

“Nothing to Play For”

Memoirs of a Cricket Graduate

The Almondbury Casuals Cricket Club was formed in 1949 at The Wool Pack Hotel, Almondbury, Huddersfield. P A Haigh, Chairman between 1952 and 1960, was the main energy source. On his return from the war he decided the discipline of league cricket was not for him and gathered together men with similar views. The head at King James, the local grammar school, lent the school pitch to get them started and a cricket club was born. They called themselves Almondbury Occasionals, which soon collapsed to The Almondbury Casuals.

The Casuals have attempted to play cricket every Summer Sunday since. They have no property, other than kit, and rely on the availability of a local league club ground for their home fixtures, graciously considering any reasonable invitation to travel away. I, with a couple of other Casuals started to write match reports in 2003, distributed by e-mail during the week following the relevant game. This collection of stories and essays, edited in 2009, concentrates on the years between 2003 and 2005, the year my cricket gradually ground to a halt.

In 2006 I studied cricket at The University of Huddersfield. Peter Davies was the lecturer, assisted by Rob Light. To start with we met one night of the week on the Huddersfield campus. During the second semester we rotated round local cricket clubs, for example, Hanging Heaton, Todmorden, Golcar, Thurstonland, and Illingworth. The subjects included cricket origins, the development of the laws and kit, ladies cricket, cricket during wartime, the influence of Caribbean and Sub-continental immigrants on Kirklees and Calderdale cricket, and amateurs and professionals. The students were associated with league clubs, or were umpires, or in the case of the two senior guys, cricket lovers who went and watched cricket somewhere as many days of the year as they could. Though many league clubs do run a Sunday side, I was the only student from friendly non-league cricket. My presentation was about Caribbean immigrants to England and West Yorkshire from 1948 into the 1950's, and how their cricketers did or did not integrate into local league teams. Around twenty completed the course which was a small part of Peter's project on the history of W. Yorkshire cricket - www.ckcricketheritage.org.uk.

Those in search of a bit of Casuals history could consult “Cricket in Perspective: A Potted History of The Almondbury Casuals CC”, compiled in 1987 by Jim Netherwood (Chairman 1969-76) with help from Guy Overton (Chairman 1961-64), Michael Hallas (Chairman 1965-68), David Pedley (Chairman 1977-94), Tony Sykes, John Bell, Harry Taylor and Paul Wood.

Other accounts include, in addition to Pete's website:

“W. G. Grace” by Simon Rae, published by faber and faber, 1998, “A Social History of English Cricket” by Derek Birley, published by Aurum Press, 1999, or even “Cricket in Perspective - 2: A Further Potted History of The Almondbury Casuals CC 1988-2005”, compiled by Bill Crossland, Greg Smith and Dave Walker.