

Dream come true

20. Almondbury Wesleyans C.C. - Kaye Lane

In the 1920s we bought a heavy roller off Huddersfield Borough Council. We borrowed a horse from one of the local farmers to pull it. The horse died the next day.

[Club secretary Keith Crawshaw]

Towards the end of the 2002 season, the following message appeared on the Almondbury Wesleyans' website:

Well, we've made it! After two and a half years of planning and fundraising, 'The Wes' played their first home game of the season against Denby on Saturday 13 July at our redeveloped Kaye Lane ground on a lovely summer's day, watched by dozens of members, friends, neighbours and well-wishers...Our return to Kaye Lane and a new normality is a watershed in our history...

Our new ground will require a different management style and will be more costly to run, but also opens up a whole range of possibilities for increased social and community use and for revenue generation. We have already hosted our first sponsored game, held our first social/fundraising evening at the pavilion and taken our first private party booking. A final word of thanks to everyone who has played a part with time or money in making our ground redevelopment the success it has become. We have already received many favourable comments from those who have visited Kaye Lane and who have been impressed by both the ground and the pavilion.

A sincere word of thanks to everyone...

Mark Binns, Club Chairman.

The new pavilion (incorporating function room, tea room and changing rooms) is built out of traditional stone. The club's 'Buy-A-Brick' scheme raised a total of £8,500 (a 'big' brick cost £50 and a 'small' one £25). The club gained a car park and a new set of pitches (grass and plastic); and was also granted a new 25-year lease for their Kaye Lane premises. The 'Grand Opening' took place on 25 August 2002. The *Huddersfield Examiner* reported on the occasion:

The legendary Brian Close dropped into Huddersfield on Sunday to

officially open Almondbury Wesleyans' magnificent new cricket facility at Kaye Lane. The 71-year-old former Yorkshire and England captain was unable to play in the exhibition match which followed the opening ceremony, but made a brief speech before a large crowd...Club chairman Mark Binns welcomed the guests and said the grand opening heralded the culmination of six years of planning for the Arrow Central League club. President, the Rev. Paula Bee, added her delight at the success of the venture, while Lynda Burton, on behalf of Sport England, handed over a cheque for £251,000 towards the overall cost of the redevelopment, and also congratulated the club on their vision. Yorkshire cricketers Ryan Sidebottom, Matthew Wood and Scott Richardson and rugby legend Garry Schofield formed part of the Celebrity XI who took on a Central League XI.

Today, Kaye Lane certainly looks the part. The levelled-up playing area and the handsome pavilion make for a wonderful sight.

In the tea room of the new pavilion (where the sponsored bricks are very visible), the story of the 'Wes Redevelopment' is told in three framed photo-montages: (1) 'Earth-moving days', (2) 'New shoots' and (3) 'New foundations'. Almost everywhere you look, Sport England are thanked for their financial assistance (the Lord's Taverners also get their own plaque). There are plenty of momentos of the first match on the new ground, and also details of how you can order your very own 'Wes' t-shirt. A photo of the AW team that won the league and cup in 1953 also hangs in the pavilion, reminding locals that they have a glorious past as well as an exciting future.

The club was founded back in November 1920, and 1921 was their first full season. It was around this time that the club started work on levelling up their Kaye Lane ground - and they were obviously helped by the fact that many local men found themselves unemployed following the war, and thus had plenty of time on their hands to help. 'Wes' went on to join the Huddersfield Association but gradually became frustrated with having to play most of their away fixtures at Leeds Road. Thus, in 1977 they opted to join the Huddersfield Central League.

Development work at Kaye Lane has been pretty concerted. In the 1960s running water was piped into the pavilion, and in 1986 portakabins were installed - housing a new tea room and dressing rooms. In 1995 the club started Kwik Cricket sessions for juniors, and in 2001 it had to play its last six 'home' games away from Kaye Lane so work could start on the major redevelopment project that came to fruition in 2002.

As you leave the Kaye Lane ground, you realise that it isn't *actually* in Almondbury at all (the village seems to end somewhere between the Methodist church and the cricket ground). This is a strange curio.

Cricketers from opposing teams are always interested in the club's Methodist links, and Keith Crawshaw, club secretary, is happy to explain: 'In the early days there was a strong connection between the club and the local

Wesleyan church. Most of the cricket team were regular attenders - in fact, they were actually *obliged* to go to church a certain number of times each month. Today, the situation is different, with only a few club members still having links with the church. But that said, we're very proud of the connection and we're pleased that the minister at the church still holds the position of club president.' He goes on: 'Today, we see ourselves as a community club - indeed, being involved with the Lottery meant we had an obligation to expand our profile in the local area. We've got a good junior set-up and it's a very friendly organisation.'



ALMONDBURY WESLEYAN C.C.
 Back Row (L to R) Harry Stell, Wm Arthur Crowe, Arthur Haigh, Hamer Lockwood
 Ernest Armitage (Scorer) Middle Row (L to R) Arthur Wood, Ernest Hickman, Harold Crawshaw
 Joe Sheard, Charlie Dawson. Front Row (L to R) Stanley Dawson, John Charles Shaw
 1921

For the record, the village has an impressive Methodist heritage. The first Methodist sermon was preached in Almondbury in 1766, Abraham Moss emerged as the 'local leader' of the new denomination, and John Wesley visited the place on 9 July 1784. Until 1960 there were two Methodist chapels in Almondbury - one close to the cricket ground on Kaye Lane, and one called Zion. But in 1960 the two churches merged. Kaye Lane became the 'joint' church, and in 1968 this building was renovated at a cost of £27,000.

Today, 'The Wes' run two senior sides, two under-13 teams, and one each at under-15 and under-17 level. Overall they have 100+ junior members, and they benefit from the fact that club groundsman Ray Chappell has experience working at Leeds Road and the McAlpine Stadium. And one final piece of trivia: there is a 10mph speed limit on the little track that leads from the ground's main entrance to the new pavilion.