however, after dramatic wins in the league's premier KO competition, the Vaux Silver Tankard. Against Heysham, Colin Richmond hit an amazing 75 out of the first 83, and Bernard Kitchin followed with 73no. Then in the semi-final against Silverdale, Terry Oliver was devastating, taking 8 for 12 from his five overs. The Vaux cup final in 1978 was at Netherfield on Sunday 30th July, and a large crowd watched Brian Danson hit an imperious 69 in a challenging total of 147/5, then Terry Oliver (4/20) and Bernard Kitchin (3/21) dismissed Burneside for just 98.



Bernard Kitchin Harold Thompson Terry Oliver Michael Richmond Rodney Ward Alistair Winstanley Ted Longton
Eddie Smith Colin Richmond Frank Cox Brian Danson Harry Murphy Boy: Tim Mansfield

THE 1ST XI 1978

After these high points in 1978, 1979 brought 8 wins and 10 defeats, and a mid-table position for the 1st XI was very disappointing. There were, however, good things happening in the 2nd XI.

The 2nd XI had been admitted into Division 5 of the new league in 1976, and in that year some who had already served the club for many years played a big part. Johnny Barrett played in all, and opened the batting in some of the matches, and although it was 44 years since he first played for Shireshead, he still had plenty to contribute. At Holme on 3rd July he hit a rapid 46 with 6 fours and 2 sixes. Brian Walmsley kept wicket and made good contributions with the bat. The junior section was formed in 1976, and after a few years young players began to make their mark. On 19th May 1979 there was a stand of 116 for the 4th wicket between John Carr (67) and Dave Richmond (44). Later that year John Carr took 7/20 at Bentham, and then at Coniston he and Anthony Park (both U-16 players) took five wickets apiece to dismiss the home side for 31 in just 11 overs.

However, the best single moment of 1979 in the 2nd XI was the 134 made by Brian Danson against Ingleton at home on Sunday 15th July. This included 14 fours & 6 sixes and, 70 years after the club began, it was the first century for a senior team. The 2nd XI finished at the top of the table on equal points with Lansil A, and the outstanding all-round contribution to bring promotion was that of Philip Winstanley with 54 wickets at 6.18, and 156 runs at 22.28.



Brian Danson

1980-86 — CONSOLIDATION, THEN A HIGH POINT

The 1st XI finished 6th in the table in 1980, but the 42 points obtained were less than half of those achieved by winners Warton, and only 3 points above the relegation zone. There were, however, some good moments which are still talked about with relish. In the National Village KO, then known as the Whitbread, Read from the Ribblesdale League visited Clifton Park. They had been Lancashire champions on several occasions and were favourites not only beforehand, but during most of the match itself. Shireshead were bowled out for exactly 100, and at 69/2 Read were cruising along with confidence. Then captain Peter Boustead came on to bowl his medium pacers, and wickets began to tumble, though with just 5 runs needed at 96/6 Read were still seemingly in control. But Peter thought differently, and to the astonished spectators it all seemed to happen in an instant: 96/7, 96/8, 96/9, 98 all out. Peter's figures were 8-3-10-7 with a hat-trick at the decisive moment. This was the best individual performance in that round of the competition, and Peter was showered with gifts from sponsors including a new bat with a letter personally signed by Duncan Fearnley. This triumph perhaps did a little to alleviate the pain of a previous experience in the competition in 1978: Shireshead had made 144, and White Coppice won after being 70/9. Their last pair, Perryman and Baines, hit out fearlessly and somehow survived to win the game. This was a huge disappointment because Shireshead had achieved a famous victory in the previous round — before a large crowd at Clifton Park they had beaten Lindal Moor, the 1977 losing finalists at Lord's. This had raised high hopes of proceeding much further.

The other outstanding event of 1980 was a remarkable performance by Brian Danson at Silverdale on 31 May. Silverdale had scored 217/8 (Danson 4/54), and Shireshead replied with 218/3, all but 47 of this total having been scored by Brian. His 171 included 114 from 19 sixes, and it remains the highest individual score in the 1st Division.

The newly promoted 2nd XI had a splendid season in 1980, topping the 4th division after winning 14 games and losing only twice. Philip Winstanley took 67 wickets at 7.95, and Anthony Park had 47 at 8.64.



