

Thank you, Colonel!

Triangle CC - Grassy Bottom

It's a very small ground but it's well maintained and the 1st XI is always near the top of the league. Good facilities and the club is always well supported.

[One visiting player]

The elderly lady whose house backs on to Triangle CC's quaint ground could not help, unfortunately. 'No,' she said. 'I'm sorry, I've got no idea why Triangle is called Triangle.'

The answer to the conundrum happened to lie elsewhere. In January 1956, the Halifax Courier and Guardian reported: 'Triangle...bears a name that often puzzles people. We are often asked "Why Triangle?" and we have often given the answer. The name was first applied to the inn...which stands on the point of a site which, if cut through a little behind the building, would form a triangle. Before that the hamlet was known as Pond, there having in older times been a pond there.'

So, the place is home to a pond and a pub called the Triangle Inn (which, in 1920, had a war memorial plaque fixed to its frontage). It also boasts a Methodist church that has been turned into a house, an industrial estate, and, surely, one of the wonders of the natural world, Penny the Mute Swan, who floats up and down the River Ryburn.

Triangle is the home of an enchanting cricketing venue. Club spokesman Gary Rodger says: 'Opposition teams love coming here. The river, the trees, the views from all around. It is a fantastic place to play cricket.'

The ground is also pretty small. Rodger goes on: 'It could well be the tiniest in the league. But, to be honest, places like Booth and Bradshaw aren't that much bigger. At Triangle, perhaps the ground looks smaller than it is because it is so enclosed by trees. It is small, but it is also well proportioned, which makes a big difference.'

The venue lies almost halfway between Sowerby Bridge and Ripponden, just off the main Rochdale Road. A blue and white 'TCC' flag flutters from atop the whiter-than-white double-tier pavilion (which incorporates dressing rooms and a bar), and a small, simple plaque reminds visitors that cricket has been played amid the vivid greenery of Grassy Bottom since 1862. So the club is fast approaching its 150th anniversary. One seasoned visitor says: 'I

always think it is a similar setting to the Salem ground at Hebden Bridge. It's cosy and intense.'

In the late nineteenth century, Triangle Reading Room and Cricket Club was the full, formal title of the organisation, and important social gatherings were held at the local pub. Local historian John Hargreaves writes: 'It was later recalled that, in the early days of the club's history, 'when the team played in Lancashire, (villagers) could know what the score was before the team returned home. The scores were sent by carrier pigeon to the Triangle Inn, where all the supporters were drinking.'



1955 Team Photo

The settlement developed in the nineteenth century with the coming of the railways and water mills. It lost its train service in 1958, but it has always been a significant staging post on the old turnpike road between Sowerby Bridge and towns on the other side of the Pennines. Between 1905 and 1934 it also had a tram link to Sowerby Bridge.

Enclosed on one side by tall trees, the trickle of the Ryburn and a series of handsome houses, and on the other by a rising bank of woodland, the cricket ground is lined by a neat array of wooden benches. And when you sit on one, you feel very adjacent to the action and intimately involved in the spectacle.

Over the years, Grassy Bottom has retained its character, as Rodger notes: 'The pavilion has been upgraded, and in 1982 the scoreboard was moved from on top of the pavilion to the far end of the ground. We've also made a tea room out of a wooden store room. But that's about it.'

And there is no argument about the wicket. 'Just ask our bowlers!' says Rodger. 'It's a good batting pitch. A few years ago you would have been happy with 190 batting first, but now you've got to be aiming for over 250. It is not just the short boundaries that make this a good place to bat - it's also a great track.'

In recent years, Triangle CC (whose main local rivals are Sowerby St. Peter's) have collected more than their share of silverware. In the 1990s they won the Halifax League five times and the Parish Cup on four occasions. The club's 2nd XI and five-a-side team have also won titles. The club is not just successful on the field, but active off it. It doubles as a working men's club - and boasts a hefty annual turnover.

The woman who wandered into her attractive garden explained a bit more: 'I am a member of the club, and so are my son and grandson. Did you know those trees at the far end were blown over in a hurricane last June? And did you know my grandson acted as ballboy for two years on the river side of the ground? A lot of balls get hit into the water, you know!' (However, locals confirm that because they hire a ballboy, who wades through the water with a net, they do not actually lose that many balls in a typical season). According to local supporters, the ball-retrieval escapades add to the atmosphere and camaraderie.

The prettiness of the location is enhanced by the whiteness of the pavilion and the general effort that has been made to whiten the walls behind the bowler's arm near the main entrance. On the front of the pavilion there is a clock (telling the right time) and a TCC crest (in the shape of a triangle, of course). The tea room is spick and span - lots of orange juice and Yorkshire Tea in evidence - and a poster in the window tells all members what is expected of them: PLEASE CAN YOU PUT ALL RUBBISH IN BLACK BIN LINERS AND PUT ROUND THE BACK OF THE CLUB HOUSE IN THE WHEELY BIN. THANK YOU.

Way back in 1927, Colonel Tom H. Morris, a local mill-owner, made a gift of the ground to Triangle CC. Today, it is a smart and well appointed venue, but it's the tree-lined boundaries and the sound of running water that captivates the first-time visitor.

Extract from P.Davies, *Home Soil* (2003)