

ARMITAGE BRIDGE

Another Of Huddersfield's Cricket Nurseries

THE star of Armitage Bridge Cricket Club has dimmed somewhat in recent years, and during the war actually came very near to extinction. But the club happily persists. There has been a cricket club at Armitage Bridge for 93 years at least, and in that village were produced County players in Jack Beaumont, Schofield Haigh, Bob Moorhouse, Crowther Charlesworth, and Fred Moorhouse.

Cricket at Armitage Bridge is played on one of the prettiest grounds in the district.

(Yorkshire), Robert (Bob) Moorhouse (Yorkshire), Crowther Charlesworth (Warwickshire), and Fred Moorhouse (Warwickshire).

Schofield Haigh

Schofield Haigh joined the Armitage Bridge club in 1867, and first played for Yorkshire in 1853. He was one of the finest fast bowlers of his day, and later on he acquired an off-break which was particularly deadly. On a drying wicket he had no equal at his pace. He could impart such a whippy break back to the ball that on his special kind of pitch he would repeatedly bowl round the wicket in order not to break the ball so much as to beat both stumps and the wicket-keeper after getting past the bat. He had a slow "Yorker," too, that was most effective. It was a ball which slowed in its flight, with the result that the batsman had computed his stroke only to find that he had made it too soon—and there was another man out. Haigh's first big bowling feat was in 1857 against Surrey, when he took seven wickets for seventeen runs. Schofield Haigh was also a dependable batsman who could be relied upon later on in the innings, and he had a very powerful drive. One of his greatest batting performances was against Surrey at Bradford in 1858. He partnered George Hirst for the ninth wicket, and the pair knocked up 192 runs, a ninth-wicket record.

Jack Beaumont, who gained fame as a Surrey bowler, was the first of the club's cricketers to gain County honours. He played for the Yorkshire Colts in 1877, and also played in two matches for the county during the same season. In 1876 he was engaged, as professional at Holbeck, playing against the Australians in the first year. After leaving Holbeck he joined the ground staff at the Oval, and later played for several seasons for Surrey. Lohmann and he were the mainstay of the Surrey bowling at that time. He went to

Prominent Players

It was at this period that the club were fortunate in having the late Mr. E. R. Benson as captain. He first captained the team in 1863, and continued as its captain for seventeen years. He always took a very great interest in the club. He was a forceful father than a stylish batsman, and once in a match against Lepton he scored 41 runs in two overs. In the first over he hit six successive 4's, and in the second over four 4's and a 1. It was his lovable personality that endeared him to the players and created the wonderful team spirit so essential for success.

George Moorhouse was a brilliant fielder with a remarkable return and a free-hitting batsman, who was wonderfully quick on his feet.

Ben Hawkyard was a slow break bowler; one of the finest slow bowlers the club ever had.

Then there was G. W. Oldfield, who was admittedly one of the best wicket-keepers the district ever produced. He was given a trial against Surrey's second eleven at the Oval, and would have undoubtedly gained county honours had he been so inclined. Jos Moorhouse, Ed. Robinson, and Fred Shaw were all-round men of merit. There was W. A. Oldfield, a fine defensive and pushing batsman. He scored 226 against Paddock in a Lumb Cup tie in 1893, which is still a local batting record.

James Walker did great service for the club as secretary for a long number of years. He had a great deal to do with the construction of the present field in its early days, and it was in a great degree due to his powers of organisation that the club attained its excellence at that period.

Benjamin Langrick (the retired headmaster of the Armitage Bridge Church School) followed James Walker as the secretary. He

As has been the case with nearly all the local cricket clubs, no permanent record of the very early days of the Armitage Bridge Cricket Club has been kept. It is difficult, therefore, to determine with any degree of certainty the exact year in which the club started, but there is no doubt that there was a club at Armitage Bridge at least ninety-three years ago.

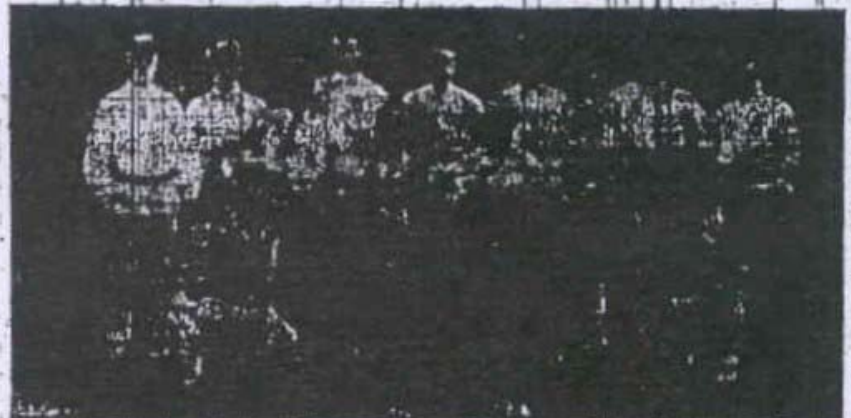
Round about the year 1830 was founded a club which played in a field near a house belonging to a Mr. Edgecombe. This field was later converted into arable land, and the club moved on to a common just above the wood. This in turn was taken and used for pasture land, and the club had to move again. This time they took a field next to what was commonly known as the "Neddy Field."

