

A HISTORY OF NORTHWRAM HEDGE TOP CRICKET CLUB

By Bruce M. Deadman

FOREWORD

It is one of the sad facts of life that a majority of people tend to live for today giving little thought to the documenting of that which may be of interest to succeeding generations. Northwram Hedge Top Cricket Club is no exception and, in keeping with many organisations of its kind, memories and records of the past have become either lost or faded. As they have relinquished office, generations of officials have either misplaced or discarded their records leaving the Club in something of a quandary about its heritage and development.

This is, therefore, an attempt to redress that situation in the hope that present and future members of the Club will respect and cherish the history of the development of their Club, and that the contents might be of interest to other local historians.

Most of the material for this publication has been gleaned from the memories and memorabilia of current members, reports from the newspapers of the day and from the hearsay of people who claimed 'to have been there.'

A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

There is no doubt that cricket existed in the Halifax district during the 1850's, but, in his column, "CRICKET NOTES FROM ALL PARTS", in the Halifax Evening Courier of Saturday, April 25, 1914, "LONG STOP" admirably summarises the interest in and the hierarchical organisation of cricket in the Halifax district at that time.

The glorious weather of the past week has given impetus to the cricket fever, and with most local clubs the season commences to-day. The Easter holidays afforded good practice, and the warm evenings this week have also enabled players who finish work early to get an hour's practice before sunset. Last season's weather was ideal and a repetition of such fine afternoons would be very welcome.

Halifax to-day are due at Skipton in the first Yorkshire Council fixture of the season, and King Cross commence next week. There will be the usual healthy rivalry between these teams, and with the men at their disposal the Thrum Hall eleven should have a better season than last year. They are particularly strong in bowling. Sutton, who played with King Cross last year, has transferred his affections to Halifax, whilst Coyle tells me he is this time playing with Brighouse as an amateur. Some uncertainty exists as to who Ewart Firth is going to turn out with. Last season but one, it will be remembered, he joined King Cross, half-way through the season, and played with them regularly last year. There are rumours that he might assist Halifax this time, but we shall soon see.

King Cross will be almost an amateur team again, and I am looking forward to them having a better run of play than came their way last season. They found it difficult to recover from an unfortunate start, the first three matches being lost by only a very few runs. The Rev. W. Mack and a promising young player named Wilson, have joined, and these are being tried with the second eleven, amongst whom are some promising players for promotion to the first team.

The newly-formed Parish Cricket League had an enjoyable function on Tuesday evening, when the cup, presented by the president, Mr. J. E. Shaw, J.P., and the "Courier" were handed to the League.

I fully endorse Mr. Clarkson's remarks concerning the value of amateur sport. The professional element in all games is becoming too prominent a feature, and play for money never brings the same interest as playing for the love of the game. The new league comprises ten good clubs, and I wish them and the old Halifax and District League every success. These remarks apply equally to the Amateur League, which had its annual meeting on Wednesday evening, and another year's successful working was recorded.

The Halifax district is well off in the number of its leagues, and the system forms a sort of co-ordination for the game. From the Non-conformist and other junior leagues clubs transfer to the amateur league and eventually from there to the District League, and now, under the new conditions, they can go a step higher to the Parish League. These stepping stones are provided not only for the clubs but for the players, and many take advantage of them, ultimately reaching the Yorkshire Council.

The Halifax Cricket Club are to be complimented on the arrangements made for the workshops cricket cup competition, which commences a week next Wednesday. Thus interest will be aroused straightaway, and maintained

well into the season. A welcome innovation is a time limit – one hour – for batting, unless the team is previously disposed of. The team scoring the most runs in that time will be the winners, irrespective of how many wickets have fallen. The committee reserve the power to reduce the time of play.

An additional attraction at the finish of each match will be a half-mile relay race, in squadrons of four. Workshops competitions have usually proved a success and this one, starting at the beginning of the season, should arouse considerably more interest than was the case when the games were delayed until the season was on the wane.

