

Why Booth are proud of the Gaukroger family

IT is not difficult to pinpoint the secret of the success of Booth as a village cricket club.

The most important single factor is the close connection and liaison with all people in the area, including the residents of both Midgley and Luddenden.

The club has also been fortunate in its choice of officers with Joe Greenwood's service as treasurer for 21 years an outstanding example.

This record has been equalled in later years by Arthur Berry, who also served as treasurer for 21



JAMES GAUKROGER

years up to 1947, when he was followed in office by John Horsfield, grandson of A. Horsfield of the 1892 team.

Efficient secretary

Another man to whom the club owes a great debt is Harry Clegg, who recently resigned after serv-

ing as secretary for 14 years. Strangely enough, Harry is not a native of the district, and he is one of the first to admit that his knowledge of cricket from a playing point of view is negligible.

His lack of cricket knowledge has been an advantage at times for he could always stand aside from any of the dissensions about playing matters which sometimes beset the best-run cricket clubs.

His minute books are a model to all secretaries, and in them are preserved a lively record of the affairs of the club during his period of office. It is said that he most enjoyed arranging (and eating) the annual dinner, which has been such a popular feature of the club's activities since the war.

He was always keen to meet cricketers and officials on other grounds, and in this way made many friends.

He will never forget one hot day in September going with a party to Castle Carr to fetch a hut which Mr. Ronald had given to the club. After the work was finished, Harry sat down to have a bite to eat. (Several ham sandwiches, so he thought.)

Booth's wolves

To his disgust, upon opening his picnic case he found that what he had believed to be sandwiches were nothing but stones. The food had long since been eaten by other hungry members of the fatigue party.

It is, perhaps, in their choice of presidents that the club has been most fortunate. Their first, Com. Harry Boardall, held office for more than 20 years, and during his term the club grew both in strength and importance.

He was followed by Mr. Leonard Midgley, who served the club faithfully for 40 years up to his death in 1944. He served as a player, chairman and president, and both he and Mr. Boardall left sons who carried on the good work.

ROUND AND ABOUT IN LOCAL CRICKET



WILLIE GAUKROGER

When they were searching for a ground in 1946 it was quite natural that the owner of most of the land in the district should be consulted.

It was with some diffidence that Bob Midgley suggested to Mr. Ronald Murgatroyd that the best place for a village cricket field was in the park, but this was, in effect, suggesting that cricket should be played in Mr. Ronald's front garden.

However, he immediately agreed to allow this and also accepted the office of president. Without his help and encouragement, it is

extremely doubtful if cricket ever would have been revived at Booth.

He has always, in his typical modest fashion, acknowledged the help received from the club trustees, Harold Boardall and Bob Midgley, and from Mr. Alan Greenwood, for the past 13 years a most genial and patient chairman (also a non-cricketer).

So many individuals have contributed to the success of the club since the war that it is difficult to name them all, but mention should be made of a few.

Bill Hey and Jim Thomas had honorary life membership conferred upon them for the work they did in the ground reconstruction plans, and William Thomas, who, as social secretary, has for many years organised close-season activities to the considerable financial benefit of the club.

They have been fortunate in always having a number of ladies willing to sacrifice their Saturday afternoon leisure in providing teas for players and supporters, and, at the same time, making a handsome profit.

Many partisans

Players and officials are necessary to any club. Spectators are not—at least not to a club with 300 members, but they are, nevertheless, welcome, particularly when they are of the knowledgeable type found at Booth, and on many similar village greens throughout the country.

The most numerous at Booth, probably the most partisan, are the Gaukrogers. Several of the ladies of the family are Gaukrogers in name no longer, but they have certainly retained their support.

It is not unusual to have at least six brothers and sisters on the ground at the same time and, together with their wives, husbands, children and grandchildren, provide an enthusiastic force that any club would be proud of.

Another regular is Edson Patrick and, although he has little to say, he has missed little or nothing of

Booth cricket during the last 5 years.

Fred Sutcliffe, now unhappily able to see little, is as keen as ever, and Frank Sheard is usually to be found as near behind the bowler's arm as possible. Fred Mitchell sits and watches more than he used to and a regular spectator, over 80 years of age, is Mrs. Thorpe.

Looking into the future is a hazardous business, but at Booth there is reason for confidence. The boys' team is an essential to a club which likes to find its players locally, and from its ranks many good players have developed.