Philip Winstanley

1981 brought eight wins for the 1st XI and a comfortable fifth position in the table. The leading bowlers were Bernard Kitchin and Stuart Warrington, but Terry Oliver played his part yet again, taking 5/8 to help dismiss Milnthorpe for just 28 at Clifton Park on 21st June. Colin Twiname (466 league runs), Mike Barker (301) and Harry Murphy (333) led the way to some high scores, with Colin (112) and Harry (96) breaking both club and league records in a massive opening stand of 224 in the return game at Milnthorpe. The team score of 269/4 was also a new record for the 1st division. 1981 was a tough year for the 2nd XI in the 3rd division, though Philip Winstanley again did well with bat and ball. At this time several young players were being introduced into senior cricket, and the standard of the 3rd division was proving difficult for them. When relegation back to the 4th division occurred after the 1982 season it was a necessary step at that particular stage in the club's development. For the 1st XI, 1982 again brought eight wins and fifth position in the league. Denis Yates had the distinction of hitting the highest score of the season, his 89 (10 fours & 4 sixes) at Bare also being a personal best. Bill Jacques and Phil Winstanley took 48 league wickets apiece, and were among the best bowlers in the division.

In 1983 both 1st and 2nd XIs finished with exactly 50 points, and mid-table positions. It was a moderate season for the batsmen in the 1st team, with only five half-centuries, three of them to Brian Danson who scored 548 runs in all matches. Stuart Warrington was the outstanding bowler with 53 wickets at 10.58. In the final for the 1st division cup (Doug Talbot Memorial Trophy) played at Burneside, Shireshead made only 98, but some tight bowling by Stuart Warrington (4/20) gave them a chance and they lost to Arnside by just two wickets. From 1983 for four years in succession, the 2nd XI played in the final of the 4th division cup. In 1983 at Bare they lost to Arnside, despite a spirited innings of 63 by Steve Parkinson. It was better in 1984. In the semi-final, Ian Twiname took 4/9 against Kendal 3rd as they were dismissed for 63. The final was tight, Shireshead being dismissed for 118 (Andrew Cragg 49), and Moor Hospital just three runs short after good bowling by Gavin Moss and Stuart Warrington.

In 1984 the 1st XI climbed to 4th in the table, and the notable contribution was the bowling of Terry Oliver, who captured 54 wickets in league matches at 12.22. Harry Murphy, with a total of 459 runs at 21.86 was the leading batsman, and veteran Brian Parkinson made his mark with 340 runs. Although 1985 was a modest season in terms of league positions, three centuries between Sunday 14th and Saturday 27th July (Tim Mansfield and Russell Parkinson for the 2nds, Stuart Warrington for the 1sts) made the headlines. In less than two weeks, the total number of centuries for senior teams in the club had doubled! On 1st September, the 2nd XI faced Moor Hospital again in the divisional cup final, but losing this time by 6 wickets.



The 2nd XI in 1985, runners-up for the Adam & Gaskill Trophy

Tony Pegg Ken Blundell Andrew Cragg Peter Mansfield Tim Mansfield Ian Gibb
Paul Dennison Ian Twiname Gerry Hornby (capt) Tom Rickerby Bill Jacques

1986 became a season to remember, for the 1st XI finished only two points behind winners Arnside, and the 2nd XI gained promotion and won the 4th division KO trophy. On 26th April, the 1st XI beat Windermere at Clifton Park, and the game is remembered for the 47 made by Ray Blackwell on his first appearance. He went on that season to make 628 league runs at an average of 48.30, including one century, and there was much more to come in the future. On 31 August 1986, the 2ndXI were in the divisional cup final against Royal Albert for whom Paul Wareing, a former league professional and county 2nd XI player, was a fearsome fast bowler and powerful batsman. He had scored 135no and taken 4 for only 2 runs in 10.2 overs at Clifton Park. In the final, Wareing bowled his 5 overs for a mere 6 runs, but took only one wicket, then he fell lbw to Terry Oliver for seven runs. Shireshead won!

One innings for the 2nd XI deserves a special mention: Peter Murphy hit 72no off just 29 balls at Heysham, with seven sixes.

In 1984 the 1st XI climbed to 4th in the table, and the notable contribution was the bowling of Terry Oliver, who captured 54 wickets in league matches at 12.22. Harry Murphy, with a total of 459 runs at 21.86 was the leading batsman, and veteran Brian Parkinson made his mark with 340 runs. Although 1985 was a modest season in terms of league positions, three centuries between Sunday 14th and Saturday 27th July (Tim Mansfield and Russell Parkinson for the 2nds, Stuart Warrington for the 1sts) made the headlines. In less than two weeks, the total number of centuries for senior teams in the club had doubled! On 1st September, the 2nd XI faced Moor Hospital again in the divisional cup final, but losing this time by 6 wickets.



