

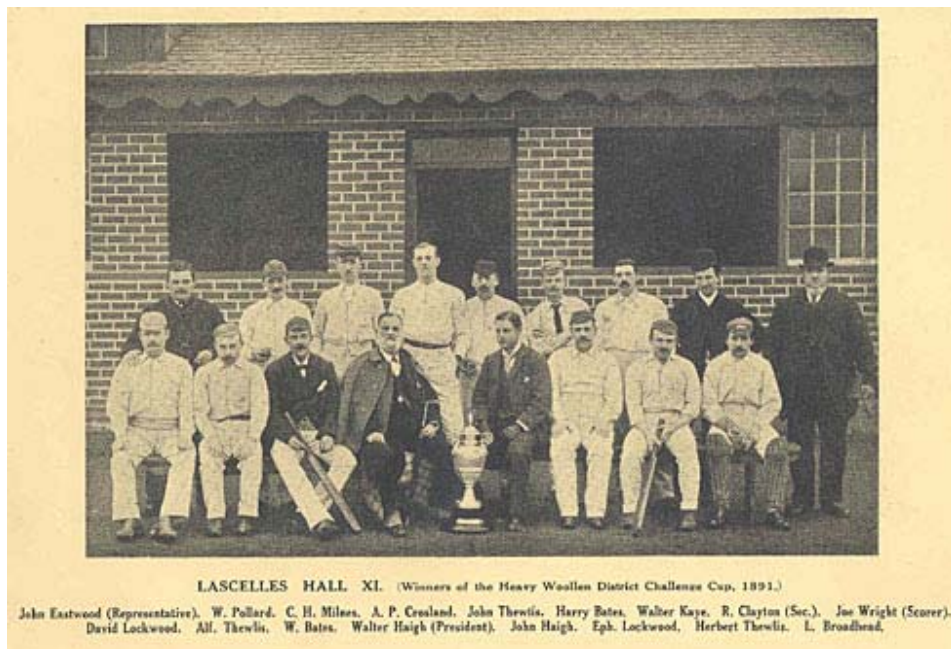
A world-famous nursery

23. Lascelles Hall C.C. - Highfield Lane

In 1873 the Lascelles Hall club, formed from a village consisting of no more than 20 cottages, took on and defeated a Yorkshire side...In a two-innings game Lascelles Hall won by 146 runs and every player who took part was an actual member of the village.

[Roy Genders, *League Cricket in England* - 1952]

Lascelles Hall is one of the oldest and most famous cricket clubs in Britain, never mind Yorkshire or Huddersfield. The ground was first used by local spinners and weavers in the early nineteenth century; eventually, the lady of the nearby manor donated the field to the cricketers for recreation purposes. One club member says: 'Today, it's a pretty setting, the playing area is a little bit small, but the pitch is good.'



The ground is located just off the main road, hidden behind some attractive houses, and with luscious rolling hills all around. The ground is isolated and set

in a natural 'bowl'. In the nearby fields, tractors and tractor-like vehicles go about their daily business and horses can also be heard. There is something very tranquil about the Lascelles Hall HQ. From the pavilion side of the ground (and with your back to the cricket), you can spot Kirkheaton C.C.'s home ground, several rather cute cottages, and Lascelles Hall, the grandiose building after which the area is known (and which is now a holistic care centre). The Elliott estate is nearby, as is what used to be the village of Gawthorpe.

The playing surface undulates in places. There are no sightscreens as such, just a nice white trim to the boundary, with benches dotted around. At the opposite end from the pavilion there is a non-whitewashed dry stone wall - where the batting team often congregates during their innings. There is a track for cars right around the top end of the ground. Locals say the wicket is not easy to bowl on, and when the ball is deposited out of the ground by hard-hitting batsmen, it usually ends up in a farmer's field.

A new pavilion, funded by loans and gifts, replaced the old stone building a few decades ago. A tea room was added on (it used to be situated near where the scorebox stands today) and so were modern changing-room facilities (for players and umpires). The scoreboard used to be on the top of the old pavilion, but when the new construction was built, it was relocated to the far side of the ground. The walls of the pavilion are covered with team pictures, including one from 1915. There's also a commemorative plate, a watercolour painting of the pavilion (c.1970), and two framed LHCC cricket caps, as worn in 1870 and 1930 (the original club colours were purple, black and yellow).