The "Neddy Field" club ceased after a few years, and for a short time no cricket was played, but a new club, the existing one, was formed, and played in the park of Mr. Thomas Brooke, who kindly lent it for that purpose.

It can easily be said that the present club came into existence shortly after the Northgate Mount club at Bosley, from which team it took several players, who were really Armitage Bridge men, including Mr. Green (who was the headmaster of the Armitage Bridge Church School), Neil Lockwood, Joe Beaumont, Jack Beaumont (of another family), and J. W. Haigh.

The lease of the park could obviously be of a temporary nature only, and a new field was given to the club by Messrs. John Brooke and Sons. In 1870 the pavilion was erected, and a year later a scoring-lantern and refreshment-room were added. The refreshment-room was built for the members during the evenings, and the club purchased the bricks and the other building materials.

The field was found to be too small to be really satisfactory, and it was decided to add two adjoining fields to it. The walls were pulled down, and the work of making the three fields into one level field was all done by the members. To make the ground level, much trenching, digging, and tipping had to be done, but such was the enthusiasm of the members that practically the whole of the work was done by them. The only help they received was some free labour given by the firm of Messrs. John Brooke and Sons, and assistance from the local farmers.



An old Armitage Bridge team. Top Row: H. Turner, G. Haigh, G. Moorhouse, H. Blakely, J. H. Barrand, R. Moorhouse, and J. Broadbent. Bottom Row: F. Shaw, G. W. Oldfield, E. R. Benson (capt.), J. N. Oldfield, E. Oldfield, and B. Hawkyard.

A Beautiful Setting

The present field is one of which any club could be proud, and it is noted not only for the excellence of its pitch, but for the natural beauty of its surroundings and its setting in the Holme Valley. It would be somewhere in the early twenties when the club moved to its present ground.

Celebrities of that time were William Lockwood, Alderman J. Taylor, Ben Booth, Jack Beaumont (of Sarrey fame), Gustavus Rushforth, M. Haigh, Leo Haigh, Jack Craws, Abol Cartwright, G. Boys, and Joe Beaumont.

In those days there were no Leagues, Associations, Alliances, or similar organisations, and the club struggled home and away fixtures with neighbouring clubs. As the reputation of a club developed it played further afield, and thus it happened that Armitage Bridge played against Penistone, Rawdon, Leeds Albion, Upper Batley, Pitsmoor, Dewsbury and Savilla, and Brighouse. At that time the Armitage Bridge club was locally famous, and so keen did the rivalry become, especially at the holiday matches, that the clubs engaged county men to play for them.

The Pitsmoor club, for instance, brought to Armitage Bridge F. Sugg and W. Sugg (of Derbyshire), and Armitage Bridge engaged J. Briggs (Leeds), E. Peats (Yorkshire), J. Beaumont (of Sarrey, a former Armitage Bridge player, of whom more will be said later), and E. J. Diver (Warwickshire).

These visits of county men were undoubtedly the means of fostering local ambition, and were contributory causes of the team's outstanding excellence.

In the early eighties the club began to engage professional professionals who served Armitage Bridge in the 'eighties were Herbert Lodge (Kirkstall), 1882, W. Rayner (Batley) 1883, H. Spence (Leeds Albion) 1884, J. Bateson (Rawdon) 1885, H. Hirst (Armitage Bridge) 1886-1894, and T. E. Oldfield (Armitage Bridge) 1894-1900.

It will be seen that in 1886 the club tried the experiment of appointing one of their own men as professional. At first many of the members were opposed to the idea, but time proved the wisdom of the experiment. Harry Hirst was without doubt one of the

Australia with Vernon's team in 1886-87.

Robert (Bob) Moorhouse first played for Armitage Bridge first eleven in 1886, and in 1887 he met with tremendous success when batting in the Lamb Cup match. It was his success in this match that brought him to the notice of the county committee, and he obtained a place in the Yorkshire colts the following year. In the North v. South match that season he scored 45 and 83, and from that time he had a permanent place in the county. At first his batting did not quite come up to expectations, but his brilliant fielding more than compensated for that. In the season 1891-95 he had the honour of being top of the County averages. His brother, Fred Moorhouse, gained considerable fame as an all-round man for Warwickshire.

Crowther Charlesworth, who also played for Warwickshire, was a batsman of repute.

He was widely known as a hard-hitter, and his association with the Warwickshire club extended over a long period. He was a member of the team in 1898; in 1910 he headed the average list with 1,195, average 35.17; and he assisted the club after the war.

First Lamb Cup Winners

The Huddersfield Cricket Association was founded in 1886, and the Lamb Cup was given in 1887, when it was won by Armitage Bridge who defeated Leeselles Hall on the Lockwood ground in the final. They won it twice afterwards, in 1893 and in 1895, when they won by only eight runs.

In the 1890 final they defeated Dalton, at Fartown, and the outstanding feature of the match was the partnership between D. L. Atha and J. H. Barrand.