There is a wealth of inherited



H. CLEGG

cricketing skill and talent in the district. With players such as W. Thomas, N. Butterworth, R. Helliwell, K. Twemlow, R. Parker, R. Midgley (Jnr.), T. Driver and P. Metcalfe, to name a few, nearly all at the beginning of their cricketing careers, the future can be faced with confidence.

The off-comed-'un's cricket supplanted billet at Booth

BOOTH CRICKET CLUB—PART I

THE year was 1905, and Whiteley Turner describes in the first chapter of his "Springtime Saunter" how he paused to admire the view from the top of Stocks Lane or Guide Stoop as he knew it.

He refers to Brackens Paper Mill in the valley below, Stoodley Pike on the far hill top, Oats Royd Mills and Broadfold and he also refers to the many changes which had taken place in the Luddenden Valley during the preceding 50 years. Older people still call Stocks Lane top "Guide Stoop," although the stone direction post or stoop was removed some years ago, having become an obstruction to traffic. It is possible to stand on the same spot, however, and admire the same view that Whiteley Turner did 50 years ago and the present-day observer will probably feel that since the 1905 description there has been surprisingly little change.

True—Brackens Paper Mill has almost disappeared and the new mill built by Calvert's can be seen in the village of Wainstalls. A few new houses can also be seen ahead but the area known as Broadfold appears little changed although no doubt there is greater girth around the trees.

Snug

If the observer looks more closely, however, he will see a most notable change in the park. Between the house and the road, there stands a cricket ground, the home of Booth Cricket Club. So snugly does it fit into the park since it was made 10 years ago, that it might well have been laid out when the house was built.

There was a Booth Cricket Club in 1905, but the ground was a field at the back of the Woodman Inn. Whiteley Turner must not have been interested in cricket or he would surely have referred to the ground which he would see as he gazed across the valley. Perhaps his lack of interest in sport was due to the loss of an arm as a youth and, though not surprising, it is unfortunate for the historians of Booth

Cricket Club that the help of Whiteley Turner, who was such an authority on the area, is denied them.

There is enough evidence available to ascertain that Booth Cricket Club originated about the early 1880's and the first matches were played in a field at the north side of Tommy Lane, along Jerusalem Lane. The first officers are not known but it is fairly certain that they were members of the Booth Congregational Church and a local tradition is that the first cricket bat to be seen in the district was brought by William Ellwood who came out of the East Riding to be coachman to the Bracken family at Woodlands.

It must be remembered by modern teams visiting the pleasant



THOMAS OGDEN
Is called the last of the Booth billet players.

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Booth ground to-day that 80 years ago Booth was indeed a place off the beaten track and in an area where for many generations the local game of "billet" had held sway. Unlike billet sticks, cricket bats had to be bought and the price was such that not many people would be in a position, even had they the desire, to purchase one. In any case it is improbable that cricket was played anywhere in the Halifax area much earlier than this for neither Halifax nor King Cross can trace their origins back much earlier. The Halifax Parish Cup which is the oldest local competition still in existence, celebrates its 70th anniversary this year.

When cricket was earning its popularity, some clubs were formed on the grounds which they still occupy to-day, but Booth Cricket Club were not as fortunate. The Tommy Lane ground was a most unsuitable patch of land for a cricket field and then a dispute with a farmer forced them to move camp to the Holmes, between Woodlands and the Paper Mill where subsequently Brackens constructed filter beds. Although this ground was level, it was very narrow and is reputed as having been a murderous place for flies in the evenings.

Cattle grazed

Booth had one season here, and then returned to the old field, but the pioneer cricketers were far from satisfied. They levelled a pitch in Carr House field, behind the present Booth bus terminus. This field can be seen to-day, but it is said that it was never used because in the meantime they managed to rent the field at the back of the Woodman Inn. This was their home for many years, right up to 1942, in fact.

Booth did not have full control of the field, but a good wicket was produced. The outfield is never reputed to have been the same standard as the pitch for the

farmer used his field for grazing even during the season and older players recall an essential duty before each home game when they had to go round the field with a shovel and wheelbarrow.

It was impossible for anyone in the village, however little they were interested in cricket, not to be aware of the presence of the cricket field for most houses overlooked it and over the years, almost every family had some connection with it.

