

# Get the ladder!

## Northowram Hedge Top CC - Hedge Top Lane

*Every Monday at 11am a group of volunteers meet up to see to the playing area - it certainly gets a lot of love and affection.*

[Club secretary, Dave Torney]

Northowram Hedge Top's ground, on Hedge Top Lane, Northowram, is a smart, well-kept and well-appointed venue. It is situated immediately next door to Northowram Fields' home ground.

The plaques attached to the five benches in front of the pavilion give us a range of insights into the recent history of the club:

PRESENTED TO NORTHOWRAM HTCC IN MEMORY OF ERIC ANDREW RICHARDSON, VICE-PRESIDENT AND FORMER PLAYING MEMBER, 1920-1991

DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF ROY POLLARD, PLAYER-MEMBER OF NORTHOWRAM HTCC, 17-6-1934-20-6-1994, AND HIS WIFE SHEILA, 13-12-36-28-7-94

IN MEMORY OF MR GILBERT HOLDEN, 'SPORTSMAN', DIED MAY 31ST 1990. IN APPRECIATION OF HIS SERVICES TO SPORT IN NORTHOWRAM VILLAGE

PRESENTED TO NORTHOWRAM HTCC BY WW. HOWDEN TO COMMEMORATE 50 YEARS OF CLUB MEMBERSHIP 1935-1985

PRESENTED TO NORTHOWRAM HTCC IN MEMORY OF MR JACK CHARNOCK, SPORTSMAN, DIED MARCH 12TH 1994 - FORMER PLAYING MEMBER

The dedications hint at the loyal support and service that has gone in to making Hedge Top one of the best appointed clubs in the area, and Hedge Top Lane one of the most impressive venues.

There are many appealing features of the ground: the well-groomed square, the flat, expansive outfield, the handsome scoreboard (built in 1998), and the attractive bushes and flowers just to the right of the pavilion. Club

secretary Dave Torney says: 'At its best, our wicket is an excellent batting track. The main variable, however, is the weather.' In 1992-3, five new wickets and five new grass practice wickets were laid.

The pavilion - erected in 1980 - is a modern bungalow-style building, with dedicated dressing-room space for both sets of players and umpires. The front and side of the pavilion are adorned by the NHTCC club badge (a bright yellow crest that incorporates images of bat, ball and hedge, not unnaturally).



**1921**

During the 2001-2 close season, the building was extended at the front to give the club more 'social' space, and to enhance showering, toilet and bar facilities. This meant encroaching onto the playing area - and club officials reckon that a foot or so of turf had to be sacrificed.

On one side of course, the venue is 'joined at the hip' with Northowram Fields. Around the other sides there are empty fields and, behind the bushes and flowers, a smart residential area (Croft View). Torney explains an interesting bit of history: 'Part of the ground - the area near where the pavilion is sited - lies on top of an old quarry. Obviously, it was all filled in, but at one point there was a huge gap in the earth down which the ball could drop. So we got hold of a long ladder, so that if the ball did get lost, one of us could go and fetch it. We also used the old quarry as a toilet. If any of the players were caught short, they would just get the ladder out - and do what they had to do down below!'

The two fixed, sliding sightscreens (erected in 1999) are above-average in quality. They help to give Hedge Top Lane a very professional feel.

Informed opinion suggests that the Hedge Top club was founded in 1919. In its early days, it competed in the Halifax & District Nonconformist League and played at a ground to the north of Heywood Church. In 1926, after a period of inactivity, the club was re-formed, having relocated to Hedge Top Lane. In the old days, it was linked to the local Wesleyan church. In the 1930s, the club became known as Northowram Methodists after the merger of the Wesleyan and Ebenezer churches.

In 1946, the club joined the Halifax & District Amateur League, and a year later was successful in its application to become members of the Halifax Cricket League.

The club's current name was acquired in 1952. Connections with the local Methodist church were severed when the club organised a Christmas raffle - a serious offence in the eyes of the Methodist hierarchy, which for a long time viewed any sign of 'gambling' as unethical. In the same year, the club purchased its ground from the Coley Hall Estate, and thus put an end to years of renting the land.

The 'glory days' of Northowram Hedge Top CC came in the mid-1960s: it won the Parish Cup in 1965 and the Halifax League in 1966.

Extract from P.Davies, *Home Soil* (2003)