The 2nd XI in 1985, runners-up for the Adam & Gaskill Trophy

Tony Pegg Ken Blundell Andrew Cragg Peter Mansfield Tim Mansfield Ian Gibb
Paul Dennison Ian Twiname Gerry Hornby (capt) Tom Rickerby Bill Jacques

1986 became a season to remember, for the 1st XI finished only two points behind winners Arnside, and the 2nd XI gained promotion and won the 4th division KO trophy. On 26th April, the 1st XI beat Windermere at Clifton Park, and the game is remembered for the 47 made by Ray Blackwell on his first appearance. He went on that season to make 628 league runs at an average of 48.30, including one century, and there was much more to come in the future. On 31 August 1986, the 2nd XI were in the divisional cup final against Royal Albert for whom Paul Wareing, a former league professional and county 2nd XI player, was a fearsome fast bowler and powerful batsman. He had scored 135 no and taken 4 for only 2 runs in 10.2 overs at Clifton Park. In the final, Wareing bowled his 5 overs for a mere 6 runs, but took only one wicket, then he fell lbw to Terry Oliver for seven runs. Shireshead won!

One innings for the 2nd XI deserves a special mention: Peter Murphy hit 72 no off just 29 balls at Heysham, with seven sixes.



THE FIRST XI OF 1981

Bill Cowan Stuart Warrington Bill Jacques [Anthony Oliver] Brian Danson Bernard
Kitchin Harry Murphy
Denis Yates Colin Twiname Peter Boustead Terry Oliver Michael Barker



1st Division Runners-up in 1986

Harold Thompson, Steve Parkinson, Tim Mansfield, Stuart Dennison, Terry Oliver, Dave Richmond, Ray Blackwell
Brian Parkinson, Paul Dennison, Stuart Warrington (capt), Scott Lee, Harry Murphy, Angela Murphy (scorer)

1987-1990: THE BEST OF TIMES

The 2nd team had been propelled into the 3rd division for 1987 by some fine batting from Andrew Cragg (401 runs at 28.64) and a young bowler, Phil Oliver, who had 30 wickets at 12.83. This time the higher league position was maintained, thanks to a good blend of experience and some emerging young talent. John Williams made several big scores, as did Ian Gibb and Harold Sutton including a stand of 116 in a 10-wicket win at Moor Hospital. More young bowlers began to make an impact, particularly Andrew Larkin who was to play a good part for several years. Phil Oliver began so well for the 2nds that he was promoted to the 1st XI, where he put on performances of a kind that later became familiar. At Silverdale, he hit 45 with seven sixes in a Shireshead total of 199, then when Silverdale were progressing well at 193/5 in the 42rd over, he took 4 quick wickets to dismiss them for 195. This was one of just six victories for the 1st XI, who had to settle for 5th place.

In 1988 both teams had modest success in the league, but in the final for the 1st division's Doug Talbot trophy at Carnforth, Silverdale made 100/9, and Shireshead 100/7. The win on fewer wickets owed much to Stuart Dennison who took 4/20, then held the fort with 22no to achieve the tense victory.

1989 was an outstanding season. The 1st XI won the league championship with 15 wins and just one defeat, finishing 17 points ahead of runners-up Westgate. Ray Blackwell made 593 league runs at 49.41, and Colin Twiname 546 at 32.11 including another century. Stuart Dennison was the leading bowler with 43 league wickets at 9.95, strongly supported by Bill Jacques with 39 at 11.66. Captain Brian Wood's batting was to the fore in the cup matches. He hit 73 off 86 balls in the Doug Talbot semi-final against Arnside, then 81no in an opening partnership with Colin Twiname (83) in a massive score of 205/2 in the win in the final against Warton. The 2nd team also had a good season in 1989, winning 13 games to gain 3rd place in the 3rd division. Denis Yates headed the batting with 292 runs at 26.54, and young Andrew Larkin performed admirably to take 47 wickets at 12.97. Against Holme at Clifton Park, Terry Oliver made 53, then watched as son Philip hit eight sixes in a score of 70 off just 24 balls. Later in the year, Phil returned the season's best bowling figures with 8/15 v Provincial in Kendal.

