

Percy's stamping ground

10. Paddock C.C. - West View Rise

Having to overcome the utmost difficulties in making a ground, the Paddock club may be likened to the Oldham club of Lancashire. Once again, a Christian organisation was instrumental in founding a cricket club, for the club was originally the Paddock Methodists Cricket Club. Before the ground was made, thousands of tons of soil had to be tipped over the rocky surface, and night after night for several years the villagers toiled with pick and shovel until the work was completed.

[Roy Genders, *League Cricket in England* - 1952]

Paddock C.C. was born in 1872, a direct descendant of Paddock Methodists C.C.. The story of West View is fascinating. An onlooker wrote in 1951: 'One would doubt if ever a club ground was made under more heart-breaking and back-breaking circumstances...[It] had to be made and thousands of tons of tipping had to be used. Night after night, month in and year out, the early enthusiasts toiled with barrow and spade, and fruits of their labour can still be seen for the "Johnny Moor Hill" side has a tipped banking which causes a stiff climb when the ball is sent over the boundary.'

And when you visit West View today, you are instantly struck by its unique geological and geographical location. Over one boundary fence, a raw, narrow railway quarry (only a few hundred yards down the line from the main Huddersfield station); over the other, the aforementioned Johnny Moor Hill; and in the distance, massive grass banks, new industrial units and the glory of the Colne Valley. It is not pretty but there is something magnificent about the rawness of the immediate

industrial environment.

Paddock C.C. - in its early days, a traditional village club - celebrated its centenary earlier than many other clubs (1972) and has packed a lot into its 130-year history. In 1882 the then club secretary David Lea signed a £13 ground lease agreement with John Foster of Gledholt Bank - to be paid in instalments. This secured West View for the club, but in time the ground became the property of Huddersfield Corporation. In 1934, 'arrangements were made in order to prevent the ground being taken over by a builder', and a 50-year lease granted, 'on condition that a pavilion costing not less than £100 excluding equipment was erected.' At this time, the club was suffering severe financial problems. One account has it that the club was in debt to the tune of £350; a framed document in the clubhouse today reveals that four trustees (H. Robinson, A. Teal, A. Clay and W. Noble) helped to clear the club mortgage during the period 1937-47. In time, the club was given the option of further leases on the ground.



1st XI, 1937

The history of Paddock C.C. is dominated by a few key people. Percy Holmes and Willy Watson - two great names in English cricket - both learnt their cricket at West View. The late Chris Balderstone was an ex-Paddock pro, who staged a special game at the club during his testimonial year in 1984.

On the admin side, mention should be made of Sam Livesey - stalwart of the club in its formative years - and Guy W. Booth, former chairman, treasurer and general committee member (and honoured with a plaque in the clubhouse). One recent professional was Akhtar Bangaish, from Pakistan.

Paddock C.C. is in fact part of a bigger organisation: Paddock Cricket and Bowling Club. The clubhouse, a big, extended red-brick building by the car park, is used for many and varied social events, and its inside walls are covered in old photos of bowling, darts and snooker teams, as well as famous cricket elevens (for example, those of 1924, 1937, 1955, 1962 and 1968).



Sobers of Paddock

On matchdays, the teas are served in the clubhouse, while the two sets of players change in the newly refurbished pavilion at the far end of the ground. From the new pavilion (which also houses the scoreboard) you get a good view of Paddock (or 'Parock'/'Parrock', as the hamlet-cum-village used to be known in the sixteenth century). You see the tower of All Saints parish church, the tops of old houses and cottages, and bits of greenery round about. (You can also see Castle Hill, in all its splendour, out to the right). Curiously, Paddock, the place, has no connections with horse racing; rather, 'Paddock' denotes 'enclosure'.

Linked historically to Marsh and Quarmby, Paddock is an

interesting part of Huddersfield. Once upon a time it was home to a bare-footed eccentric called 'Paddock Jack'; it also endured a terrible cholera epidemic in 1849, and came to be noted for its liberal club and poultry show, as well as its burgeoning Irish community. It is significant too that a photograph of 'Paddock Worthies' published in the *Huddersfield Examiner* in May 1914 was taken against the background of the cricket club.

A framed aerial photo of West View and a framed painting of the ground (1972) both adorn the clubhouse wall. In the early days, West View also used to be the home of Paddock Rangers F.C..

The history of the ground has been littered with controversy, and 1957 was a particularly significant year. First, the club appealed against the assessment of £100 rateable value for the ground and premises. It claimed that this figure was too high, and that it should be reduced on account of the fact that the club acted as a key community organisation; it wasn't just a cricket club but a 'youth club' and an 'old people's club' too. According to the *Examiner*:

The club felt that the assessment of £100 would be a burden greater than they could bear, and they asked that the present £67 assessment should continue. Mr R.M. Berry (Valuation Officer) questioned Mr. Thackray [a club official] about refreshment and bar receipts totalling £4,700 for one financial year...Mr. Berry said that the club premises consisted of a cricket ground, pavilion, refreshment hut, two bowling greens, bowling pavilion and a social club which was licensed. He understood that the membership was at least 500 and the whole site area covered five acres. The club had the advantage of being close to the town centre and near the main road...

Paddock eventually lost their appeal!

In August of the same year, the club had to respond to criticisms of their ground. The case against Paddock was that no wicket had been prepared for a particular fixture and that there were other problems too. The club claimed that they had experienced difficulties with a key piece of machinery and that

the authorities should offer them a 'helping hand' rather than pointing out defects. But things changed for the better, as the *Examiner* reported on 5 September: 'Further improvement in the condition of the Paddock Cricket Ground was reported to the meeting of the Huddersfield and District Cricket League at the Pack Horse Hotel last evening by the president, Mr. Herbert Robinson. He said that, in accordance with previous decisions, a small sub-committee had again been to see the ground that evening. "We can say," he said, "that there has been even greater improvement and the ground is looking more like its old self and it gives us a lot of joy." If the club continued with their work there was no doubt that the ground would soon be back to its old glory, and nobody need have any fears...'