I shall be glad if club secretaries and others will be good enough to forward me, week by week, items of interest for this column.

The Shaw Family and Cricket

The interest which the Shaw family have taken in local cricket has done much to popularise the game. In 1887 the late Mr. Thomas Shaw, M.P., presented the Halifax Parish Challenge Cup, and when the Halifax and District League was formed in 1894 a shield was presented by Mr. W. Rawson Shaw, son of Mr. Thos. Shaw, and also for a time member of Parliament for Halifax. Now Mr. J. E. Shaw, J.P., a member of the same family, has given a cup for the newly-formed Parish Cricket League.

Defunct Clubs

The clubs in the District League during its first season were Dean Clough, St. Thomas's, King Cross, Greetland, Sowerby Bridge, Lightcliffe, and Triangle. Of these, the first two have long been defunct. In 1895 Stainland and Holy Trinity joined, in 1897 Mytholmroyd came in, in 1898 saw J. and J. Baldwin's, Lord Nelson, and Luddenden Foot St. Mary's join. In 1898 Illingworth entered, and in 1911 Siddal St. Mark's."

CRICKET FIXTURES FOR SATURDAY NEXT

YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

Halifax v Spen Valley
King Cross v Brighouse
Hull v Elland
Barnsley v Rastrick

HALIFAX PARISH LEAGUE

Elland Edge v Siddal
Greetland v Illingworth
Lightcliffe v Triangle
Norwood Green v Clifton
Sowerby Bridge v Stainland

HALIFAX & DISTRICT LEAGUE

Copley v Barkisland
Coley v Elland Tradesmen
Mytholmroyd v Northowram P.C.
S. Whitley's v Oates & Green's
Sowerby St. Peter's v Warley

HALIFAX & DISTRICT AMATEUR LEAGUE

Siddal United v St. John's
Hipperholme v Booth
Thornton & Marshalls v Lumb & Co.
Norland v Stones
Dyeing Co. v King Cross 3rd
Trinity Wesleyans v G.P.O. Eng. Branch
West Vale Baptists v Sowerby Bridge C.I.
Rishworth v Caddy Field
(It would appear the Beech Hill had a free date).

There were in addition three other cricket leagues functioning in the district:

THE HALIFAX & DISTRICT NONCONFORMIST LEAGUE comprising:

Rhodes St. Wesleyans, Stannary, Illingworth Wesleyans, Lee Mount Baptists, Ripponden, Queen's Road Primitive Methodists, Sion, Queen's Road United Methodists, Square, Pellon-lane Baptists, North-parade Baptists, Booth Town United Methodists, Heywood, Brunswick United Methodists.

HALIFAX & DISTRICT CHURCH LEAGUE comprising:

Luddenden St. Mary's, St. Hilda's, St. Paul's, St. Anne's, All Saints', St. Michael's, St. Mary's, St. Thomas', Pellon.

HALIFAX AMATEUR THURSDAY LEAGUE comprising:

Tradesmen, Fish & Game, Thursday, Boot and Shoe, Prudential, Banks.

It is perhaps significant from a village perspective that there were, at this time, three clubs already operating within the Northowram area: St. John's Church, Coley and St. Matthew's Church, Northowram were members of the Halifax & District League, having previously competed in the Halifax & District Church League, and Heywood Chapel competed in the Halifax & District Nonconformist League.

The World War of 1914 to 1918 had a huge impact on the infrastructure of local sport, particularly when military conscription was introduced in January 1916. Local league cricket was abandoned in the 1915 and 1916 seasons and then re-established during the 1919 season.

On Monday, February 24, 1919, The Halifax Evening Courier under the column "SPORT AND PASTIME" reported as follows:

"The Halifax Parish Cricket League had another meeting on Saturday, and much headway was made in preparation for the coming season. Probably eight clubs only will be contesting the trophies during 1919, but it is hoped later that their numbers will be increased to ten by the addition of Siddal United and Halifax Baptists.


