

Percy Sowden

'Percy Sowden was a great citizen. One could hardly enter any realm of public life without encountering Percival Sowden. One could not think of a man in the community whose interests were so varied or who, when engaged in any activity, did so with such thoroughness and efficiency ... the youth of the district have lost a great friend.'

Reverend WS Davies at the funeral of Percy Sowden
Wednesday 14 December 1955

Percy Sowden joined the staff of Moss Bros, dyers and finishers straight from college and on the death of Frederick Moss he became manager of Bridgeroyd Mill. It was this mill's cricket team, playing in the workshop league hosted by Walsden, which spawned Bridgeholme Cricket Club. The club was formed when Percy Sowden instigated an amalgamation with the rival works team from Nanholme Mill. Still in existence, Bridgeholme Cricket Club remains as a testimony to Percy Sowden's foresight and enthusiasm.

A man of outstanding general knowledge and administrative abilities he died in office as chairman of the Hebden Bridge Master Dyers' Association, the Calder Divisional Education Executive, the county Libraries Committee, the Heptonstall Exhibitions Foundation and the governors of Calder High School. He was a member of the Hebden Bridge and District Technical Education Committee and the Elementary Education Committee. As chairman of the West Riding Education Committee, Percy had a high profile in education beyond Todmorden's boundaries and commanded a respect which brought influence.

He was a JP and, from 1943 was chairman of the Todmorden Juvenile Court. Among many other offices, he was president of the Hebden Bridge branch of the Old Age Pensions Association, president of the Hebden Bridge Lawn Tennis League and founder member and trustee of the Hebden Bridge Literary and Scientific Society.

Percy was such an effective organiser that, once in post, he was re-elected year after year by the various bodies he served.

In addition, he was an active member of the Labour Party, a keen participant in amateur dramatics at the Co-operative Hall and Little Theatre and preached regularly at Nazebottom Baptist Church.

In reviving cricket in the Eastwood area, Percy was re-establishing a family connection. His father, John, was a formidable bowler in the early days of the Hebden Bridge League. In 1896 took 32 wickets at less than 2 runs each for Zion and produced a match winning spell of 4 for 7 against Mytholmroyd in the league's cup final. John's brother Sam also played for Zion and both later played for Eastwood.

Percy Sowden had just returned from education meetings at Calder College when he collapsed and died at his home on Friday 9 December 1955, aged 73. The following Wednesday Nazebottom Baptist Church was packed for his funeral service. The four bearers were all employees at Bridgeroyd Mill, two of them, M Hartley and Jack Horsfall, Bridgeholme cricketers.