

► CRICKET HISTORIES: Birchencliffe – the third in our third series...

# Nomads, successes and self-relegation!

THERE was a cricket club in Birchencliffe in the inter-war years – Birchencliffe Church Cricket Club, linked to the local parish church, St Philip the Apostle.

Their HQ was in the middle of the village, and there was a set of tennis courts next door.

Birchencliffe Church Cricket Club competed in the Huddersfield Association League. The club also played a lot of evening cricket.

As their players all worked in the local mills, they rarely got Saturdays off.

In 1934 the club's 2nd XI won a league-and-cup 'double', securing the Huddersfield Association Challenge Shield and the Armitage Shield.

The 'old' Birchencliffe CC folded almost as soon as hostilities broke out in 1939 – and its members dispersed.

The club sold its pavilion to Blakeborough Cricket Club.

The field that it had rented as a ground was sold to Birchencliffe Brick Works to be used for quarrying.

Customers of the former Royal Hotel established the 'new' Birchencliffe Cricket Club.

Some local men had returned from the war without a cricket team to play for.

The 'new' Birchencliffe club was formed officially on November 20 1950 at a special meeting staged at the hotel.

They moved into their Halifax Road HQ a few years later. In the years in between they wandered from ground to ground like nomads.

Club stalwart Peter Clarkson explains: "It was a fresh start for everyone after the war.

"We had no proper base – we'd literally play anywhere.

Birchencliffe were admitted to the Huddersfield Cricket Association in 1952 – and stayed there for a quarter of a century.

They were members of the league when

it celebrated its 75th Anniversary in 1961.

Much success followed in the 1950s.

The club won the Crosland Trophy in 1955, the league and Lumb Cup in 1957, and the Section C title in 1958.

Birchencliffe also purchased their Halifax Road ground during the 1950s.

Then, in 1960 the club spent £300 on levelling the playing area.

To help with this project they received a £55 grant from the National Playing Fields Association.

In 1961 the Association authorities described Birchencliffe as a club that was 'by its own exertions... forging ahead, and which is so obviously a credit to the association.'

Birchencliffe were also involved in comic goings-on.

On 30 April 1962 the Police Cricket Club were fined for playing only six men against Birchencliffe!

More Lumb Cup triumphs followed – in 1964 and 1972.

The shell of the clubhouse building put up in 1960 was formerly the fuselage of a World War II glider. In 1969 and 1976 the construction was extended further.

In 1978 Birchencliffe entered two senior teams in the Arrow Huddersfield Central League.

Five years later, in 1983, they netted the Section C trophy – their first piece of Central League silverware!

Birchencliffe are very proud of their junior set-up – and in 1998 they scooped the Armitage Cup.

Silverware followed in the new century: the Section B title in 2003 and the Section A championship in 2004.

The club 'relegated themselves' down the Central League ladder this summer after an unfortunate exodus of players – but Halifax Road, Birchencliffe, is still a key landmark in local cricket circles.



**SIGN OF TIMES:** The distinctive sign at the cricket club's headquarters and (right) the distinctive club scoreboard. Below: a panoramic view of the picturesque Birchencliffe ground off Halifax Road and surrounding area in the height of summer. The ground is still a landmark of cricket in the area.

AROUND THE WICKET

...with historian Peter Davies



**BIRCHENCLIFFE MEMORIES:** The 1955 Crosland Trophy winning side: L. Tansey, J. Fish, R. T. Brook, R. Woodhead, J. Keegan, J. Clegg, A. McGinty, G. Hinchcliffe, I. Chatterton, N. H. Barraclough (secretary), S. Pickering, S. Sykes (scorer). Right: Section C winners in 1958: G. Plant, S. Sykes, N. Barrowclough, A. McGinty, D. Goswami, J. Keegan, W. Ingleby, L. Powell, G. Mullins, G. Hinchcliffe, R. Clay (captain), S. Pickering, B. Lilley (inset K. Ingleby, T. Robinson).