Ploughed

On washing days, housewives would have strict instructions that the washing water had to be left in tubs outside the houses and this



HAROLD BOARDALL
Has given great service to Booth Cricket Club.

was used for watering the wicket when the players returned home from work in the evenings.

The cricket club became part of the village life and it was not surprising that when the field was ploughed up in 1942 and during the subsequent years, when it was apparent to all that cricket would never be played on that field again, no one even contemplated the disbanding of the club. Repeated offers to buy the motor-mower and other equipment by clubs still in being were rejected.

It was in 1948 that permission was sought and obtained to construct a cricket ground in the park at Broadfield and old players, officials and a few newcomers rallied round and were soon hard at work.

Dug down

The slope of the land had to be reduced by cutting out seven feet at the top and tipping at the bottom. Several hundreds of tons of ashes were brought, a wicket laid, walls built, huts demolished and re-erected, turf laid, seeds sown and hundreds of hours of voluntary work put in.

After the first season the wicket had to be relaid because it was not level and in 1950, after the ground had been in use for three seasons, it was decided that a further reduction in the slope was necessary. A scheme costing nearly £1,000 was undertaken and the money was raised by the donations and loans of members and friends.

Booth Cricket Club had a permanent home, however, and with a ground up to the standard of any in the local area. It was a great day for the cricket club in 1956 when the ground debt was finally cleared and they could look forward to the future with confidence.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Noel Murless is in line for a new record this year for winning prize money gained in one season by a racehorse trainer. The present record, £93,899 15s., was established in 1931 by Joe Lawson, who that year won 69 races with 34 horses. Murless has already passed the £75,000.

Fred Mitchell sees down the years a grand parade of

Booth cricketers

Booth Cricket Club.—Part II

To survive and prosper for a period of 80 years it is obvious that a cricket club must have had many loyal personalities and Booth Cricket Club admit to having been very fortunate in this respect. Many names are brought to mind, but one in particular stands out and that is Mr. Fred Mitchell.

Fred is nearly 80 years old and his memory, which covers a life-long connection with the club, links the early days with the present.

He has been happy to be associated with the game as an official and mainly a groundsman—the sort, in fact, without whom few cricket clubs are really successful.

It is said that when the plough cut across the wicket in 1942 he wept unashamedly, and not without reason, for he more than any other person had brought it to its then splendid condition. There are those who well remember the look of relief on his face in 1950 when the tractor and harrows came off the new field after seeding had been completed, and the grunt of satisfaction when ten minutes later it started to rain. Generations of Booth cricketers remember how Fred Mitchell would take up his stand by his roller. He made no request, for all knew what he wanted. Once under way he would often comment "This is what makes batters." May he be granted many more years to enjoy that which he has helped so much to create.

Taught the straight bat

Among playing personalities in the early days were William Ellwood, George Spencer who was cashier at Brackens, J. Hodgson, Dr. Poulkes, who was also a noted Rugby player and lived a short time in the district before emigrating to

New Zealand. John Ambler, son of James Ambler of Glen Royd, was another. It is said that, having been away at school and there been coached, he was the first man to demonstrate the virtues of a straight bat. He no doubt had a difficult task overcoming the then more practised art of 'billet swinging.'

John Ambler purchased a bat which was to become the property of the first man to score 50 and



FRED MITCHELL

How many years for Booth cricket?

unbelievable as it may seem to present-day Booth cricketers, this bat remained unclaimed for several years.

Jim Harry Ogden then batted through an innings for 49 not out and this was considered a feat worthy of the prize. The proud owner used this bat for many years

and in the course of time it became black with age and linseed oil. A veritable barn door.

The fact that this bat remained unclaimed for so long reflects more on the poorness of the wickets rather than the excellence of the bowling or deficiencies in the batting. An innings total of 50 was regarded as good. In 1892, a Booth team which consisted of G. Dean, A. Horsfield, H. Greenwood, H. W. Wade, J. H. Ogden, W. Ingham, W. Smith, R. Robson, J. Pollard, J. E. Bedford and M. Wade bowled out local rivals, Luddenden Foot St. Mary's, for eight runs.

