

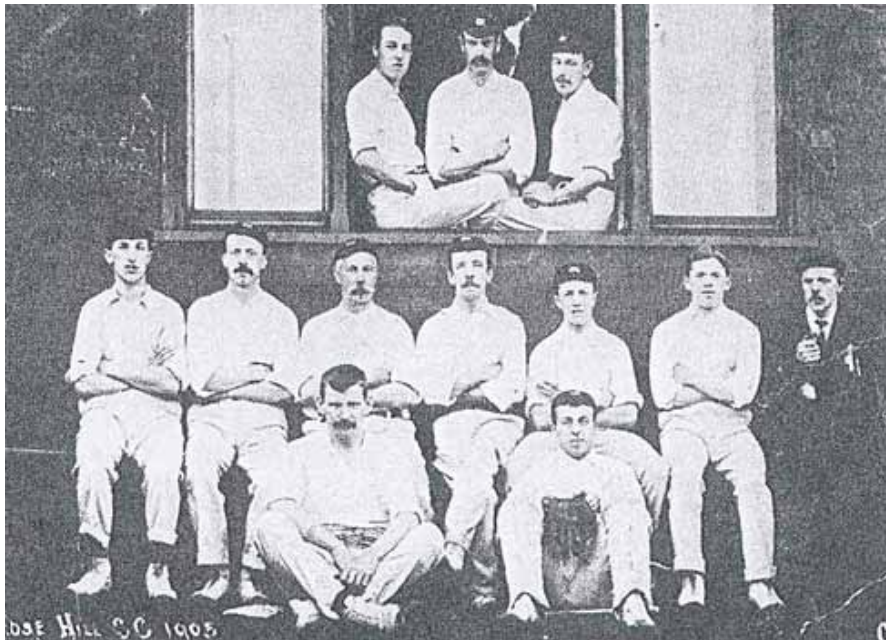
Community club

22. Primrose Hill C.C. - Cross Lane

Primrose Hill Cricket Club looks set to have escaped the axe once again. Not for the first time...Primrose Hill appear to have overcome their most-recent parlous financial state...The cash-stricken club were faced with extinction at the end of last season when they were declared insolvent and had a county court order hanging over their heads. However, Primrose Hill chairman, treasurer and secretary Bruce Heath has said the club have appointed a new bar steward, who has advanced a sum of money to clear off the club's debts.

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Primrose Hill - known locally as the 'Hillites' - were formed in 1875, and were very much a 'village' club in their infancy. Their early years were littered with interesting and amusing goings-on. In 1891 they won the Lumb Cup and opened a 'champagne account' at a local inn to celebrate. In the same year the club allowed two of its members - George Beaumont and J.A. Kennedy - to 'hawk tripe and fish in the cricket field on payment of sixpence at each match'; it also informed the police that gambling was taking place in the adjacent football field (but unfortunately, the Chief Constable didn't seem very interested in the matter).



Early team photo

In 1893 the club employed Fred Dawson, of Lockwood, as professional at a rate of 10/6d

per week, with the promise of a benefit, 'provided he is willing to attend practice three nights a week'. Three years later, on 1 April 1896, the authorities 'resolved we order one dozen best match balls from B. Harse (Oxford) at 50/- per dozen, less 12 and a half per cent for ready money and that we ask J. Kennedy to lend us the money.' In this era the club's formal title was Primrose Hill Cricket & Athletic Club. As such, it held annual athletics festivals (between 1888 and 1924) and also had connections with the village football club. It is estimated that the club had 300 card-carrying members around this time.

Since this period, Primrose Hill have had a turbulent, up-and-down history. In their infancy, they played in the Alliance Council. In 1913 they were one of the founder members of the Huddersfield Central League, completing the league-and-cup double the following year (in the league they won 14 out of 16 fixtures), and also triumphing in the 2nd XI competition. The 10 years following also contained its landmarks:

1916/7 - The club became involved in 'workshop cricket'. Local businesses such as the Primrose Hotel and Thomas Broadbent & Sons would put out their own cricket XIs and battle it out for supremacy on the Cross Lane square.

1918 - Like many other cricket clubs, Primrose Hill suffered terribly during the Great War, with 50 members perishing in combat.

1920 - The club joined the Huddersfield & District League after at least one failed application.

1922 - It lost its place in the League to Marsden.

1924 - Gained re-entry to the League, and was indebted to J. Wilson Senior, club official and League secretary, for his hard work on behalf of the club.

In more recent times, the club has faced financial problems, but whatever their trials and tribulations over the years, Primrose Hill have always survived. They have produced cricketers of good repute - Ken Taylor (Yorkshire and England) and Arnold Hamer (Derbyshire), who belonged to a famous cricketing family - and their spirit has helped them prosper. As one observer noted in 1951: 'There is a general atmosphere of enthusiasm prevailing at Primrose Hill, and the club may be regarded as fortunate in possessing a band of volunteer workers which is enthusiastically backed up by the lady supporters, who are most active in promoting the club's welfare.'

Today, the club likes to see itself as an integral part of the local area (hence the phrase, 'Pip Hill Community Cricket Club', used in some PHCC publicity material). In September 2002 it organised a special 'Fun Day', which was billed as a 'family day out - sports for all ages'. The club is also sponsored by a Newsome curry house, Top Taste. (Other companies have taken out perimeter boards: Jack Barber Ltd. - Wholesale Stationers and Greeting Card Specialists, Sellers Travel, Rawthorpe Roofing and Building Contractors, and Stephen Byram Motor Engineer).

But it hasn't been easy. At the end of the 2001 season Primrose Hill were on the verge of extinction - they were declared insolvent and had a county court order to deal with - but they pulled through thanks to the work of PHCC chairman, treasurer and secretary Bruce Heath and a new bar steward.

There are no sightscreens at Cross Lane, just white-ish walls at both ends. The tea room and changing-room block (which also incorporates a scoreboard) were built in 1968 and

opened a year later. This is sited on the Cross Lane side of the ground, and as such, it looks out over town-centre Huddersfield. When the weather is good and the sky is clear, the panorama is magnificent, with the Infirmary, the University and the McAlpine Stadium very much to the fore.

In the early days, Primrose Hill played at two other venues in the locality before moving to the Cross Lane site. One of these former venues, where they played for two years, is now the site of St. Matthew's Church.

The suburb of Primrose Hill - wedged between Huddersfield town centre and Newsome - is full of character.

The cricket ground is situated close to Stile Common School. Over the years an interesting relationship has developed between the club and the educational establishment. The school has utilised cricket club facilities, and pupils from the school have also graduated onto Primrose Hill's books. The cricket club has declared that the relationship is based on 'mutual respect' and it is significant that both institutions have a similar kind of history: the school was founded just a year after the cricket club, in 1876.

Just down the road from the cricket field are Primrose Hill Liberal Club and Primrose Hill Baptist Church (which celebrated its centenary in 1992). There are houses, flats and trees beyond the perimeter of the playing area; and, poignantly, the iron gates at the main entrance incorporate a special 'bat and ball' design. The area is also famous for two other things: Primrose Hill Feast and the village anthem, *Blossom Bells*.

The ground backs on to the Crimea pub. Once upon a time, before the cricket club had its own pavilion, this hostelry acted as the cricketers' clubhouse. Club officials described it as a 'pleasant public house' and talked about the 'excellent relationship' between pub and club. Today, the Crimea is still the local landmark - and a visible reminder of the club's fascinating history.