

## CRICKET

## Focus on - Copley

The 10th in a Saturday series on Calderdale cricket clubs by Dr Peter Davies of the Cricket Heritage Project at Huddersfield University

# United front is the key to continued success

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

Today, the framed memorabilia in the pavilion bar at Copley Lane 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'...).

A new pavilion was built in 1909 at a cost of £60 and replaced in 1969. The ground was bought from Bentleys Yorkshire Brewery for £200 in 1920.

During the Second World War, the army used Copley's ground for their own cricket fixtures.

Locals remember the day in 1947 when the River Calder burst its banks. Club stalwart 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 Yorkshire Water has made strategic adjustments to the water flow.

In 1952 Copley scooped the Parish Cup for the first time, vanquishing Booth in the final. For good measure they also claimed the Division One title in the same summer.

The club continued to stack up the silverware in the 1960s and 1970s and then started to dominate the local cricket scene in the early 21st century.

Copley Lane is a regular venue for showpiece Halifax League events and is always packed to the rafters on such occasions.

It is a scenic and atmospheric cricket ground, located in the shadow of Copley Viaduct.

Legend has it that once upon a time, when passing trains left clouds of black smoke in their wake, umpires did not hesitate to take the players off the field for a breather.

In 2005 the club celebrated its 125th anniversary, and Lancashire and England coach Mike Watkinson spoke at their special dinner.

## FACT FILE

Founded: 1880  
 Ground: Copley Lane  
 Nearest Landmark: Copley Viaduct  
 Nearest Other Clubs: Old Crossleyans, Sowerby Bridge, Greetland  
 League: Halifax  
 Former Leagues: West Vale Baptist League, Akroydon & District League  
 Greatest Moment: 1973 League & Cup 'Double' under the captaincy of Brian Hulme.  
 Local Hero: Roy Smith - club stalwart and Halifax League VIP.  
 Bizarre Fact: Only one batsman has ever cleared the viaduct with a big hit - and he played for Blackley!



As time goes by: The first XI pictured in 1920 (above) and club members watering the pitch in the 1950s