It is believed that Herbert W. Wade is the sole survivor of that team to-day and he is a most sprightly veteran of 82. He subsequently played for Luddenden Foot S.M., but was lost to Booth cricket at an early age when he went to live in Halifax. He was one of six cricketing brothers, Herbert, Major, Angus, Frank, Horace and Herman. All at some time played for the village club and the first four actually played in the same team.

Of that 1892 side, J. H. Ogden is regarded as being one of the most prominent, for he was a fine batsman and a bowler good enough to open the attack. Although he played most of his cricket for Booth he had a spell with both Siddal and Sowerby Bridge. It is hard to imagine a better performance than his 116 not out when facing a Stainland score of 216. Even so Booth lost, being out for 195.

Herbert Wade was also a good opening batsman and Jimmy Pollard is remembered as a wicket-keeper of no mean ability. Bill Ingham was known as a hard hitter and H. Greenwood was the first of a line of slow bowlers, being followed by Henry Akroyd and he in turn by Bob Midgeley.

It was in 1900 that Booth cele-

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brated their first championship success, winning the Sowerby Division. Herbert Wade still has his medal and another recipient was Frank Sheard, who was to have a long and successful career with the club.

Frank had a spell with Sowerby Bridge during the first war and he recalls with pride playing in a benefit match with George Hirst and making top score of 13. Hirst's contribution was 12, and Frank



WILLIAM HEY

Honorary life member, Booth C.C.

further remembers that in this match he saw a ball swerve in the air for the first time. The bowler was Richardson, then professional with the Elland club.

In 1904, Booth reached the semi-final of the Parish Cup, but were defeated by Lord Nelson on the old King Cross ground. This was the site of the present Riley's Toffee Factory and Archer Rigg, of Rugby

fame, was a member of the Lord Nelson team.

Two years later the club played in their first Parish Cup final, but again met with defeat, by seven wickets to Illingworth, after scoring 81. F. Sheard was the captain, and principal scorers were Angus Wade 23, Martin Addison 18, and Frank Wade 15. The failure of the Booth batsmen in the final was in contrast to the semi-final when they scored 250 runs, of which Frank Wade made 105 and Oliver Smith 67 in an innings which included 16 boundaries.

Veteran trio

James Sutcliffe virtually won the match for Illingworth with seven wickets for 30 runs. He was undoubtedly one of the finest bowlers of his generation in the district, and Booth were perhaps a little unfortunate to meet such a grand bowler on top form for such an occasion.

Also playing for Illingworth that day was a man called Harry Hustwick. That grand old man of Illingworth cricket, along with Herbert Wade and Fred Mitchell, make up a remarkable cricketing trio.

A group photograph of 1912 features Joe Greenwood commemorating his 21 years in office as treasurer and it is said that during his years of office the club never showed a deficit. It is fairly generally known, however, that in some years this happy state of affairs was only maintained by his personal generosity.

The group also includes Mr. Priestley Crossley now actively connected with Mytholmroyd Methodists Cricket Club, Ernest Gallop, J.P. (now at Nuneaton), Charlton Robson (son of R. Robson of the 1892 team), Frank Sheard, Fred Mitchell, Johnnie, Albert and Walter Priestley, and many other names which will live for ever in the annals of Booth Cricket Club.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Sam Patrick (all the strokes) was greatest of Booth batsmen

BOOTH CRICKET CLUB— Part II

BOOTH CRICKET CLUB, in common with many local sides, disbanded for the duration of the 1914-18 war. Just before the war, however, one player who was to play local cricket for every season between the two wars, ending his long career with the Illingworth club during the last war, had joined them.

That player was Sam Patrick and Booth followers believe, and refuse to argue the point, that he can be



BOB MIDGLEY

(his farm now takes his time)

included among the top 12 cricketers in ability ever to be produced in the Halifax district.

Under average height, he could well have achieved equal prominence as batsman, bowler or wicketkeeper, but he is remembered chiefly as a batsman and his neatness and quickness of footwork enabled him to use all the strokes

of the game on all conditions of wickets.

His first appearance for Booth was in 1908 at the age of 15 and although his career was interrupted by the war, in 1919 his aggregate was 670 runs. Many of his batting exploits are legendary, but one innings of 100 not out against Mytholmroyd was scored after he had arrived late at the ground to find his team had lost five wickets for 21 runs. Walter Priestley scored nine at the other end while Sam made his hundred.

He had a spell at Tong Park opening the batting with Arthur Mitchell who was later to achieve fame with the county.

