

Red all over

Lightcliffe CC - Wakefield Road

We've got a nice ground, a lovely pavilion and we're very proud of the fact that so many of our players come from the local area.

[Chairman of Lightcliffe CC, John Brooke]

The Halifax suburb of Lightcliffe is famous for many things: its educational establishments (Hipperholme and Lightcliffe High School and the older Hipperholme Grammar School - now an independent school), its golf club (founded 1907) and its UFO sightings (the latest took place, apparently, in March 2000). In geographical terms, Lightcliffe is a crossroads, located at the intersection of Bradford, Brighouse and Halifax, but it is devoid of a railway station (shut in 1965). The place also has an interesting religious history: John Wesley made many visits to the area, the Moravians created a settlement there, and the original St. Matthew's parish church dates back to 1529.

The church, in fact, lies just across the road from the little alleyway connecting Wakefield Road to the home of Lightcliffe CC (the church bells ring on the hour...as if to encourage the over-rate). The club was founded in 1875 and in its early years played home games at West Field, at the other end of the village.



1927

Lightcliffe were one of the founding members of the Halifax & District League in the late-1880s and then joined the Yorkshire Council. The 1920s were a busy decade. Sir WH. Aykroyd provided the club with a new pavilion in 1922, and two years later LCC enrolled in the Bradford League. Two years after that, they captured the Priestley Cup for the first time, and went on to win it on four more occasions. The club's history has been dominated by the exploits of WH. (Bert) Foster, Ronnie Somers, Albert Hartley, Donald Garside, George Bottomley, Herbert Aspinall, Martin Radcliffe, Roger Stead, and many locally-born players.

Lightcliffe & District Cricket and Lawn Tennis Club (as it is still formally known, even though the tennis courts disappeared in the 1970s) currently runs three teams for seniors, six at junior level, and allows the local school, Lane Head CC, and the Wakefield Diocesan XI to use its facilities when they want to. Abram Pulman is just one company that has helped to sponsor the club.

Lightcliffe's ground is owned by a local farmer, and as such, players and spectators have to park on the main road rather than the ground perimeter. In the near distance one can see over to the Bradford suburb of Wyke; one can also spot two viaducts, a folly and dozens of cows (hence the notice in an adjoining field: BEWARE BULLS).

The club produces an excellent 12-page programme to accompany 1st XI home games and charges spectators a £1.50 admission charge (£1 for OAPs). In the field, Lightcliffe's cricketers are prone to yell, 'Come on the Villagers!', but the team should really be known as 'The Reds', such is the club's self-identification with the colour. The club crest features a green tree against a scarlet background; the caps worn by LCC players are a fairly dark shade of pink; and, quite a rarity, the scoreboard, umpires hut and pavilion are all painted red and white.

These three buildings are in fact the main features of the Wakefield Road venue. It's not just their colour, but their architectural quality. The pavilion is the jewel in the crown, and has a delightful frontage.

In recent years, the club has thought about upping sticks and moving - two local sites have been considered - but it eventually decided to develop existing facilities. Planning permission has just been granted to the club to extend the pavilion, and thus increase the size of the building by approximately 80 per cent. The cost is £100,000, the architect Michael Lister, and as the club's glossy 'Pavilion Extension' leaflet says: 'The project will involve the refurbishment of the existing pavilion, both internally and externally...the building of an extended section that will incorporate two changing rooms each...the retention of the existing façade, with an extended balcony and seating area.' The club says it would be very happy to name the 'new' pavilion after any major sponsor that might come forward!

Lightcliffe's ground has a range of other features: the state-of-the-art covers, the super sightscreens, the 'Lightcliffe Salad Tea' (£3), and the Canterbury-esque tree that hangs over the boundary edge to the left of the pavilion. As regards the wicket, it is described as a 'proper batting track' by a 1st XI fast bowler.

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