The Amateur Cricket Association are to be congratulated on their clubs' promotion to a better class. It is hoped that the anxieties of the Baptists in respect to their ground will not cause any serious misgivings, and the members are reminded that they will have to work hard to get their ground into good or even moderate condition. Of course the same applies to all the grounds which have been held in suspense during the last couple of years."

At a meeting of the Halifax and District Amateur Association held on Monday, March 31, 1919, the Secretary reported that the league would be composed of the following clubs for the coming season: Campbell's Ltd., Illingworth Wesleyans, St. Anne's, Screw Co., Sowerby Bridge Church Institute, West End Wesleyans, Asqith's Ltd., Greetland 'A', Illingworth St. Mary's 'A', Luddenden St. Mary's, Norland, Providence Congregationalists, Ripponden Cons., Rishworth, Northowram Parish Church, Siddal 'A', Stones Wesleyans, Zion Congregationalists and Ripponden

The clubs competing in the Halifax Council League were Brighouse, Halifax, King Cross, Siddal, Clifton, Elland, Lightcliffe, Rastrick and Sowerby Bridge.

Although the re-establishment of league cricket had been accomplished in a very short period of time, it was only some three weeks into the season that the officials found it necessary to re-instil some discipline into their procedures. At the monthly meeting of the Halifax Parish League, which was held at the Upper George Hotel in Halifax on Tuesday, May 20th, 1919, Mr. J.J.Fielden, in accepting the presidency, said that he marvelled at the wonderful impetus put into the work of rebuilding the various cricket clubs and leagues, and said that it augered well for the future success. The Secretary reported several umpires for not fulfilling their appointments, and also deplored the indifference of the club representatives to attend meetings. It was decided that the 'fines as per rule' for these deficiencies would be enforced from the present date.

Of the three pre-war village clubs only Northowram Parish Church, in the Amateur League, was, at this stage, reportedly involved in competitive cricket, and players representing this club during the 1919 season included, W.Brooke (captain), W.Naylor, H.Naylor, I.Wade, N.Wade, M.Wade, H.Hopkinson, J.W.Spencer, J.Birchenough, J.Barston, R.Ridsdale, W.Barker and T.Birch.

It would appear that the Halifax & District Nonconformist League was not in a position to reintroduce league cricket during the 1919 season, in as much as there were no reported league fixtures in the Halifax Evening Couriers of that era. Competition did take place, however, for the Mackintosh Cup, which was the Knock Out competition for Nonconformist Cricket Clubs.  the

Halifax District. A 'friendly' fixture between Heywood CC and Hipperholme Grammar School was also reported on Friday, June 13, 1919 when the scorecard read as follows:

Heywood CC: Rev. F.Denham 6, E.Robinson 15, H.Appleyard 9, R.Ambler 2, P.Brook 0, F.Appleyard 3, A.Brook 8, J.Shepard 0, A.Rawnsley 1, M.Smith (not out) 1, J.Gibson 0, extras 4, total 49.

Mr. Houseman 9 overs 0 maidens 23 runs 4 wickets
Binns 9 overs 0 maidens 22 runs 6 wickets

Hipperholme GS: Kinder 1, Barker 0, Mr. Houseman 2, Mr. Harris 30, Marshall 0, Pilling 1, Harker 2, Thompson 0, Binns 2, B.Boothroyd 2, R.Boothroyd (not out) 0, extras 2, total 42.

Brooke 6 overs 0 maidens 19 runs 7 wickets
Shepard 6 overs 0 maidens 20 runs 3 wickets.

