

A new pavilion and a re-birth

Mytholmroyd CC - Moderna Way

It's not just that the facilities in the new pavilion are excellent. The building has actually been a catalyst.

[Club secretary, John Pinder]

The town of Mytholmroyd lies at the bottom of the Calder Valley. ('Mytholm' means 'meeting of the waters' and 'Royd' denotes 'a clearing in the wood'). Its most famous son is Poet Laureate Ted Hughes and one of the most famous dates in its recent history is 1931, when the place was rocked by an earthquake. It would be fair to say that as a town, Mytholmroyd does not have the profile of nearby Hebden Bridge, but it does have the same culinary speciality - dock pudding. (The town actually hosts the Annual Dock Pudding World Championships!)

Mytholmroyd CC play at Moderna Way, just off the Burnley Road. A family atmosphere pervades the club's headquarters. The children playing with their plastic toys close to the pavilion; the mums making the teas and minding the kids at the same time; the juniors coming on to field when injuries befall senior players; the grandfathers watching the action intently from deckchairs on the boundary's edge.

The slope up from the wicket to the pavilion is a steepish one - not a nice gradient to climb if you're a batsman and you've just been dismissed - but this slight eccentricity can easily be forgiven. In all other respects, the Mytholmroyd ground - wedged between the main Halifax-Burnley road and the River Calder - is a classy venue for local league cricket.

So much so in fact that the most recent Halifax League ground inspectors arrived at the following verdicts: 'CONDITION OF PITCH - Very good; PLAYING AREA - Very good; GROUND SURROUNDS - Very good; SIGHTSCREENS - Good; DRESSING ROOMS - Excellent; SCOREBOX - Very good; CATERING FACILITIES - Excellent; SEATING - Very good; TOILETS - Excellent; OTHER REMARKS - A

credit to the league.' (Locals say the wicket is super to bat on and has improved gradually over the years).

The pavilion may be ultra-modern - the product of a recent, and extremely generous, lottery grant - but the photographs hanging on the walls remind the visitor of the rich heritage of the club. To most cricket fans, 1948 will go down as the year of the greatest-ever Australian team to visit England, but it was also the year when silverware and top performances followed Mytholmroyd CC around. Indeed, in the history of the club, the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s were most certainly the glory days. (The prints in the pavilion actually go back as far as 1914).

If you ask MCC officials about the formation of the club, they're slightly in the dark. Club secretary John Pinder says: 'We think the club has existed long enough to celebrate a centenary, but that's about it! I would say the origins of the club lie in the 1880s or 1890s, but that's very much an informed guess. We've looked in the local papers and the local record office, but we've never found a date. The issue is complicated by the fact that in the old days there were lots of clubs and grounds.'



Mytholmroyd's claim to fame is that it once hosted a representative match between Yorkshire and Lancashire. However, it is pretty certain that Moderna Way - as it is now called - is not the club's first ground. In the very early days, the club played at Ewood Holmes.

Not much has changed at Mytholmroyd over the years, but in the last decade the wheels have started to turn. Pinder explains: 'The club was in the doldrums not so long ago, but we received a grant to help us in our tree-planting campaign, and the trees around the ground are now reaching maturity. They give the place a lovely feel. And then in 2000 we were able to open our new pavilion.'

Originally, the Mytholmroyd pavilion was an old hen hut - donated to the club by Thornbers, the local poultry farmers. By the mid-1990s, however, it needed replacing. The club applied for and got a Lottery grant, and the rest is history. Pinder takes up the story: 'Professional builders worked on it during the latter months of 1999 and the early months of 2000 and we've now been in it for three seasons. The whole club has blossomed as a result. Recently we were on the verge of extinction; we had trouble getting out two senior teams then. Now we could probably field four.' A visiting player is also full of praise: 'It's always nice to go to Mytholmroyd because the new pavilion has excellent facilities. It would also be fair to say that the wicket isn't as lively as it used to be.'

On a sunny day, the ground is a dazzling sight. The myriad background noises add to the atmosphere: the trickle of the nearby river, the rumble of the Bradford-Manchester train line (just beyond the water), and the whoosh of the cars and buses that head up and down the A646. A visiting spectator says: 'It's a nice ground, accessible, modern and good for children. Perhaps you're a little too near the main road to achieve maximum isolation, but you always feel close to the action.'

Mention must also be made of the food. Two tuna mayonnaise rolls for 70p? Cheap at twice the price! In fact there was so much filling in the sandwich that it was almost spilling out! The mug of tea also hit the spot. Perfect.

In nostalgic mode, Pinder reminisces about the titanic struggles of yesteryear between Mytholmroyd and local rivals, Mytholmroyd Methodists: 'We used to play them on Bank Holidays. It seemed like the whole village used to attend those games.'

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