

WOODFIELD PARK CRICKET CLUB: the fourth in a second series of cricket histories...

Assault, charity and rise of police sport...

A long and arresting tale

WOODFIELD Park Police Sports club was formed as Huddersfield Borough Police in 1903. One of their first fixtures was against Emley and this turned into an annual event.

As cricket quickly became a key part of the social fabric that bound the force together, Huddersfield Police XI played a charity match against the West Riding Constabulary in front of 400 people at Fartown.

The proceeds of £50 were donated to the Huddersfield Police Court Mission. The event also included an 'assault at arms'.

It comprised of a 'Ju Jit-su' display by Edward Drayton, who was assisted by pupils of the Halifax School of Physical Culture, and a three-hour exhibition of 'Ken Jit-su', the Japanese double-handed sword play, also conducted by Mr Drayton.

Around 1910, Woodfield Park, off Meltham Road, Lockwood, was bequeathed as a gift to the Huddersfield Borough Police Section (as it was then known). The woman who donated the land was the owner of the Woodfield Estate. The only stipulation she made was that the land should be put at the disposal of local police officers and their families for recreation.

It was soon developed with sporting purposes in mind: a cricket pitch, a bowling green, a set of tennis courts, and a fitness trail (a kind of army assault course) around the perimeter of the land.

A fixture that took place in 1913, against Emley, was probably the most famous in the club's history.

The game took place at the end of the season, on September 24, and it became an almost mythical occasion because the boys in blue managed to persuade the famous triumvirate of Huddersfield and Yorkshire cricketers - George Herbert Hirst, Wilfred Rhodes and Schofield Haigh - into becoming bobbies for the day.

Unsurprisingly, Borough Police won the game comfortably, making 102-6 dec, and then bowling Emley out for 68.

The annual Athletic Sports gala was a key part of the Borough Police's social and fundraising activities during the 1920s.

A Rose Bowl was donated by the cricket club in 1924, to be presented to the winner of the 100 yards race. The first winner was Po W H Fisher.

In 1929 the foundation stone of the new pavilion was laid at the new Woodfield Park sports ground.

By the 1930s, most major Yorkshire towns had a police cricket team - including Halifax.

Before the club joined the Huddersfield Association League in 1952, Huddersfield Police teams competed in the Yorkshire Police Forces League, previously known as the West Yorkshire Police League.

The club was re-formed in 1952, and came to be known simply as Police CC. They joined the Evening League and then the Huddersfield Cricket Association. At the same time they were also members of the West Yorkshire Police League.

In 1954 the club scooped the Sharpe Rose Bowl as Section B champions, but lost to Rastrick New Road in the championship play-off final.

In 1955 the club succumbed to Brook Motors in the championship play-off match. The Police also won the Saville Trophy in 1955 and retained it in 1956.

Alongside local league competition, inter-departmental cricket matches remained a key part of social life in the police force during the 1950s.

In 1959 the CID team played the Uniform division at Woodfield Park. CID scored 75 but were defeated by five wickets.

Evidently, in April 1962 the Police were fined for fielding only six players in a match against Birchcliffe. Given the month of the year in which this punishment was meted out, it is likely that a local soccer match, and the policing of it, would have been the root cause of the problem.

Throughout its history, the Police have had to juggle sporting enthusiasm with professional commitments. On March 18 1963, for example, the minutes of the Association stated: 'Police representative announced doubts of ability to fulfil early season fixtures due to football duties.'

In May 1964 it was another sport to blame. The relevant Huddersfield Association minute read: 'Oakes CYC and Police permitted to re-arrange match on May 23 1964 due to Eastern Division Rugby Cup Final.'

In 1978 the 1st XI came up trumps when they netted the Huddersfield Cricket Association League Section A championship - and also the Lumb Cup.

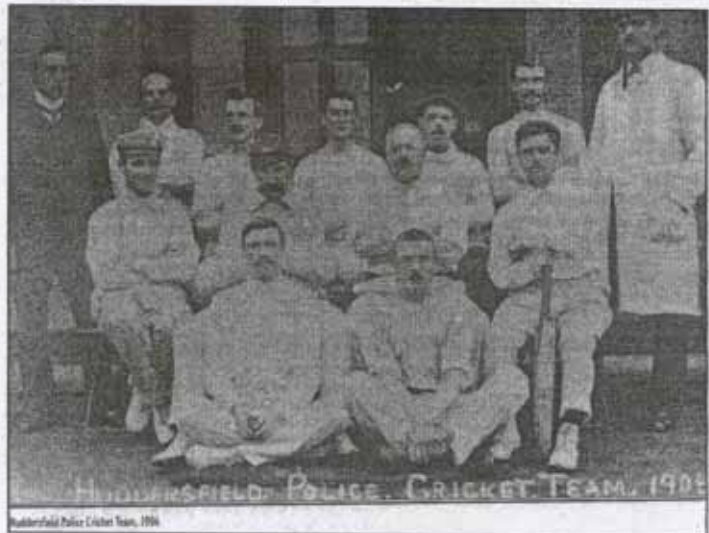
In this period, the club established a 2nd XI and made great play of its uniqueness. A spokesman said: 'Here at last is one club which has never thrown open its doors to friends, relatives or the general public... It is a credit to the players, throughout the club's history, that they have often competed in matches having come straight from, or going straight to, duty, after having had little or no sleep.'

□ DISTINGUISHED HISTORY:

Clockwise (from top): this photograph of Huddersfield Police Cricket team dates from 1906; distinguished Caribbean visitors to Woodfield Park in 1994; the Borough Police XI pictured in front of the pavilion in 1950; Yorkshire and England greats George Herbert Hirst, Wilfred Rhodes and Schofield Haigh join the Police line-up in September 24, 1913 for a friendly game against Emley. Unsurprisingly, the Police side romped to a comfortable victory!

AROUND THE WICKET

...with historian Peter Davies



Huddersfield Police Cricket Team, 1906

In 1982 the 1st XI won the Lumb Cup, while the 2nd XI netted the Crossland Trophy.

The Huddersfield Association meeting on 19 March 1984 recorded that: 'The Police requested a cancellation of the game on the opening day of the season because all Police leave had been cancelled due to Leeds United playing Huddersfield Town at Leeds Road.'

Over the years, the Police team has been invited to take part in evening cricket festivals organised by near-neighbours Armitage Bridge. Other teams from down the Holme Valley would also compete (Hall Bower, Thongsbridge, Holmfirth) and with adjoining cricket grounds to take advantage of (Armitage Fold and Woodfield Park), the sides would fight it out until a winner emerged.

In the last years of the 20th Century, cricket remained a key part of social life in the Huddersfield police force. A series of touring sides were entertained at Woodfield Park during the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s, including the Royal Barbados Police Cricket team in 1994.

Other visiting teams have included the Royal St. Christopher cricket team and the Taunton Police side.

Woodfield Park is such a well-appointed ground that it has been used for a variety of Association and Central League finals. Today, it is looking as good as ever.