THE LAUNCH OF THE CLUB

The available records would suggest that the Club was launched in 1919, on a trial basis, from the Northowram Wesleyan Church, which was opposite the Shoulder of Mutton public house on Towngate. Not surprisingly the Club was called the Northowram Wesleyan Cricket Club and its home ground was situated behind and to the left of the Heywood Chapel. Three 'friendly' fixtures were reported in the Halifax Evening Courier for that season:

Monday, June 6, 1919

Northowram Wesleyans v Ebenezer at Northowram

Ebenezer: F.Sharpe 5, I.W.Collinson 5, A.Wright 16, H.Mountford 0, W. Robinson 2, H.Heritage 0, J.Beverley 14, W.Brooke 0, A.Woodhead 5, E.Gill 7, F.Mitchell (not out) 1, extras 2, total 57.

Wesleyan: N.Ingham 5, I.Kenyon 0, A.Greenwood (not out) 40, G.Wade (not out) 14, extras 4, total 63 for 2 wickets.

Monday, June 30, 1919

Northowram Wesleyans v Halifax Secondary School at Northowram

Northowram: F.Foster 0, E.Oates 8, W.Hanson 0, G.E.Lawton 71, W.Greenwood 1, N.Ingham 6, A.Whittaker 19, H.Jackson (not out) 20, J.Kenyon (not out) 10, extras 20, total for 7 wickets 161 (innings declared).

Secondary School: Manger 1, Smithies 1, Clapham 0, Tempest 15, Theed 58, Dodd 0, Halliday 0, Simpson 5, Hodgson 4, Spriggs (not out) 1, Whittaker 0, extras 7, total 92.

Wednesday, July 16, 1919

Hipperholme Grammar School v Northowram Wesleyans at Hipperholme

Northowram: H.Jackson 2, F.Foster 17, A.Greenwood 4, E.Oates 5, W.Greenwood 0, G.Wade 3, W.Hanson 0, J.Kenyon 0, Nowell 0, Isles 0, Noble (not out) 1, extras 5, total 37.

Mr.Houseman 10 overs 2 maidens 24 runs 6 wickets
Binns 10 overs 6 maidens 8 runs 4 wickets

Hipperholme: Harker 6, Mr.Harris 2, Mr.Houseman (not out) 22, Pilling 2, Barker 6, Kinder 7, Binns 0, Marshall 0, B.Boothroyd 2, Thompson 1, R.Boothroyd 3, extras 6, total 57.

Foster 8 overs 0 maidens 17 runs 2 wickets
Greenwood 10 overs 3 maidens 24 runs 6 wickets.

The newly formed Club did, however, experience competitive cricket by virtue of its entry in the Mackintosh Cup, and winning it. Although there were no reports of the club's earlier rounds, the final between Northowram Wesleyans and Pellon Baptists took place on Saturday, August 2, 1919 on the ground of Lee Mount Baptists at Ovenden Cross, and the Rev.F.Drennan who was the President of the Halifax Nonconformist League presented the cup and prizes. The scorecard as printed in the Halifax Evening Courier read as follows:

PELLON				NORTHOWRAM			
Spencer	c Greenwood	b Hodgson	12	Leyton		b Spencer	0
Longbottom	c and b	Hodgson	5	N.Wade	c Spencer	b Jowett	5
Fleming	c Naylor	b Briggs	2	Naylor	c Halliday	b Spencer	5
Normanton		b Briggs	0	Hy.Hodgson		b Spencer	2
Halliday		b Briggs	1	Greenwood		b Spencer	11
Jowett		b Wade	3	Briggs	retired		6
Naylor	c and b	Wade	3	Harold Hodgson	retired		1
Farrar	c Jackson	b Wade	3				
Priestley	run out		0				
Whiteley	not out		1				
Fleming	c Naylor	b Wade	0				
Extras			2	Extras			4
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	Total		32		Total for 5 wickets		34

According to the late Walter Howden, during its formative years the Secretary of the Club was Andre Greenwood, the village butcher and the Treasurer was Frank Anderton, who lived at Hud Hill. Traditionally, the President of a church club was always the Superintendent Minister and the Trustees of the Club were also the Trustees of the Chapel. In effect this meant that if, for any reason, the Club should discontinue, its assets would revert to the Chapel. By the same token the Club, at a minimal cost, was allowed to use the Sunday School for its meetings and for fund raising activities such as Jumble Sales and Concerts. In his notes Mr. Howden mentions an annual subscription of £2 to Chapel funds, but there is no evidence of this in Club's Cash Book.

