

High, wide, handsome

Outlane CC – Old Lindley Road

Every cricketer's ambition is to score a century, and it is a proud moment if and when the coveted target is achieved. 1997 saw Outlane Cricket Club reach its century, and I am sure that all past and present members will reflect with pride upon this landmark. Since the club was formed in 1897, the year of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, it has provided, under three different names and on three different fields, the opportunity for countless people to play, watch and enjoy their cricket.

[www.outlanecricketclub.co.uk]

Outlane CC was formed in 1897 and was known originally as Outlane Methodist New Connexion Cricket Club (it became Outlane CC in 1919) Between 1897 and 1920, the club played in the Huddersfield and District Junior League; between 1921 and 1973 Huddersfield and District Cricket Association; and since 1974 in the Halifax Cricket League. Outlane's three grounds are described as follows by the club historian:

The first was behind what is now the Old Golf House Hotel (where the motorway is) and rent was paid to the 'Board of Guardians'. The building that is now the Old Golf House Hotel was built as a children's home (c.1905) and subsequently became the Golf Club headquarters. Clearly some of the money paid to the landlord for rent was recovered by sub letting the ground for pasture.

At the Annual General Meeting on 6 November 1928, the Board of Guardians informed the meeting that the field had been sold to Outlane Golf Club. But on the 12 December 1928, Mr Noble had negotiated with Mr Saxton that the club could rent a field from him for £10 per year and though the club asked for a 10-year lease, this was not granted. During February and March of 1929, Mr Pugh was asked to lay a wicket. A quarter of a mile of class-28 wire was purchased from David Green of Lytham, 50 posts at 1/- were purchased and 20 yards of canvas for sightscreens were obtained from Spratts. The old pavilion was pulled down on 2 March 1929. The new field was situated at the rear of where Saxton's Garage is now (Cote Farm) and on the 7 May 1929 it was

resolved that golf would no longer be allowed to be played on the field. So early in 1929 the club moved to its second home – Cote Farm.

On 1 October 1934 it was resolved that the club leave Cote Farm for Lindley Moor – its present home, and on 15 December 1934 a meeting was arranged at Lindley Moor to view the proposal. On 9 December 1935 the old pavilion at Cote Farm was pulled down and rebuilt at Lindley Moor and in May 1935 a concrete practice wicket was laid at the new ground.

If there was ever an award for the 'British Cricket Ground Situated Closest to a Motorway', Outlane would be clear favourites. In the Calderdale region, Rastrick CC and Blackley CC would push them close, but Outlane would just have the edge. Their table-top, motorway-adjacent HQ lies just yards from the M62 and also just yards away from the boundary with Kirklees.

Outlane cricketers explain that they quickly get used to the motorway noise - and that they get withdrawal symptoms when they don't hear the rush of traffic at away venues - but for the first-time visitor to the ground, the motorway noise is the first thing that one notices.

The ground is perched at a pretty high level and from the top perimeter fence one can see for miles and miles into the distance. To the right one can make out the small green and white 'blob' that is Blackley Cricket Club, and straight ahead one can just deduce where Elland Cricket Club and Elland Golf Club are situated.

Outlane have attracted a range of local advertisers. The location is ideal - and the big, colourful wall hoardings can be seen by all who travel in a Leeds direction on the (very) nearby M62.

The playing area is a large rectangle: the boundaries straight of the wicket are quite short, but when the track in use is towards the centre of the field, the onside and offside boundaries can be quite long (usually, wickets are pitched on the pavilion side, leaving a short boundary on the Junction 23 side of the ground and a very challenging boundary on the Junction 24 side). The boundary is denoted by white flags and a white painted line, and white seats and benches line the area between pavilion and scoreboard.

There are two sightscreens at the pavilion end and a long, low dry stone wall at the far end. Farmland and empty fields lie beyond the playing area on three sides of the ground.

The one-storey pavilion greets all visitors to the ground through the main entrance. It incorporates tearoom, bar area, games room and mini-trophy cabinet. The walls of the bar area are particularly interesting. There are two aerial shots of the OCC ground, plus framed photos of

three football stadia: the Shay in Halifax, the McAlpine in Huddersfield and the Stadium of Light in Sunderland. There's also a couple of cartoons and a large colour photo of Darren Gough with his tongue sticking out! Various photos line the walls of the spacious tearoom.

Between the tearoom and bar is the club noticeboard, which advertises the many and various activities going on at the club. There's also information about the website (www.outlanecricketclub.co.uk), fundraising events, and a sponsorship deal that has netted the club £1,000 to help pay for a new roller. The players change in a white and green portakabin just next door to the pavilion.

The history of Outlane CC is the history of three grounds. The story of the club can also be told via tit-bits of trivia and ground-related news:

c. 1900 - Gate money varied from 1/- to 5/- per match.

1898 - League fees were 11/- and £5 was paid in rent. A tent (pavilion) was purchased for £2-10-0d.

1903 - Pavilion was sold to F. Whitwam for £1-6-0d and a subscription appeal was launched to pay for a new one costing £18.

First World War: Cricket continued to be played except in 1917, though the tent was painted!

1919: General meeting was called to consider the uncertain nature of the ground and the continuation of the club (the ground had been broken up for food production).

November 1919: Deputation was sent to meet with Mr Robson, Chairman of the Food Production Committee, about the allotment-holders on the cricket field.

1927: Club purchased its own mower – a 14" Ransome for £12.

1951: Running water laid on.

3 April 1958: Club purchase ground off Websters Brewery for £100.

18 April 1961: First reference to the proposed motorway.

1962: Huddersfield Corporation were unable to roll the field owing to pressure of work!

1963: Vandals deposited the heavy roller over the quarry top.

June 1964: Club officially objects to the coming of the motorway.

1965: Ministry of Transport turns down club's objection re. the motorway and club begins the search for a new ground (the MoT say they will require half the ground). The old Acre Mills ground on Moorlands Road was touted as a replacement. A number of other sites were looked at.

1 May 1968: Town Council agrees that 'a corresponding area near Peat Ponds be provided'.

2 December 1968: It was resolved to redevelop the remainder of the field after the construction of the motorway by filling in the quarry.

1 February 1970: Ground had to be vacated for the building to start on the M62.

6 April 1970: It was agreed that the club should hire Highfield's cricket ground from the Corporation for the 1970 season and the duration of work on the motorway.

1974: Club moves back to the Lindley Moor ground and joins the Halifax League. The old field was in fact one field in from Lindley Moor Road and actually in the line of the motorway. The new wicket had to be constructed much closer to the edge of Lindley Moor itself and a new pavilion constructed. This was an old pre-fabricated house and was assembled by members. This provided two changing rooms, two toilets and a central area for teas. There were glazed windows – an improvement on the old pavilion – and water was connected.

1976: Momentous decision taken to lay on electricity and subsequently for the bar to be installed. Webster's Brewery (once the club's landlords) agreed to assist in this venture.

1981: Clubhouse extended. A portable building was acquired to provide changing rooms and the old Brook Motors' football pavilion was salvaged.

30 Aug 1997: Fire at the club, caused by a faulty thermostat in the kitchen. Extensive damage was caused by the smoke, which meant having to nearly totally renovate the whole of the clubhouse.

Today, Outlane CC possesses one of the most interesting and curious of grounds. It is high, wide and handsome, and dominated by the sight and sound of the nearby motorway.

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