In the rough

After the first war, some players returned to the Booth club, some went to other clubs and some never played again, but in the meantime an era of local cricket had passed never to return. The pre-war days of bad wickets, uncut outfielders and unco-operative farmers who were sometimes even hostile were gone. Previously fieldsmen had to shout lost ball and forfeit six runs when the ball was lost in long grass to prevent batsmen from continuing to run and Eli Helliwell will no doubt recall a six for a lost ball more than 50 years ago at Booth.

Abraham Alderson of Booth chased a ball into mowing grass at Wadsworth Lanes and after being grabbed by an irate farmer the cricketer only managed to escape at the expense of his waistcoat (a man was a toff if he possessed a sweater). Abraham subsequently found himself in court at Todmorden and, accused of trespassing, was duly fined.

Unrelenting

When a nucleus of the old players returned, the club was formed again and they went into the Halifax Amateur League. In 1921, Bob Midgley played his first game on the Booth ground but it was for Barkisland. He later joined Booth and as is well known, served the club for many, many years and still does to this day in innumerable ways.

Remembered chiefly as an astute captain and a slow spin bowler, he

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had three "hat-tricks" and numerous other performances of merit. Though he never scored a century, he is credited with two scores in the nineties. It was a proud moment for him when he received the Parish Cup in 1948.

In 1924, the club joined the Hedden Bridge League and there they succeeded in winning all the honours possible. Every game was a "derby" match and Booth were known for the unrelenting fashion



FRANK WADE

(best feat, nine wickets)

in which the game was played. It was in those days the partisan attitude of many of the spectators tended to give opponents a wrong impression of the true qualities of the club.

Men prominent in those days were Tom Nicholl, an all-rounder, Harold Boardall, a fine bat who has also done a lot for Booth cricket in many and various ways, and

Arthur Briggs, a wicketkeeper with a quiet and unobtrusive style who played for nearly 25 years. Thomas (Nigs) Ogden can be described as the last of the crack billet players and batted like one, although there was nothing crude about his bowling. He now looks after the ground with Fred Mitchell.

There were also the Patrick brothers. Arnold had the amazing distinction of knocking a middle stump out of the ground at Bridgeholme without removing the balls. There was a heated discussion with a spectator who insisted that the batsman could not be out if the balls were not removed.

In 1938, following ground improvements, Booth were accepted into the Halifax League and about this time Jack Corboy joined them from Sowerby. During succeeding years he became one of the personalities of Halifax cricket and his departure in 1956 to play for Luddenden Foot St. Mary's was a great loss to the Booth club. Now he has returned to Booth to help in the club's bid for the championship of Division I. Jack and Frank Wade came into the team about the same time. Frank soon to achieve fame as a bowler. His best performance was at Mytholmroyd in 1948 when Pugh and Wilcox bowled Booth out for 56. Frank Wade took nine for 18 and Mytholmroyd were all back for 29.

Parish Cup final

So to another war, the ploughing of the field and eventual loss of the ground, but they restarted in 1947. Owing to the new ground not being completed, all matches were played away.

This season is always recalled with great pleasure and gratitude to the other clubs in the league. On April 24, 1948, the first game was played on the new ground at Broadfold Park, Booth's opponents being Greetland. Before the match a short ceremony took place when Mr. R. H. Murgatroyd bowled the first ball to Bob Midgley.

In 1951, Booth had the unique distinction of playing in the Parish Cup final after being knocked out in the semi-final. Halifax were unable to play in the final because of

Yorkshire Council commitments and Booth took their place to lose against King Cross.

Since the war, players who have earned themselves places in Booth's annals are Leslie Summerscales and George Woodhead. Both have many good batting performances to their credit. Leslie Summerscales must hold the record for appearances in the Parish Cup final. With Booth and Mytholmroyd he has played in 10 finals.

Though as years go by, players famous in the Halifax League drop out of the Booth teams, most of



J. B. CORBOY

(now with Luddenden Foot C.C., formerly with Sowerby St. Peter's, Booth and Dalton)

them retain an active interest in the club. There are still old names in the present-day score books but they represent new generations of these families. There is a waiting list of young players whose fathers, grandfathers and even great-grandfathers helped to put the name of Booth Cricket Club on the cricketing map of Halifax.

To be continued.