The league championship was won again in 1990, and if we look purely at statistics it was almost a repeat of 1989 — just one defeat, a 16-point lead over the runners-up and retention of the Doug Talbot trophy. There is, however, even more of the 1990 season residing in the memory. Ray Blackwell hit eight 50s and two centuries; he topped the league averages with 803 runs at 53.53, and additionally made 262 runs in cups to become the first, and to date the only, Shireshead batsman to score over 1000 runs in a season. There were also fine contributions from other batsmen, three of whom (Colin Twiname, Phil Oliver and Tim Mansfield) scored over 300 in league matches. Brian Danson returned after a sojourn for a few years at Garstang, hitting 75 in his first match at Galgate in a record second wicket partnership of 157 with Tim Mansfield (81). The all-round promise shown by Philip Oliver in the preceding years came to fruition, for as well as making 334 runs in the league he took 31 wickets at 6.91, 3.59 lower than his nearest contender for the 1st division averages. There was a good all-round performance by the other bowlers. Paul Dennison took 41 wickets in league matches, and the spin of Steve Parkinson was decisive in several games. The one defeat on the league was by 2 wickets in a home game against Trimpell, where Ray Blackwell fell cheaply and was one of five victims of Graham Rand, of whom we shall say much later. In the Doug Talbot final, there were fifties from Colin Twiname and Ray Blackwell in a total of 209/8, then Ray took 4/25 as Staveley were bowled out for 109.

One particular game in the 1990 season will be long remembered. At Silverdale on 11th August, it took Shireshead only 65 minutes to pull off a remarkable victory. Phil Oliver took 4 wickets (balls 2-5) in his 1st over. The team arrived back at Clifton Park to find the 2nd team game was only at the half way mark, and they were able to relax and enjoy an 8-wicket victory over Benthams as Denis Yates made 77no, his highest score in an excellent season in which he topped the divisional batting averages.

Silverdale			M Sayer	not out	0
J Smith	c Dennison b Oliver	0	Extras		3
K Letcher	b Dennison	13	Total		23
N Dalzell	c Dennison b Oliver	0	P Dennison 4-1-18-2	P Oliver 3.5-1-3-8	
C Mason	c Murphy b Oliver	0	Shireshead		
M Shorrocks	b Oliver	0	C Twiname	not out	18
S Watts	c Twiname b Oliver	2	M Sutcliffe	not out	4
R Watts	b Dennison	0	Extras		2
M Moon	c Blackwell b Oliver	5	Total (no wkts)		24
J Mason	b Oliver	0	C Mason 2.5-0-18-0	S Watts 2-1-4-0	
P Mason	c Sutcliffe b Oliver	0			

Brian Wood, himself a batsman of quality, was in charge of the 1st XI in 1989 and 1990 and, while he undoubtedly had the advantage of some very talented players, his fine captaincy has always been acknowledged as a major contributory factor in winning the two championships.



THE 1ST XI OF 1989 — LEAGUE & CUP WINNERS

Angela Murphy Tony Goodwin Paul Dennison Terry Oliver Bill Jacques Michael Armstrong Phil Oliver Tim Mansfield Harold Thompson
Colin Twiname Stuart Dennison Brian Wood (capt) Steve Parkinson Harry Murphy (wk) Ray Blackwell

The 1st XI slipped to 4th place in 1991, a season in which for 15 matches they missed the services of Ray Blackwell following his severe hand injury at Galgate on 25th May. In the previous week against Trimpell he had scored a commanding 87, then he returned to finish the season with 90 at Westgate. The batting did remain strong, however, with Brian Danson making 616 league runs at 34.00, Tim Mansfield 424 at 28.27 and Phil Oliver 365 at 28.08. Brian Danson (101no) and Brian Wood (66) had an opening stand of 153 at Warton but this splendid effort brought no reward in points after rain intervened. In general, a lack of form among the bowlers failed to take advantage of good batting, the exception being Bill Jacques with 32 wickets at 13.69 in the league. For the 2nd team, Denis Yates again batted well, sometimes alongside his son Paul. Towards the end of the season, Michael Armstrong emerged as a reliable opener, a role he was to fulfil for a long period for the 1st XI.

