

Hirst, Rhodes and ox roastings

Rastrick CC - Round Hill

It is at Rastrick that one can find the old character which is always one of the features connected with a local cricket club.

[Huddersfield & District Cricket League,
Diamond Jubilee Brochure, 1951]

In the world of Halifax cricket, Rastrick's home ground holds the double distinction of being the closest to a metropolitan boundary and the closest to a motorway.

It is located only a couple of dozen yards away from the Calderdale-Kirklees frontier and like Outlane's ground, just the other side of the border, it is dominated by the sight and sound of cars and lorries pounding the nearby M62. No doubt too, the drivers of these vehicles can spot the premises of Rastrick Cricket & Athletic Club (RCAC) down below them, as they whiz towards Leeds and Hull.

When one is out in the middle, Rastrick's ground definitely has its appeal: the rather distinguished brick scoreboard (20ft tall and erected in 1996 at a cost of £26,000), the spectacular views out over Brighouse and Halifax, and the large spherical mound located directly opposite the pavilion (think of a West Yorkshire version of the Sydney Hill)

Many years ago, Round Hill, as it is called, used to witness ox-roastings on special occasions. Today, seven benches are perched halfway up, making it an excellent vantage point from which to watch Rastrick go about their business in the Huddersfield League (they also put out a team in the Halifax Sunday League). There is a neat white perimeter fence, a pair of modern sightscreens and three advertising boards (one of which proclaims: BRIGHOUSE ECHO: BEST FOR LOCAL SPORT). To the right, one sees a white wall behind the bowler's arm, two seats for watchers of the game and the double-decker pavilion. Rastrick CC was formed in 1863. For the first two years of its existence, it played at Grantham Park Sports Ground on Dewsbury Road, just above where

Badger Hill CC now play. It has been based at Round Hill ever since 1865.



1948

The Rastrick club switched from the Yorkshire Council (Halifax Section) to the Huddersfield League in 1923 and claimed the Section A title in 1949 and 1952. It was during the 1940s that the club was able to purchase its Clough Lane ground (one commentator said £900 had been raised 'with astonishing ease'). And throughout the last 140 years, the big local derby has always been against Brighouse.

In April 1905, the Halifax Evening Courier reported the opening of a new pavilion at club headquarters. And it is significant that the club could attract two cricketers of the stature of Wilfred Rhodes and George Herbert Hirst to the opening ceremony. In the following year Rastrick decided to dispense with their professional and pay 'talent money' to their top-performing players instead. Soon after, however, the club realised the folly of their ways and reversed the 1906 decision.

Today, when one inspects the brickwork on the front of the building, an inscription jumps out: DONATED AND BUILT BY RCAC MEMBERS 1974-1975. So, the clubhouse has been built and rebuilt. (Incidentally, the zig-zag iron steps up to the changing rooms from ground level are amazing and no doubt faze some opposition batsmen as they climb down from high altitude into the middle).

Rastrick's ground is also interesting on account of the row of houses that back on to it - thus forming a natural boundary fence - and the strange, defunct white brick building at the motorway end (on its front one can just make out the words: THE CALDER & HEBBLE CAR PARK - PATRONS ONLY). Apparently, this construction originated in Victorian times.

And a note to all cricketers and cricket-watchers: the Roundhill Inn, situated just behind the pavilion on the main road into Rastrick and Brighouse, serves a very decent pint of Black Sheep.

Rastrick - perched on a hill three miles south-east of Halifax - can trace its history back to Roman times, when it was a key settlement on the York-Chester Roman road. It is also the site of rare church ruins from the tenth or eleventh centuries and was the name of a pre-1842 parish township.

As a town, it is most famous for Richard Blakey (who attended the local grammar school), quarrying, coat-hangers, and in tandem with Brighouse, its brass band. Among its now-defunct sporting organisations is Rastrick New Road CC.

The club celebrated its 125th anniversary in 1988 - producing some lovely commemorative plates - and is still going strong.

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