

Ambition and Rising Status: Elland CC in the 1870s and 1880s.

In the late 1870s and 1880s the rising status and ambition of Elland Cricket Club was reflected in a series of major matches which were played at Hullen Edge. Staging this type of 'big match' cricket, against leading touring XI's, had been a common way of attracting prestige for clubs in the district since the 1840s. During this time, leading players came together to form teams which could be hired to play matches against local and district sides of varying numbers. This meant that nearly all the great cricketers of this era could be seen regularly at local cricket grounds each year. Not surprisingly, these matches were the major events of the season. The 1846 All England XI, which was the first to tour the country in this way, played at Leeds during its initial season and regular annual matches were played by this team, and the others which followed its lead, in Huddersfield, Halifax, Dewsbury, Batley, Todmorden, Bradford and elsewhere in Yorkshire. The most famous of these 'Big matches' to be held at Elland was the first one, against the 1878 Australian Tourists.

Halifax Guardian June 8th 1878

'The public spirit of the Ellanders has once again come to the front and, by the engagement of the Australian Cricketers, thousands of people, round and square, have been offered an opportunity of witnessing one of the finest treats that could have been provided. The treat was all the more exceptional because the match...was only the fifth which the antipodeans have played upon this side of the water, three out of the five moreover, having been at Nottingham, at Lords and at Kennington Oval, whilst only one, that against Yorkshire, has approached this division of the country.'

Halifax Courier June 8th 1878

'The Australian Eleven begin a three day's match with Eighteen of Elland and District on Thursday. The Elland Club has been coming steadily to the front for some years. It has at last reached the foremost place in the Halifax district, Halifax its self having possessed no really first class club since the dissolution of trinity. The Elland men seem most enterprising, proof of which his found in their having at so early a period in the stay of the Australian Cricketers engaged in a match with them.'

Halifax Courier August 7th 1880

THE PERIPATETIC CRICKETERS AT ELLAND - Yesterday Caseys peripatetic cricketers commenced a two days match with 15 of Elland Cricket Club. One of the players, Dugwar, is a juggler and equilibrist: the rest of the Clowns do not play cricket but greatly amuse the spectators between the innings and as the game proceeds with jokes, acrobatic feats and whimsicalities. It was intended to give a grand variety entertainment last evening after the wickets were drawn, a very good programme being arranged, but a thunderstorm coming on at six-o'clock, the programme could not be proceeded with. There will be such an entertainment today, of course bweather permitting, and we are told it is well worth seeing, with such tricks as were done yesterday during the match the spectators were greatly amused.

Halifax Courier August 14th 1880

Rain ruined the second day of the Caseys match at Elland and paper said:
'This was extremely unfortunate, as the Elland Club had gone to great expense in securing Caseys' team. By these two unlucky days they lose as much as £25.'

But, despite the weather, Caseys had been enough of a success for them to be booked the following season.