

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. See [www.ckcricketheritage.org.uk](http://www.ckcricketheritage.org.uk) for further details. Contact Dr Davies on 01484 472405 or via [p.j.davies@hud.ac.uk](mailto:p.j.davies@hud.ac.uk) if you have any more information or images for the Project archive. Today the spotlight falls on Rastrick . . .

# Visitors feared an uphill struggle against Rastrick

**WHILE many people will think of our world famous brass band whenever Rastrick is mentioned it is Rastrick Cricket Club that is the oldest surviving leisure-based organisation. Records of games played go back to 1863.**

But, unorganised, unrecorded cricket was probably first played in Rastrick in the 1840s. One of the teams from those days was Rastrick United, the forerunner of Rastrick C.C.

There were no leagues then, but fixtures were arranged and cards issued. One regular fixture every year was against local rivals Brighouse. By 1868 the club was also playing matches against leading local sides such as Dalton, from Huddersfield.

Rastrick C.C. moved to their current home at Round Hill soon after they were established. It is not known exactly where their former ground was, but it was either in Fixby or Grantham on Dewsbury Road.

By 1874 the club's traditional rivalry with Brighouse C.C. had begun. The Brighouse club had recently re-formed as Brighouse New Alexandra. The superiority of the long-established Rastrick C.C. over their near neighbours was clear, as the club's 2nd XI actually played the Brighouse 1st XI.

Visiting teams in the early days didn't really relish playing Rastrick.

Transport was not what it is today and opposition sides arriving by train at Brighouse station faced a two-mile hike - all up hill - to Rastrick's ground. And that included carrying all the kit as well!

Originally the hill at Round Hill extended well into the playing area. In 1891, major excavations took place to remove a part of the hill to provide a more level playing field.

In the early 1890s Rastrick joined the Huddersfield & District League. However, when the Huddersfield League decided to form a second division, they demoted Rastrick into the new section. Despite their objections, the League refused to change its decision and Rastrick joined the Spen Valley League instead.

One intriguing item which occurs repeatedly in early committee meeting minutes is the order for pies each week. Some weeks, as few as five dozen (60) pies are ordered, while at other times as many as fifteen dozen (180) or more were ordered if the 1st XI were at home.

The size of the pie order gives some idea of the size of matchday crowds in those days. Not everyone would have bought a pie - but attendances could have topped 1,000 at cup finals and semi-finals.

In 1899 it was reported that a young Rastrick bowler named Shaw had recorded the following bowling analysis: 6 overs, 5 maidens, 2 runs, 10 wickets. And the last 6 wickets were taken with consecutive balls!

The first Round Hill pavilion was opened on 15 April 1905 by Sir Thomas Brook-Hitchin. A year later, Rastrick decided to dispense with their professional and pay 'talent money' to their top-performing players instead. Soon after, however, the club realised the folly of their ways and reversed the 1906 decision.

In 1923 Rastrick re-joined the Huddersfield & District League after a spell in the Yorkshire Council (Halifax Section).

In 1931 the club ran a ladies team. On 29 May 1931 the Brighouse & Elland Echo reported: 'A large crowd [around 1,000] enjoyed the novel spectacle of a ladies' cricket match on the Rastrick ground last Monday morning, when teams representing Rastrick and Brighouse met in a friendly game.' According to the newspaper, 'The match was full of interest'. The Echo's report was accompanied by the (rather sexist) headline, 'Fair Cricketers at Rastrick'.

Similarly, the Echo stated: 'The ladies entered enthusiastically into the game, and some of them displayed no little skill.' A caption to a photograph read: 'A Good Return - A fielder in the ladies' cricket match at Rastrick caught in graceful pose'.

We are also told that in 1931 the 'pin-up girl' of local women's cricket, Mona Greenwood, turned out for Rastrick Ladies against Brighouse.

In the middle of 1931, the Brighouse and Elland Echo stated: 'There is also to be a Brighouse v Rastrick Ladies'



*Cricket at Round Hill . . . Played out in a unique setting*

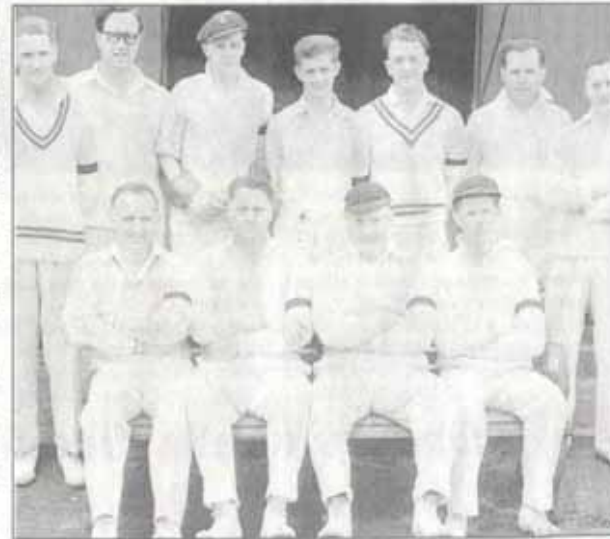
match, probably on July 4, and on July 18 the Brighouse and district ladies will meet Lascelles Hall ladies. Both the latter matches will be at Rastrick. It is also hoped to arrange an evening fixture with Bradford ladies.'

It was in the 1940s that the club was able to purchase its Clough Lane ground. One commentator said that £900 had been raised 'with astonishing ease'.

In 1951 a cricket writer commented: 'It is at Rastrick that one can find the old character which is always one of the features connected with a local cricket club.'

The club celebrated its 125th anniversary in 1988, and produced some beautiful commemorative plates to mark the occasion. A rather distinguished brick scoreboard was erected in 1996 - 20ft tall and constructed at a cost of £26,000.

Today, Rastrick pit their wits against other teams in the prestigious Huddersfield Cricket League.



*The Rastrick side playing in the 1954 season*