

Bowled a few googlies – but Lightcliffe keep bouncing them back

Over the past two years Dr Peter Davies from the Department of History at the University of Huddersfield has been reconstructing the history of local cricket as part of a pioneering £50,000 Cricket Heritage Project being sponsored by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the University of Huddersfield. Working in tandem with research assistant Rob Light, he has been unearthing old photographs, archive documents and other sources relating to the rich local history of the sport. A website, which can be found at www.ckcricketheritage.org.uk has further details. Contact Dr Davies on 01484-472405 or via p.j.davies@hud.ac.uk if you have any more information or images for the Project archive. This week the spotlight falls on Lightcliffe ...

William Ackroyd who provided Lightcliffe with a new pavilion in 1922 – but a condition forbade the sale of alcohol and the chance of a lucrative earner.



It was 1875 when Lightcliffe Cricket Club was formed.

At this time, the club was located at the other end of Lightcliffe village on West Field. Today the ground is situated on Wakefield Road, although a local farmer owns the ground.

Lightcliffe played an instrumental role in the formation of one of the district's first cricket leagues.

A Parish Cup committee was formed in Halifax in 1887 and Lightcliffe Cricket Club was one of the 12 organisations involved in this.

The club was a key player in the establishment of the Halifax & District League in the 1890s.

Lightcliffe continued to play in the Halifax League for the rest of the century and well into the twentieth century.

An inspection of all grounds in the Halifax Parish League was made in 1891 – including Lightcliffe. It was recorded that the ground was 150 x 118 yards in area and was in good condition.

While still playing in the Halifax Parish League, Lightcliffe were successful in winning the championship in 1905.

Due to the Great War (1914-18), Lightcliffe joined the Spen Valley League on a temporary basis.

Large numbers of young men enlisted, and as a result a number of clubs were unable to carry on for the duration of the conflict. But despite the war the cricket continued in full force.

Lightcliffe were overjoyed when Sir W.H. Ackroyd provided the club with a new pavilion in 1922. However, on receiving the pavilion, one of the conditions was 'that they did not have a bar or sell alcohol.'

In 1924 the club left the Halifax League and joined the Bradford League, one of Yorkshire's most prestigious competitions.

The 1920s were a roaring success for Lightcliffe. The big year was 1926 – the year of the General Strike.

After playing matches against Saltaire, Windhill, Bradford and Lidgett Green, the 1st XI won the Priestley Cup for the first time, but not the last.

The club received an early setback at the start of the 1947 season. In the off-season, leading player and future captain Herbert Aspinall had been injured playing football!

This temporary setback was viewed with great seriousness, and received a special mention in the club minutes.

In 1947 women at Lightcliffe would have been very pleased to hear the news

that in the following season, 1948, they would be accepted as full playing members.

However, they would not have been pleased to hear that they would have to pay the same joining fee as an ordinary member. Equality came at a price!

The Priestley Cup final of 1950 was affected adversely by the elements. The local newspaper recorded: 'After an appeal for bad light by the Lightcliffe batsman had succeeded...a thunderstorm sent spectators scurrying for shelter.'

Uncertain times loomed for Lightcliffe in 1974. As one newspaper put it: 'The club celebrate their centenary next year and are approaching a vital stage in their history. The lease on the ground ends in February 1977, which means that 1976 would be their last season unless they can negotiate a new lease or arrange to purchase the ground.'

However, all fears were laid to rest when Lightcliffe successfully reached agreement over the Wakefield Road venue.

Across the Bradford League there are urban landscapes aplenty, but Lightcliffe bucks the trend. It is a beautiful rural outpost.



The brochure produced to mark the opening of the club's pavilion extension