

STONES CC

HOME SWEET HOME

The weather can get pretty wild up here.

[One Club member]



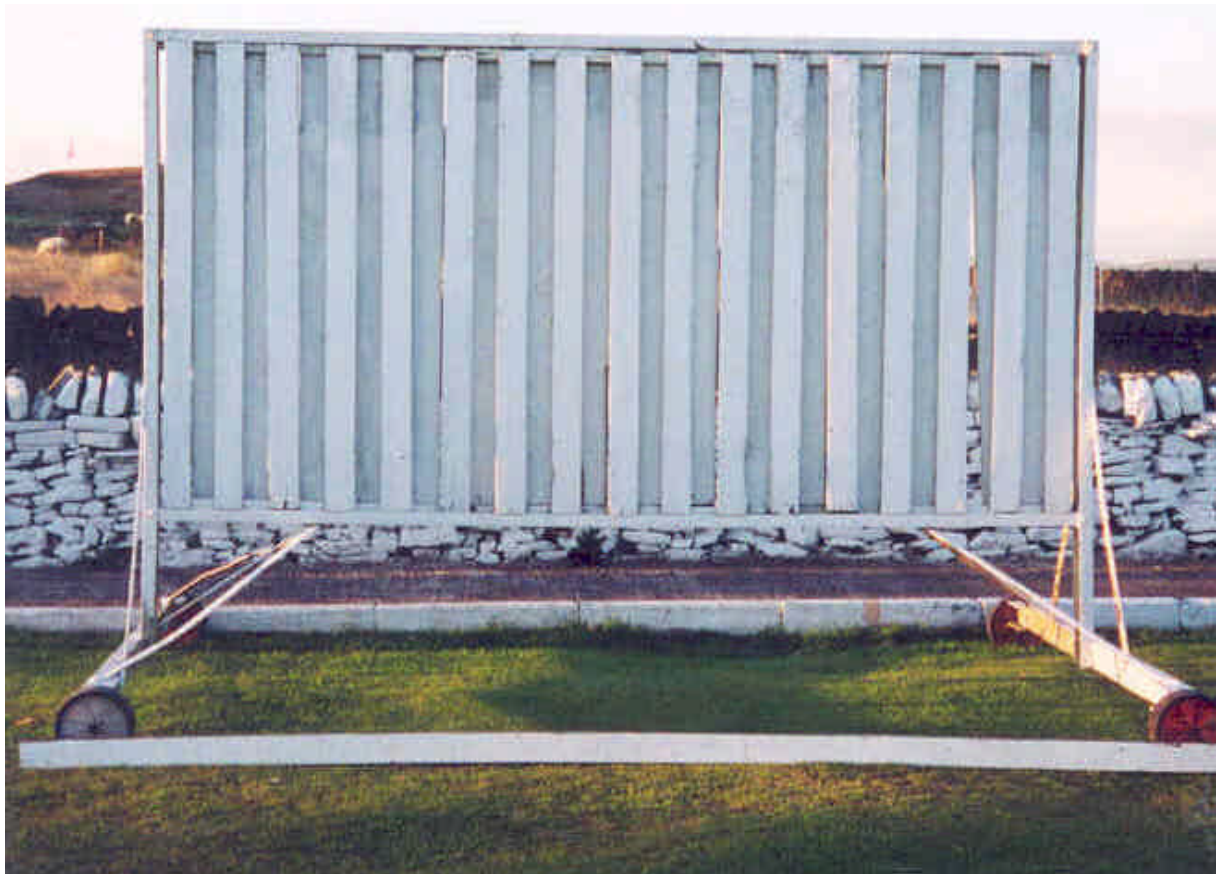
Stones C.C. - formerly known as Stones Wesleyans CC and Stones Methodists C.C. - is situated high above Ripponden. In fact, as you navigate the many meandering hillside lanes *en route* to the Ripponden Old Lane ground, one does begin to wonder whether it exists at all...But just before desperation is about to set in, it comes into view.



The location of Swift Cross is one of the key points of interest. A Club member says: ***'In the Halifax League, I reckon that Outlane is higher, but after that I think you're struggling. Maybe Barkisland or Queensbury? I don't know.'***



In their infancy, Stones used to play in a field opposite the Methodist chapel on Rochdale Road (hence the club's former names). They moved to Swift Cross when cricket resumed after the First World War. As Club spokesman David Normanton says: ***'There isn't a lot of flat land in and around Stones, so the Club wasn't exactly spoilt for choice.'***



In the early years the cricket field was infamous for its long grass. A local farmer owned bantam hens, and one afternoon he was more than surprised to discover one of his precious birds laying eggs in the middle of the overgrown outfield. One visiting cricketer from the Illingworth St. Mary's club said, rather pertinently and sarcastically, that Swift Cross was the size of '**a hen pen and no bigger**'.



Swift Cross is full of curiosities. The playing area was once so narrow that the Club was forced to expand. On one side, it bought up land off the local farmer, Mr Crowther, who also happened to be a member of the club. Stones were charged 2/6 a yard for the extra land they bought.



On the other side of the ground, the Club turfed over a small road. And bingo!

In the old days, when the ground was a little on the tiny side, a curious set of 'local rules' came into play. Markings on the boundary fence delineated whether a ball had been hit for a 'four' - or a 'two'!



The iron gates at the main entrance are a memorial to Kenny Brown. One visiting spectator comments: **'Stones reminds me of Luddendenfoot, only slightly more isolated.'** A visiting player adds: **'Extremely cold - even in the summer!'**



Stones is an excellent cricketing venue: the views across the Ryburn Valley are spectacular, there's a charming dry stone wall at the road end (it is thoroughly whitewashed, so it doubles as a long, low sightscreen) and the only sign of civilisation is the odd cottage and the occasional noise emanating from one of the local sheep.



Over the years, the land adjoining the cricket ground has been owned by a variety of different people. The aforementioned Mr Crowther was a big friend of the club, but other local farmers haven't been so forthcoming. Normanton states: ***'One bloke wasn't keen on cricket, and he made it very clear that when the ball was hit onto his land, only one person was authorised to look for it. Can you believe it? We used to send out search parties of four or five, but this guy just wouldn't have it. Needless to say, we lost a lot more balls in that period!'***



And for those who fancy a stroll during the tea interval, a public footpath runs alongside the leg-side boundary (if you're a right-handed batsman and you're taking guard at the pavilion end). You won't find a more tranquil spot in the whole of Calderdale.



