

ALMONDBURY WESLEYANS: the first in a second series of club histories...

Church connection and regal facilities!

AROUND THE WICKET

...with historian Peter Davies

ALMONDBURY Wesleyans Cricket Club - successor club to Almondbury Zion CC - was founded back in November 1920, and 1921 was their first full season. It was around this time that the club started work on levelling up their Kaye Lane ground.

They were obviously helped by the fact that many local men were unemployed following the Great War. They thus had plenty of time on their hands to help.

Cricketers from opposing teams are always interested in the club's Methodist links, and Keith Crawshaw, club secretary, is happy to explain:

"In the early days there was a strong connection between the club and the local Wesleyan church. Most of the cricket team were regular attenders - in fact, they were actually obliged to go to church a certain number of times each month.

"Today, the situation is different, with only a few club members still having links with the church. But that said, we're very proud of the connection and we're pleased that the minister at the church still holds the position of club president."

The 1920s were a busy decade. The club bought a heavy roller from Huddersfield Borough Council and also borrowed a horse from one of the local farmers to pull it.

Sadly, the horse died the next day!

'Wes' played in the Huddersfield Association, winning their fair share of silverware, but gradually became frustrated with having to play most of their fixtures at Leeds Road.

Thus, in 1977 they opted to join the Huddersfield Central League.

Development work at Kaye Lane has been pretty much non-stop ever since.

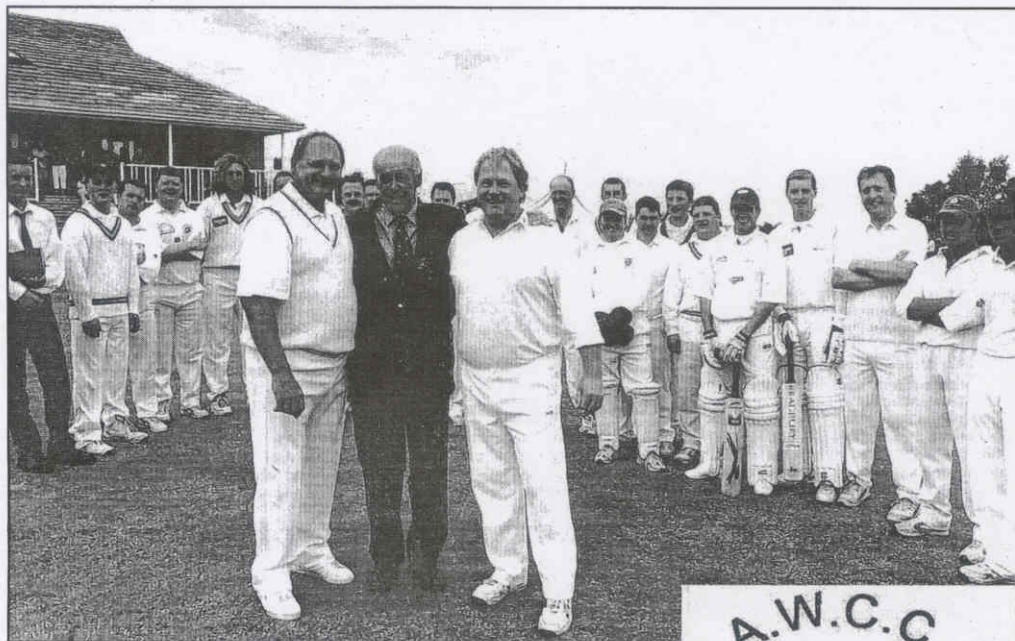
In the 1960s running water was piped into the pavilion, and in 1986 portable cabins were installed - housing a new tea room and dressing rooms.

And in 2001 Wesleyans played their last six 'home' games away so work could start on the £340,000 redevelopment project that was completed in 2002.

And towards the end of the 2002 season, the following message appeared on the Almondbury Wesleyans' website:

'Well, we've made it!

'After two and a half years of planning and



□ **MOMENTOUS DAY:** Yorkshire and England legend Brian Close with Central League president Adrian Whittaker (right) at the opening of the 'new' Kaye Lane in August 2002.

fundraising, the club played their first home game of the season against Denby on Saturday 13 July at our redeveloped Kaye Lane ground on a lovely summer's day, watched by dozens of members, friends, neighbours and well-wishers...

'Our return to Kaye Lane and a new normality is a watershed in our history...A sincere word of thanks to everyone...Mark Binns, Club Chairman.'

The new pavilion (incorporating function room, kitchen and changing rooms) is built out of traditional stone.

The club's 'Buy-A-Brick' scheme raised a total of £8,500 (a 'big' brick cost £50 and a 'small' one £25).

The club gained a car park and a new set of pitches (grass and plastic); and was also

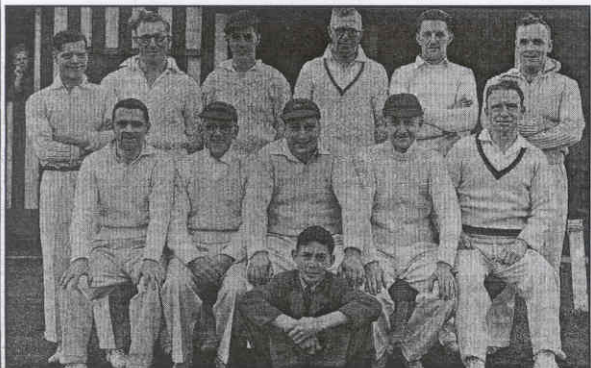
granted a new 25-year lease for their Kaye Lane premises.

The 'Grand Opening' took place on 25 August 2002, with Yorkshire and England cricket legend Brian Close in attendance.

Almost everywhere you look at the venue, Sport England are thanked for their financial assistance (the Lord's Taverners also get their own plaque).

There are plenty of mementos of the first match on the new ground, and also details of how you can order your very own 'Wes' t-shirt.

Today, Kaye Lane certainly looks the part. The levelled-up playing area and the handsome pavilion make for a wonderful sight.



□ **HISTORY IN THE MAKING:** Wesleyans in 1950. Back row: Fred Levitt, Fred Worth, Malcolm Dyson, Philip Sykes, Jack Tarbatt, Ernest Holt; front: Leslie Sowdon, Vincent Dawson, Brian Senior, Fred Greenhalgh, Tommy Nestor and scorer Neil Schofield. Right: lottery bonanza in 2002.

