

## **Woodfield Park Police Sports CC**

The club was formed as Huddersfield Borough Police in 1903. One of their first fixtures was against Emley, and this turned into an annual event.

As cricket quickly became a key part of the social fabric that bound the force together, Huddersfield Police XI played a charity match against the West Riding Constabulary in front of 400 people at Fartown.

The proceeds of £50 were donated to the Huddersfield Police Court Mission. The event also included an 'assault at arms'.

It comprised of a 'Ju Jit-su' display by Edward Drayton M.A., who was assisted by pupils of the Halifax School of Physical Culture, and a three-hour exhibition of 'Ken Jit-su', the Japanese double-handed sword play, also conducted by Mr Drayton with one of the pupils.

During the second demonstration both combatants wore 'the curious fencing costume used by the army, navy and police force of Japan.'

Around 1910, Woodfield Park, off Meltham Road, Lockwood, was bequeathed as a gift to the Huddersfield Borough Police Section (as it was then known). This meant the Police now had a permanent cricketing home.

The woman who donated the land was the owner of the Woodfield Estate. The only stipulation she made was that the land should be put at the disposal of local police officers and their families for recreation.

It was soon developed with sporting purposes in mind: a cricket pitch, a bowling green, a set of tennis courts, and a fitness trail (a kind of army assault course) around the perimeter of the land.

A fixture that took place in 1913, against Emley, was probably the most famous in the club's history.

The game took place right at the end of the season, on 24 September, and it became an almost mythical occasion because the boys in blue managed to persuade the famous triumvirate of Huddersfield and Yorkshire cricketers - George Herbert Hirst, Wilfred Rhodes and Schofield Haigh - into becoming bobbies for the day. Or ringers by any other name!

You can just imagine the reaction of the Emley cricketers when they saw the legendary trio warming up before the match!

Anyway, the Borough Police won the game comfortably: they made 102-6 declared, and then bowled Emley out for 68 (with Hirst, Rhodes and Haigh no doubt among the wickets).

The annual Athletic Sports gala was evidently a key part of the Borough Police's social and fundraising activities during the 1920s.

Pictured below is a Rose Bowl that was donated by the cricket club in 1924, to be presented as one of the prizes at this event. The inscription reads as follows:

HUDDERSFIELD BOROUGH POLICE CRICKET CLUB,  
TO BE COMPETED BY ANNUALLY AT THE POLICE SPORTS  
IN THE 100 YARDS LOCAL RACE.

The first winner was PC W.H. Fisher.

In 1929 the foundation stone of the new pavilion was laid at the new Woodfield Park sports ground.

By the 1930s, most major Yorkshire towns had a police cricket team – including Halifax.

Before the club joined the Huddersfield Association League in 1952, Huddersfield Police teams competed in the Yorkshire Police Forces League, which was previously known as the West Yorkshire Police League.

The club was re-formed in 1952, and came to be known simply as Police C.C.. They joined the Evening League and then the Huddersfield Cricket Association League. At the same time they were also members of the West Yorkshire Police League.

In 1954 the club scooped the Sharpe Rose Bowl as Section 'B' champions. They lost to Rastrick New Road in the championship play-off final.

In 1955 the club succumbed to Brook Motors in the championship play-off match.

The Police also scooped the Saville Trophy in 1955 and retained it in 1956.

Alongside local league competition, inter-departmental cricket matches remained a key part of social life in the police force during the 1950s.

In 1959 the CID team played the Uniform division at Woodfield Park. The CID scored 75 but were defeated by 5 wickets.

We are told that in April 1962 the Police were fined for fielding only six players in a match against Birchencliffe.

Given the month of the year in which this punishment was meted out, it is likely that a local soccer match, and the policing of it, would have been the root cause of the problem.

Throughout its history, the Police have had to juggle their sporting enthusiasms with their professional commitments.

On 18 March 1963, for example, the minutes of the Association stated: 'Police representative announced doubts of ability to fulfil early season fixtures due to football duties'.

In May 1964 it was another sport to blame. The relevant Huddersfield Association minute read: 'Oakes CYC and Police permitted to re-arrange match on 23 May 1964 due to Eastern Division Rugby Cup Final.'

In 1978 the 1st XI came up trumps when they netted the Huddersfield Cricket Association League Section 'A' championship – and also the Lumb Cup.

In this period, the club established a 2nd XI and made great play of its uniqueness. A spokesman said: 'Here at last is one club which has never thrown open its doors to friends, relatives or the general public...It is a credit to the players, throughout the club's history, that they have often competed in matches having come straight from, or going straight to, duty, after having had little or no sleep.'

In 1982 the 1st XI scooped the Lumb Cup, while the 2nd XI netted the Crossland Trophy.

The Huddersfield Association meeting on 19 March 1984 recorded that: 'The Police requested a cancellation of the game on the opening day of the season because all Police leave had been cancelled due to Leeds United playing Huddersfield Town at Leeds Road.'

Such a local-derby occasion would have had many local bobbies on the beat, and some also on the terraces (either working or watching the game).

And so it was natural that the Woodfield Park authorities would ask for a postponement.

Over the years, the Police team have also been invited to take part in evening cricket festivals organised by near-neighbours Armitage Bridge.

Other teams from down the Holme Valley would also compete (Hall Bower, Thongsbridge, Holmfirth) and with adjoining cricket grounds to take advantage of (Armitage Fold and Woodfield Park), the sides would fight it out until a winner emerged.

In the last years of the 20th Century, cricket remained a key part of social life in the Huddersfield police force. A series of touring sides were entertained at Woodfield Park during the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s, including the Royal Barbados Police Cricket team in 1994.

Other visiting teams have included the Royal St. Christopher cricket team and the Taunton Police side.

Woodfield Park is such a well-appointed ground that, over the years, it has been used for a variety of Association and Central League finals. Today, it is looking as good as ever.