Mr. Howden recalls that the only part of the cricket field with the grass cut short was a small square in the middle of the field which was surrounded by iron posts with wire slotted through them to keep the cattle off the square. The accommodation was also very meagre consisting of one dressing hut used by both teams with no division. There were no refreshment facilities, which meant that visiting teams had to provide their own.

There was, however, a great deal of enthusiasm for the development of the recreational aspects of community life. The Halifax Evening Courier reported that a successful concert, chaired by Mr.A.Jackson, had been held on Saturday, November 8, 1919 in the Northowram Wesleyan School, when the Alexandra Concert Party had entertained the crowded gathering. "Through the efforts of the energetic secretaries, the committee of the Tennis and Cricket Clubs, and the teachers of the Sunday School, these clubs will benefit by the sum of £8 - 10s, which is nearly twice the amount originally aimed at." There are no records, which enlarge upon either the location of the court or the organisation of the Tennis Club

Although there are no financial records for the cricket club for this inaugural season, the records for the 1920 season do show a 'Balance from last year' of £4 - 19 - 0d.

THE 1920 SEASON

The Nonconformist League was reformed in 1920 and consisted of the following clubs: Heywood, Ovenden Wesleyan, Halifax Baptist, Northowram Wesleyan, Queen's Road United Methodist, Friendly Wesleyan, Sion, Akroydon Wesleyan.

Players representing the Northowram Wesleyan in fixtures against Ovenden Wesleyan on Saturday, 5th June and on Saturday, 4th September, in the semi-final of the Mackintosh Cup, included H.A.Greenwood (capt), H.Wade, H.Jackson, J.Kenyon, G.Jackson, L.Walker, G.Wade, G.Walker, H.Hodgson, F.Kershaw, S.Taylor, B.Lightowler, C.Ingham, E.Drake, E.Fellows, E.Briggs, G.Lawton, and A.Wilkinson. Northowram Wesleyan lost this semi-final, which was played at the Denfield ground, scoring only 49 runs in reply to Ovenden's 71.

The final League Table indicates that the club had a very comfortable introduction to its first season of league cricket.

	P	W	L	D	Pts.
Ovenden Wesleyan	14	12	1	1	25
Heywood	14	11	2	1	23
Northowram Wesleyan	14	7	6	1	15
Akroydon Wesleyan	14	6	7	1	13
Friendly Wesleyan	14	5	8	1	11
Queen's Road U.M.	14	5	9	0	10
Halifax Baptist	14	4	10	0	8
Sion	14	3	10	1	7

The nature and condition of the ground has already been described and, although allegedly mowed, the quality of the "squares" in general must have made batting something of a lottery going by some of the scores achieved during this season. Of the ten games recorded, four had a winning score of less than 40, two of less than 60, one of less than 80 and only three of over 100. The items "Turf Lifter", "Lawn Seed" and "Loan of turf cutter", shown early in the season in the "expenditure column" of the Cash Book for 1920, must have been crucial to the preparation and maintenance of the playing strip. Since there is no record of either the purchase or the hire of a mower, one can only assume that in the early years this was loaned by one of the members.

The development of a ground in Westercroft Lane was first reported in the Halifax Evening Courier on Monday, 12th April, 1920:

"CRICKET CLUB DANCE AT NORTHOWRAM

Under the auspices of Northowram Oarish Church Cricket Club, a successful dance was held in the schoolroom on Saturday, at which a large number assembled. At intervals the lights were turned low and limelight was thrown in various parts of the room with pleasing effect. The proceeds are to partly defray the initial cost of the laying of the crease at their new cricket ground in Westercroft Lane. The work has been done by Messrs. Conway, Halifax."