

Royalist White

King Cross CC - The Ramsdens

The off-field facilities have gone from strength to strength, with the clubhouse being open all year round for both sport and social activities and the cricket section once again fielding three senior teams, along with one junior team. The club can boast some of the best facilities in the area.

[www.kingcrosscbac.org]

King Cross play at The Ramsdens, Upper Kingston in west Halifax. It is an urban venue with lots of character: located on the main road out of the town centre - Hopwood Lane - and distinctive mainly on account of the huge and rather handsome white turreted wall that stands behind the recently refurbished pavilion building.



1911

Indeed, the 'whiteness' of the ground is a general feature. It's not just the turreted wall that is extremely white, but also the scoreboard, the low dry stone wall that runs round half the ground perimeter, and the brick structure that doubles as a sightscreen at the top end. It should also be noted that there are 23 benches dotted around the ground - 18 of which comprise a 'mini-stand' to the left of the pavilion.

Some cricket grounds are situated in the middle of nowhere, but this one is surrounded by rows and rows of Coronation Street-style streets. As Norman Ellis says, King Cross is noted for its 'high-density terraced housing'. Surrey Street and Essex Street lie nearby - a lovely coincidence that both are cricketing counties - and there's also an ornate-looking mosque just down the road.

The area of Halifax known as King Cross is famous for two things. During the English Civil War, when Halifax was a Royalist stronghold, King Cross was a key outpost because the Parliamentarians held parts of the Calder Valley. The area is also noted for its intersecting traffic. The road into Lancashire divides here, with one fork heading towards Burnley via Hebden Bridge and the other going to Littleborough via Sowerby Bridge. As Edward Riley states: 'For as long as anyone can remember, King Cross has been a busy junction.'

Cricket is just one arm of the King Cross Cricket, Bowling and Athletic Club. The organisation's website (www.kingcrosscbac.org) states: 'As well as the main sporting areas of Cricket, Bowls, Football and Hockey, we also have a team in the Halifax Pool League and also the Halifax Akroydon Games League where we participate in Cards, Dominos, Darts and Snooker. And you don't have to play sport to be welcomed at our club - we have 50+ social members who don't participate in any sporting activities but are amongst our most vociferous supporters.'

Inside, the pavilion is spacious and welcoming, and incorporates kitchen facilities, bar and games room (there's a full-size snooker table and pool table). Adjoining are the Home and Away dressing rooms. Wall plaques near the main door publicise the fact that the new pavilion was made possible by generous funding from the Lottery Sports Fund, Sports Council and Lord Taverners.

King Cross CC was founded in 1878 as a Sunday school team linked to King Cross Wesleyan School. The club played at Savile Park Moor until 1882, when they decided to rent a ground at West View; later, they moved to their present ground at Upper Kingston, courtesy of the Ramsden family after whom the ground is named. Since then, the key dates in the history of the club have been:

Monday 11th August 1902 - First match at The Ramsdens against local rivals Halifax CC.

1903 Laying of lower bowling green

1906 - Club join Yorkshire Council

1908-9 - Original clubhouse built at cost of £400

1921 - Laying of top bowling green

1956 - For economic reasons, the club does not engage a professional and switches to the Halifax League

1961 - Leave Halifax League and join Central Yorkshire section of the Yorkshire Council

1985 - Club engages its first overseas professional, Azmat Jalil, an opening batsman from Rawalpindi, Pakistan (from where a number of subsequent overseas players have also hailed: Sabih Azhar, Mansoor Rana and Test player Shakil Ahmed)

1988 - New stone clubhouse built at cost of £55,000 to replace the original wooden one which had fallen victim to a fire (while the pavilion was out of order, the cricketers had to use the bowling-green changing facilities)

1996 - Shakil Ahmed takes 122 wickets and scores 700 runs

A special alcove in the bar area is devoted to King Cross nostalgia: assorted silverware from decades gone by and framed photos of famous elevens of yesteryear - including the triumphant 1921 side and the 1942 3rd XI that emerged victorious in the Halifax Red Triangle Cricket League. Also on display is a 1964 letter from Sutcliffe Mitchell (Insurances) Ltd, detailing the club's policy cover for fire, burglary, house-breaking and 'storm and tempest' (a wonderful way to describe bad weather), and also a prized newspaper cutting from more recent times (the headline reads: CROSS ARE CUP KINGS AGAIN).

Club publicity states: 'One of the most successful periods in our history was during the 1930s and 1940s. During this time the club fielded three senior teams, with the 1st XI playing in the county's premier league and the other two teams playing in the local Halifax League as a 1st and 2nd XI. During these years King Cross remained largely an amateur side, although former Test players George Gunn and Wilf Barber played for the club in 1947 and 1948-50 respectively. In the post-war period one of the club's stars was Peter Rochford who kept wicket for Gloucestershire and subsequently joined the first-class umpires panel.'

Today the club's 1st and 2nd XIs play in the Central Yorkshire League - against teams like Heckmondwike, Liversedge and Batley - and the 3rd XI competes in the Halifax League Sunday Section. For every home 1st XI fixture, the club produces a glossy, full-colour programme, complete with up-to-date stats, player profiles and news and views - a very impressive publication.

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