

World famous - but cold

Bradshaw CC - Bradshaw Lane

It used to be a flyer, but not now. It's as flat as a pancake and the ball can keep very low.

[A Bradshaw batsman on his home wicket]

Bradshaw - in the far north-western corner of Calderdale - is one of the highest parts of Halifax. Queensbury, just the other side of the local government boundary, lies approximately 1,100 feet above sea level, so Bradshaw probably comes in at around the 1,000-foot mark.



Bradshaw in 1940

The village - blighted in 1631 by a deadly plague - is home to two historic churches: Mount Zion (a key landmark on the John Wesley Heritage Trail - Wesley preached here in 1790 on his last visit to West Yorkshire) and St. John's (the local parish church, only a six-hit away from the cricket ground - its churchyard is where Kenny Carter, the former Halifax speedway ace, is buried). The place is also famous for its mummies - traditional, face-painted mime artists.

Bradshaw has had a cricket team since 1923. In the early days, the club played in the Halifax Association, but in 1954 it joined the Halifax League; the glory days came in the 1990s when the 1st XI won the league twice (1992 and 1997) and the cup once (1991). The image of a white castle dominates their club crest - due recognition of the fact that White Castle Breweries owned the Bradshaw Lane ground in yesteryear. Today, the main sponsor is Wilby Ltd.

The club's ground is visible from Bradshaw Lane - situated just behind houses, tennis courts and the local bowling green. Legend has it that only one batsman in 80 years has managed to clear the boundary, and the farmer's field that lies beyond it, and deposited the ball onto the bowling green.

The ground also lies adjacent to the Bradshaw Tavern. Indeed, visitors to the pub can watch the action from inside the bar, and drinkers who wander out into the beer garden can see the game at even closer quarters. In the early 1990s, the pub actually became famous. Trans World Sport, an international television company, were looking for a venue for the Knur and Spell World Championships (K & S is an early, antiquated form of golf). The TV people liked the look of the pub, and the ground, and brought the event to Bradshaw - in their view, an ideal and hugely picturesque venue.

The most impressive feature of the ground is the newly renovated pavilion (situated side-on to the square). With financial help from the Sports Council, the Lottery Sports Fund, Calderdale Council and the Foundation for Sport and the Arts, the club was able to open the new building in 1997. The glorified wood hut disappeared, and in its place emerged a spacious, spick-and-span construction with all the facilities a league club could hope to boast: modern changing facilities, welcoming bar area, roomy TV lounge and open-plan kitchen (visiting spectators should leave plenty of room in their stomach for the help-yourself tea).

The framed miscellany is interesting - two drawings of the venue by 'Pellet' (1991 and 1993), a painting and a tapestry, and plaques that explain the contribution of Ken Hubbard and TV. Bamforth to the club's development (the former died in 1998; the club flag that flutters from the pavilion roof does so in memory of the latter) - and the patio and hanging baskets in front of the building just add to the effect. From the pavilion one can see right down into Halifax, with Queensbury up and to your left, Holmfield Industrial Estate straight in front, and the Halifax-Bradford road winding its way round the hillside in mid-distance.

From the A647, the Bradshaw Lane ground looks like it is located on a steep slope; when one is actually at the ground, one does notice the

pronounced fall down from the pavilion to the far boundary, but it is a gentle slope, and nothing more. It's a windy spot, but on a sunny day, when the shadow of the pavilion stretches out onto the outfield, it's also a very pleasant spot.

Club treasurer Mick Turner says that opposition players like visiting Bradshaw: 'They appreciate the facilities, but they're always a little wary about the weather. If it's not a sunny day, they know it will be pretty chilly!'



A team photo from 1991

The playing area is well kept, and on three sides surrounded by a low, whitewashed dry stone wall. The boundaries straight of the wicket are shorter than those square of it (when the ball beats the slip cordon it's usually four); the sightscreens are 'sliders' (and relatively new); and the green-and-white scoreboard, facing the pavilion at the bottom end of the ground, is extremely cute (it is soon to be re-built in the same kind of stone used for the new pavilion).

The wicket, notoriously uneven, was re-laid at the beginning of the 1990s, and according to locals has improved markedly in recent years. In 45 overs, a par total is now round about the 200 mark.

In 1993 Bradshaw were the Halifax League team to be invited to play in the Yorkshire Champion of Champions Trophy - a highly prestigious cross-county competition.