

Bridgeholme CC

There is no place called Bridgeholme, so how did Bridgeholme Cricket Club acquire its name?

The club originated directly from local industry. The cricket teams from J.J. Tatham Ltd., Nanholme Mills, and Moss Brothers, Bridgeroyd Mills joined forces to form one club in 1950.

The name 'Bridgeholme' was invented by combining 'Nanholme' and 'Bridgeroyd'. These two mills still exist today, although Nanholme is now re-named Springholme and is owned by Pickwell-Arnold.

The club had no ground during its first season in 1951 - its only year in the Todmorden and District League - and played all matches away.

In 1952 Hill House, the Cross Stone ground, was rented for the club's first season in the Hebden Bridge League and by early in 1953 the Eastwood ground, next door to one used from the 1890s to 1930s by Eastwood CC, was ready.

Bridgeholme moved still further a field in 1956, joining the Halifax League. Since then the club has played continuously in either the Halifax League or the Halifax Association.

Preparation of the Station House ground had been underway since the summer of 1952. Drainage, levelling and the laying of the square had been the priorities.

The first match, against Hebden Bridge Salem in Division 1 of the Hebden Bridge & District League, was scheduled for 9 May 1953 but the ground was not quite ready and the game was switched to Salem Fields.

In January 1954 an application to enter the Halifax Parish Cup was rejected, in part because the ground was deemed 'unfit', yet five months later Bridgeholme was selected to host the Hebden Bridge League's knockout final between Heptonstall Slack and Birchcliffe.

Further improvements saw the club admitted to the Parish Cup and Halifax League for 1956.

By the start of the 1956 season, all the Hebden Bridge League's champions of that decade had left. Luddendenfoot St. Mary's had joined the Halifax Amateur League while Mytholmroyd Methodists, Hebden Bridge Salem and Bridgeholme had all moved into the Halifax & District League.

Bridgeholme played their first match in the Halifax League at Blackley on Saturday 21 April 1956, losing by 45 runs.

The *Hebden Bridge Times* was accurate in its prediction about Bridgeholme's first season in the Halifax League Division 1: 'No doubt Bridgeholme will find the going harder in the senior division, but with their playing strength should be able to hold their own.'

The first significant blip on the Bridgeholme radar came in 1959. Bridgeholme's form inexplicably fell away. In Ernest Travis, who hit 508 runs at an average of 36, the club possessed one of the league's finest batsmen, but a fourth-from-bottom finish did not augur well.

Relegation followed in 1960. Only five points covered the bottom seven in the ten-team league and Bridgeholme's six wins and three draws would have seen them safe most seasons.

But they could hardly claim misfortune when, with issues to be settled on the final day, they could field only nine men in the first team and eight in the seconds. Inevitably, both teams lost.

Club fortunes go in cycles and, after almost a decade on the rise, Bridgeholme were past the peak and falling. The next test of the Club's mettle had begun.

The Sowden Trophy, a familiar artefact to those connected with Bridgeholme Cricket Club, has an interesting history.

The trophy was originally presented to the Hebden Bridge & District League in 1952 by Mrs Percival Sowden, wife of the founder of Bridgeholme Cricket Club.

The trophy was for the winners of Division 2, and its first recipient was John Martin, the Bridgeholme captain.

The Sowden Trophy was awarded only three times. By 1955 the Hebden Bridge League had contracted to one division and on 30 December 1957 it ceased to exist.

The League's trophies were held in the offices of Hebden Bridge District Council for almost 14 years for safe-keeping in case the League re-formed.

By 1971 it was clear this would not happen and the Hebden Bridge & District Cricket League committee met for the final time to distribute their assets. These included the Sowden Trophy, which was offered back to the providers and first winners, Bridgeholme.

The 53-year-old trophy continues to see good service and is awarded to Bridgeholme Cricket Club's player of the year.

How did sudden prosperity at Barkisland Cricket Club affect the cricketers of Bridgeholme?

In the summer of 2000 Barkisland Cricket Club had an unremarkable season, finishing eighth, one place below Southowram and one place above Booth, of the 12 clubs in Section 'A' of the Halifax League, a competition they had not won since 1985.

Yet, with an influx of money and new players on the horizon, Barkisland resigned from the Halifax League to enter a higher tier in Section 'B' of the Huddersfield League.

The move has worked for them. Earning promotion in 2003, Barkisland finished fifth in Section 'A' in 2004, the highest standing in the Club's history.

Their resignation from the Halifax League in 2000 left a vacancy. Bridgeholme, who had left the Halifax League in 1984, applied and were willingly re-admitted. All the omens seemed right. Bridgeholme fulfilled all the criteria of playing on their own ground, having a decent pitch and running two teams.

With facilities being re-built after the flood in June of that summer, the time seemed right for a fresh start in a higher class of cricket. It has proved to be a wise move. The club has held its own in Section 'B' and the players have benefited from playing on better quality pitches.

Bridgeholme's cricketers have traditionally frequented local hostelrys for their post-match entertainment.

For many years they diplomatically supported their landlords at the nearby Station House Hotel. This has now closed and more recently the players have held their celebrations and post-mortems at the Rose and Crown, the Swan With Two Necks and the Shannon and Chesapeake.

With the construction of the new pavilion has come the opportunity to provide post-match hospitality, thereby earning much needed funds, at the ground.

It is a condition of the Lottery grant which funded the building that it is used by the community, and local groups and private individuals are taking advantage of Eastwood's first community building for decades.

Bridgeholme Cricket Club does not have an official nickname but is often referred to as 'Todmorden's Cinderella Club'.

The last of the town's many all-amateur clubs, Bridgeholme is somewhat dwarfed by the town's other two clubs, Todmorden and Walsden. Todmorden, founded in 1835, is the town's oldest surviving institution after the church and National School and has played in the high-profile Lancashire League since 1897.

Walsden CC first played around 1856, and has been in continuous existence since 1870 and has played in the Central Lancashire League since 1893.