

Copley CC

We are told that Copley Cricket Club (founded 1880) had a precursor in the shape of 'Copley United C.C.', who were apparently playing in 1864.

In 1891 the Halifax Parish Cup Committee appointed a Sub Committee 'for the purpose of visiting and inspecting the grounds of the various clubs entered for the cup competition' so that they could: draw up a report setting forth the particulars of each ground, more especially with regard to their suitability for the playing of a cup tie game.

Subsequently, a report was produced for each and Copley was described as follows:

'This field is approached by means of a footpath just below the canal from the road leading from the station to the village, 'tis about 5 minutes walk from the station. The field measures 180 x 75 yards across the centre of the crease which latter however is not in the centre of the field, but placed considerably nearer its narrow end. The crease measures 40 yards x 40 and is on the whole a good one, the outfield is also fair. There is seating for about 20 and two small pavilions.'

Today, the framed memorabilia in the pavilion bar emphasises the history of the Club, including team photos from the early twentieth century ('West Vale Baptist League Champions 1901', 'Akroydon and District League Winners 1902'...).

An intriguing document from yesteryear also hangs in the pavilion bar. A Yorkshire Federation report stated that Copley's ground covered 17,545 square yards, that motor hire cost the club £4.10 per year, and that gate fees raised £14 per annum and tea sales £18.

It was also noted that seating facilities were 'not sufficient' - a minor problem that has been well and truly rectified since.

In 1909 one of the small pavilions referred to in the 1891 report was replaced by a new building. It was opened on 1 May by the Club President, Mr A. Briggs, who described the occasion as 'a red letter day' in the history of the Club.

The *Halifax Courier* also reported that Mr Briggs described how the Club had 'felt for some time that they needed better accommodation for meeting visitors and for themselves' and 'decided that when they did make the effort it should be in no half hearted fashion'.

He went on to say how 'every year sport takes a higher place in village and town life...and was one of the influences which helped elevate the tone of the people', and in view of this, it was hoped that 'for many years to come the pavilion would be used for the sport of the district'.

This final wish of Mr Briggs was more than fulfilled, as the pavilion remained in use for 60 years. Unfortunately, however, the match against Warley, which had been staged to celebrate the opening, was rather less longlasting and had to be abandoned due to rain after two overs, with the visitors score left at one for none.

When the 1909 pavilion was finally replaced in 1969, the new building was positioned at the opposite end of the field. It was possible to use this former area of marshland because of the flood-prevention scheme that had been launched after the Calder broke its banks in 1947.

The ground was bought from Bentleys Yorkshire Brewery for £200 in 1920. This was divided into an initial payment of £100 and a further £10 payable for each of the next 10 years.

Interestingly, the payments were raised solely by a specially-formed Ladies Committee, which disbanded once the transaction was complete.

Locals remember the day in 1947 when the River Calder burst its banks. Current groundsman Tom Thorpe explains: 'The ground used to get flooded, and then the whole of the village. The water just used to seep through the whole place. On one occasion some of our wooden benches were transported by the torrents onto the main road!'

Today, the venue is safe from flood alerts. Mounds have been built around the ground - and the village - to stop the spread of water, and the Water Board has made strategic adjustments to the water flow.

The floods used to affect Copley in the winter months; not in the summer, thankfully!

After Halifax (1946), Triangle (1947) and Booth (1948), it was the turn of King Cross to lift the Parish Cup in 1949. They defeated Copley in the final.

Both 1st XI and 2nd XI began the 1960s in wonderful style!

Brian Hulme skippered Copley to another 'Double' in 1973.

Ian Ball was 1st XI skipper in the mid-1970s. Note the presence of Club president – and stalwart – Roy Smith on the photo on the left.

In 1977 Copley won the (local) Collinson Cup and the (national) Haig Club Knockout Trophy.

Special guest John Hampshire played 8 Tests for England – and after his playing career finished he became an umpire, officiating in Test matches and One Day Internationals.

Copley won the League in 2003 under the captaincy of Richard Thorpe, but just missed out in the final of the Parish Cup to the R. Keyword-led Warley side.

Copley Lane is a regular venue for set-piece Halifax League occasions. In 2004 it was packed to the rafters for the Parish Cup final.