Ray Blackwell was there at the start of 1992, but after a few games in his usual fine form, his sojourn with us came to an end as he moved to a job in Scotland. There were two home games during his final weekend, and his batting—a parting gift?—will be long remembered. On 13th June he hit 96 against Galgate, and next day hammered 116 off 84 balls against Pendle Forest. After that, there were occasional fireworks from Phil Oliver (such as 76 off 35 balls against Moor Hospital) but overall it was a season of modest achievement and 5th position in the final table. The 2nd team, on the other hand, did well in the 3rd division, finishing just half a point behind winners Ambleside,. The scorebook shows that this was achieved through some sound but not many distinctive performances. There was just one half-century (Michael Armstrong's 75 v Benthams in the final game), and a single exceptional piece of bowling, Terry Dickinson's 5/4 off 9 overs v Cartmel.

For both teams 1993 was a bleak season, particularly for the 2nds who won only one game and plunged straight back to the 3rd division. They had a wretched time against Westgate 1st XI, scoring only 9 (Peter Wilson 7/3) and setting a new record for the lowest team score. The 1st team did win six matches in the league, but nevertheless only avoided relegation by 2½ points. After the run feast of recent years, there were only four fifties for the first team, two each for Phil Oliver and Tim Mansfield. There were a few moments of pleasure, such as at Burneside where John Bleasdale top-scored with 47, then Phil Oliver (6/30) and Steve Parkinson (4/27) bowled the home team out for a mere 84.

In 1994 the 1st XI climbed to 5th in the league and achieved enough fine wins to lift the spirits. Phil Oliver took 71 wickets in total, 61 of which were in the league at 11.27, and there was good bowling from Steve Parkinson and Dave Jack who excelled against Warton with 8/51. Russell Parkinson had a good season and his 5th wicket stand of 121 with Brian Danson brought victory at Heysham after the loss of four early wickets looked dangerous. Upon their return to the more comfortable surroundings of the 3rd division, the 2nd team managed seven wins, thanks mainly to some consistent batting by Denis Yates (343 runs at 22.86) together with 30 wickets for Tony O'Mahony and 26 for Graham Rand in the first of his notable contributions to our club. 1995 was an undistinguished league season for both teams. The 1st XI dropped to 9th but several batsmen made good contributions, particularly Steve Marston, Paul Yates and Michael Armstrong. Tim Mansfield bowled tightly in the second half of the season, finishing top of the 1st division averages with 34 wickets at 9.50, and Tony O'Mahony had some good returns to lead those of the 3rd division with 31 at 10.77.

1996 was peculiar, for the 1st XI were relegated yet finished the season by beating high-flying Windermere in the 1st division cup final. Scrutiny of the scorebook fails to reveal any obvious reason for the disappointing outcome, for the performances of most individual players look good enough. Four batsmen (Mark Sutcliffe, Russell Parkinson, Paul Yates & Michael Armstrong) and two bowlers (Phil Oliver & Tim Mansfield) were well placed in the league averages, but there was a failure to make the most of these personal achievements. There were a few enjoyable intervals, such as in a cup game against Bolton-le-Sands on 9th June when Mike Park and Phil Oliver each hit five sixes, all at the expense of one bowler, 'Percy' Stockdale, who conceded 101 runs off five 8-ball overs. Mike then proceeded to take 4 wickets for just 3 runs to seal a convincing victory. In the league, Phil Oliver bowled impressively to achieve 7/48 in 21 overs against Sedgwick, who nevertheless won by one wicket. At Arnside, Mark Sutcliffe hit 86no off 100 balls in a convincing 6-wicket win.

On the way to the Vaux final, Tim Mansfield took 5/11 v Westgate and 5/7 v Burneside. The final was at Arnside on 8th September, and Windermere had placed a large cluster of noisy supporters on the hill. These saw their team make only 118 thanks to some tight bowling and keen fielding, then they slowly grew silent as they lost by 8 wickets after a partnership of 95 between Michael Armstrong (31) and Tim Mansfield (71no).



WINNERS OF THE VAUX DIVISION ONE CUP IN 1996

Harry Murphy (wk) Phil Oliver Brian Danson Mike Park Tim Mansfield Dave Jack Andrew Cragg
Angela Murphy (scorer) Michael Armstrong Jonathan Lamley Paul Yates (capt) Official from Vaux Matt Yates

In 1996 young Matthew Yates won the batting award for the 2nd team with 266 runs at an average of 26.60, and Tony O'Mahony and Graham Rand once again provided the foundation of the bowling attack. 1996 was the last season under the name *South Lakeland League*, and from 1997 we were in the *Westmorland League*. In geographical terms, we remained anomalous!