

NEWSLETTER FEATURE

In February 2009, the CK Cricket Heritage Project featured in the Yorkshire CCC Southern Group Newsletter.





THE CRICKET HISTORY OF CALDERDALE AND KIRKLEES

CRICKET HERITAGE in CALDERDALE and KIRKLEES

PETER DAVIES

Like going to heaven without dying.

This has been my answer when people have asked me how I would sum up the experience of the last four years - leading a special £50,000 project about the history and heritage of cricket in Calderdale and Kirklees - in effect, Huddersfield, Halifax and district.

I work in the Department of History at the University of Huddersfield, and until 2004 I had contented myself with teaching and researching French history, my specialist area.

When I wasn't at work I played cricket, watched cricket, and enjoyed reading and writing about cricket. It had never crossed my mind that cricket could be turned into an authentic, legitimate subject for academic inquiry.

Then I got injured. Instead of playing league cricket on a Saturday afternoon I started to wander round local grounds - some that I'd played on, some that were totally new to me. I had always known that cricket was a fundamentally important aspect of society and the local community, but my travels served to reinforce this fact - and also encouraged me to write about what I had seen.

Then a colleague at the university suggested that I apply for some funding to turn my idle jottings into a full-blown heritage project involving cricket researchers, photographers, artists and cartographers.

I applied to the Heritage Lottery Fund for some money. The fund usually sponsors projects about churches, canals, bridges and listed buildings - aspects of what you might call traditional heritage.

Sport was a new area for them, but after a little persuasion they came to accept what I already knew to be a fact: that in most Yorkshire villages the local cricket club was as important to the social fabric as the pub, school or church.

I was lucky enough to receive a grant of £43,400, and I also received an in-kind contribution of £7,000 from my employers, the University of Huddersfield. The project I had established had a clear objective: to explore and celebrate the cricketing heritage of Kirklees and Calderdale, focusing in particular on the 100-plus league clubs and grounds in the area. It was the ultimate partnership - between myself at the university and local libraries, museums, cricket clubs and leagues.

Over the last four years we have had a wonderful time. We have researched and designed over 100 exhibitions about the history of local clubs - staged at public venues such as libraries, pubs, leisure centres, post offices, supermarkets, and even a police station!

www.ckcricketheritage.org.uk



THE CRICKET HISTORY OF CALDERDALE AND KIRKLEES

Throughout Rob Light, research assistant, and myself, project leader, have been assisted by a fantastic team of paid experts and wholehearted volunteers.

We have established cricket archives in Halifax and Huddersfield libraries and an electronic archive on our website: www.ckcricketheritage.org.uk.

Other objectives were met, too: we employed "community" photographers and artists to depict local cricket landscapes, and we have sold a range of cricket notelets and prints.

We have designed a series of cricket heritage trails for walkers, produced a variety of project-related publications, held an annual conference, and managed to publicise our work in the local and national media. We even established an evening course at the university about the history of local cricket - a world first!

The project is ongoing, and we have lots of plans. Already we have learned so much about cricket and its inter-relationship with local communities.

Cricket, just like other sports, needs its historians. There is a vital and fascinating story that needs to be told - about the development of clubs and the centrality of the game to local village communities.

*** For more information contact Dr Peter Davies on 01484-472405 or via p.j.davies@hud.ac.uk. And check out the project website: www.ckcricketheritage.org.uk