

BIRKBY FMA: the seventh in a second series of cricket histories...

Friendly club is getting on fine!

BIRKBY FMA (Former Members' Association) was founded in 1965 by Jerry Smith (captain-to-be), Colin Brennan and a group of friends.

The club grew out of the Birkby Civic Youth Club.

When a generation of cricketers left this organisation because they had become too old for it - they decided to go it alone.

Hence the emergence of Birkby FMA as a force in local league cricket.

Their sister club was Birkby Old Boys - another team that emerged from Birkby CYC.

Birkby FMA joined the Huddersfield Association League in 1965.

Over the years, the club has played at four different grounds.

In the early days, it played at Bradley Bar (St Augustinians School) and used the Ashbrow pub as its headquarters. Then in 1967 it moved to the Highfields Sports Arena, which it shared with Oakes CYC.

From there it moved to Fartown High School - a location that the Birkby club described as 'one of the most picturesque grounds probably in our league'; and then it was on to Britannia Works on New Hey Road, Salendine Nook.

In 1976 Birkby FMA bowled out Salendine Nook Old Boys - in their debut season - for 32.

This kind of form continued, and as one Association handbook put it: 'Birkby FMA have the enviable accolade of playing a whole season without ever losing a match, a feat no doubt being rare to any club in the league.'

In their infancy, Birkby FMA had significant financial problems to deal with, but continued to play, and get by, even when the chips were down.

Their claim was that, whatever their

predicament, they offered the 'usual harmony and fellowship'

In addition: 'Players not only play but are our officials, secretary, treasurer, league representative etc.'

In 1979 Birkby FMA scooped the Huddersfield Association League Sharpe Trophy, awarded to the team obtaining the most points in the last six matches.

More silverware followed: the club were Huddersfield Association Section B champions in 1981 and 1982. In 1989 Birkby FMA reached the Lumb Cup final - only to lose by two wickets to International.

But in 1992 they stormed back to form, scooping the Association Section A championship.

They gained entry to the prestigious Sykes Cup on account of winning the Association title. The draw pitted them against Broad Oak - and a huge West Indian fast bowler called Johnson.

Needless to say, it wasn't a very pleasant experience for the Birkby boys, and in the end they were beaten fairly comfortably by the Linthwaite side.

In 1993 Birkby FMA moved grounds to Britannia Works on New Hey Road, Salendine Nook.

Since joining the Huddersfield Central League, FMA have achieved a succession of promotions, and in recent years have only been a stone's throw away from the Premiership.

Today, Birkby FMA are unique in several respects. They only have one senior team, are no longer based in Birkby, and do not field any junior sides. They also have to hire a ground.

'I suppose we've done well against the odds', said secretary Mark Knight. 'We've had a few grounds, and only one IX but camaraderie keeps us going.'

Although Birkby FMA do not run junior teams, they often field teenagers in their side.

AROUND THE WICKET

...with historian Peter Davies



□ BIRKBY: date unknown and below: Birkby 1995. Back: Surry Singh, John Lovatt, Brian Blacker, Alan Dales, Brian Dolley, Interpaal Singh; front: Robert Dolley, Alan Walker, Paul Shaw, Ravinder Singh, Keith Wilson

Knight, who has been a club regular for over 20 years, says: 'We often bring in youngsters - quite a few team members bring in their sons to play. My father played and that's how I got involved. But having just one team is unusual and causes a few problems.'

'We've lost a few players recently, and at the moment we've got a pool of 16 or 17 players. Every Saturday we've got to aim for 11, and I admit that some times we've ended up as a 10-man side.'

The club has no formal committee. 'We see a lot of each other as mates, and we just organise things', said Knight. 'I've been secretary for eight years, and the treasurer has been in post for a similar amount of time. We just get on with things.'



□ CHAMPS: Birkby FMA skipper Richard Blacker receives the 1981 Section A championship trophy from Mrs. Margaret Ryan, wife of Cricket Association president Peter Ryan, as delighted members of the winning team look on, in the sunshine



□ BIRKBY CC 1992: Back: Alan Dales, Brian Blacker, Bryan Dolley, Mark Knight, Keith Wilson, Gary Senloc, Dave Mantony; front: Ravinder Singh, Justice Cockcroft, Justin Cockcroft, Barrie Knight, Mark Walker, Sundeep Singh, Alan Dolley