Cricket was first played at Lascelles Hall in 1698 - in comparative terms, a very early start date. James Walker, a wool merchant from Cowlersley, built the nearby Hall in 1817, and eight years later, in 1825, the cricket club was founded. The story surrounding the beginnings of cricket in this part of Huddersfield is bizarre. Local youths started to trespass on to the field where the cricket ground would one day stand. The Walker family moved to Torquay; the Haighs, who moved into the Hall in 1849, left for Scarborough; and eventually, almost by default, the local cricketers got their way and were handed the area of land to play on. By the mid-1860s the field was no longer deemed to be private property, but rather the home patch of Lascelles Hall C.C.. John Lockwood was the groundsman, and it was said in this period that a top-class wicket could have been produced 'within 10 yards of any boundary'. Not surprisingly, Lockwood went on to ply his trade at the Oval. (The Croft - a piece of nearby land - was another focal-point for early cricket in the village, and the players congregated in the Larden Inn).

In 1874 Yorkshire played Glamorgan with six Lascelles Hall players in their eleven. This is an amazing statistic, but three years later, in 1877, the club did even better. Again it supplied six members of the county XI (Ephraim and Harry Lockwood, David Eastwood, Allen Hill, Andrew Greenwood and Billy Bates), but

as cricket writer Roy Genders explains: 'That same year the village was so strong that she was able to send out no fewer than 16 players as professionals to outlying Yorkshire clubs which were now beginning to take up the game seriously.' No wonder that the 1969 Huddersfield & District League handbook said that the place had become 'renowned throughout the length and breadth of England as the greatest nursery of its kind', and that historian Roy Genders describes Lascelles Hall as the 'Hambleton of Yorkshire cricket'.

Discipline has always been strong. In 1881 the club stated: 'All members chosen to play in a match and being unable to play must give notice not later than Thursday prior to the match, or will be fined 3d'. There were other offences: batting more than 40 balls in the nets (fine: one penny) and being late for committee meetings (fine: twopence). Via the minute-book we also know: that in 1861 the club issued a 'challenge to be inserted in the *Leeds Times*' to any other team within a 20-mile radius; that in 1862 Ephraim Lockwood became a member of the club; that in 1873 'the 11th player in the Lascelles Hall side be chosen by ballot'; and that in 1882 the club ordered 'half a gallon of Scotch Whisky, one gallon of Brandy, half a gallon of Rum, nine boxes of Ginger Beer, 30lbs of beef, two hams and 12 dozen pies' for the first day of a special challenge game.

In 1891 the club was one of the founder members of the Huddersfield League; later in the decade there were four or five members of the Thewlis family in the Lascelles Hall 1st XI. Mention should also be made of 'Bill' Ellis, who notched over 1,000 runs in one vintage season, and two star performers with the ball: Willie Shaw (ave. 10.52 in 1899) and Frank Noble (ave. 11.92 in 1901). On one famous occasion, Lascelles Hall were bowled out for 22...only to roll over their opponents, Paddock, for 7!

In 1944 the club was able to buy the ground off the Whitley Beaumont Estate (Messrs. Copley, Lodge, Moorhouse, Robinson and Varley were named as ground trustees and Messrs. Fisher, Haigh and Robinson as trustees for the balance of the ground-purchasing fund). The ground cost £315-19-6 - although a massive £659-16-6 was raised via subscriptions to pay for it. In 1950 Len Hutton played in a special 125th anniversary match at Lascelles Hall, and in 1969 club officials advertised LHCC in the following terms: 'Come with your friends to visit our picturesque and historic ground and new pavilion. Good teas provided...by the Ladies Committee at 1st and 2nd XI matches.'

Today, a George Cross flutters on the pavilion flagpole. Over the years a number of people have played a key role at Lascelles Hall: Lt. Col. George Taylor, president of the club up until 1970; Jack Daffern, who served the club for 50 years as player and administrator; and John Shaw, an ex-pro and the current groundsman. On the subject of professionals, we should note that the club have employed a range of top performers: New Zealand batsman Matthew Horne, South African all-rounder Garth Le Roux and Yorkshire and England seamer

Arnie Sidebottom. Other county players to grace the ground include Matthew Wood and Stuart Fletcher. And some topical trivia: Delph & Dobcross 2nd XI got lost on their way to a match at Lascelles Hall in 2003, incurring a £25 fine from the League authorities in the process.

Taken from P.Davies, *Pennine Pitch* (2004)