In the same year the club was also at the top of the League.

The club tied with Blithwaite for the championship of the Huddersfield and District League at the end of the League's first season in 1892, and they won the championship again the following year.

The club left the League in 1899, but rejoined it at a later date. In the interval they arranged home and away fixtures with such clubs as Leeds, Leamington, Spen Victoria, Brighouse, Cleckheaton, and Batley. Inadvertently one season the matches with Batley and Brighouse fell on the same Saturday. Brighouse at home and Batley at Batley. A

took a very keen interest in the club and was a good all-round player. He represented the club on the Huddersfield and District League for many years, and was president of the League in 1896.

No record of the club would be complete without mentioning the firm of Messrs. John Brooks and Sons, Ltd. From the club's earliest days it had received valuable assistance from the firm, who have provided them with free labour and subscribed liberally to the funds. Moreover, they have always allowed the club to have their ground free, which saves a very big annual item of expenditure for a club which does not own its ground.

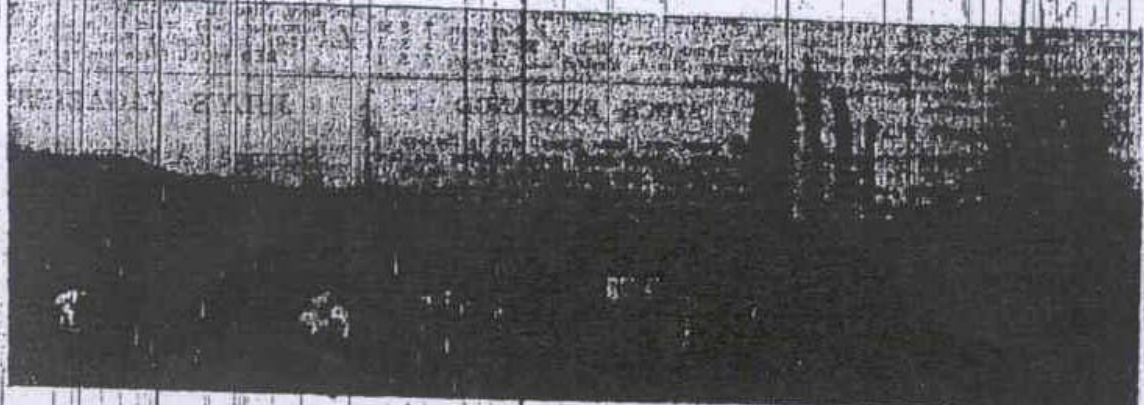
Ups And Downs

Like most of the clubs, Armitage Bridge has had its ups and downs, and it is not generally known how near it was to extinction during the War. Most of the youth of the district were in His Majesty's Forces, and those at home were few and their time so fully occupied on war work that the field became sadly neglected. The entertainment tax threatened its solvency, and great difficulty was experienced in coping a team together. Many matches were played with the team at less than full strength. Messrs. John Brooks and Sons, Ltd. seriously considered using the field for other purposes. Representations to the firm of the club's difficulties averted this. The late Sir J. A. Brooks and other members of the firm contributed to the funds, and arrangements were made for labour from the factory to keep the ground in condition. Its preservation was due to great measure to the enthusiastic labours of Mr. John Livezey, who acted as hon. secretary from 1912 to 1916. He was assisted by Messrs. H. Hallas (hon. treasurer), H. Barracough, and R. Posen.

Individual performances of later years which are worthy of note are as follows:—L. Dawson caught five catches behind the wickets against Scholes in 1916. In 1924 H. Booth took seven wickets for one run in a match with Hensley, and in that year he took 60 wickets for 6.8 runs per wicket.

Players of a younger generation worthy of mention are E. Franco, C. Williamson, T. I. Stocks, W. Woodhouse, W. Mitchell, and A. Moorhouse.

Within recent years the club has not been



greatest all-round cricketers of his day. When he was only sixteen years of age he came into the first team, and the first time he played he made the highest score in the match. At the end of his first season he headed the batting averages. Space does not permit the recording of all his big performances, but some idea of his prowess can be gained from the fact that in a match against Cliffe End played at Armitage Bridge he took seven wickets for two runs. In 1885 he scored over fifty six times, averaging 25.11, and took 110 wickets, at an average of 4.60 per wicket, as a professional. In Old Windsor in 1879, Lambourne in 1883-85, and for his own club, Armitage Bridge, from 1886 to 1894, Hirst was not only of service to the club as a player, but as a coach as well. Such were as Schofield Haigh, Bill Moorhouse, and Crowther Charlesworth all acknowledged that their success was for the most part due to his teaching.

The Armitage Bridge club have the distinction of having produced five county players: Jack Beaumont (Sarrey), Schofield (Haigh)

home Armitage Bridge were assisted by S. Haigh (Yorkshire C.C.), R. Moorhouse (Yorkshire C.C.), and at Batley by C. Charlesworth (Warwickshire C.C.), F. Moorhouse (Warwickshire C.C.), and Law Hill (professional). Against Brighouse the match ended in a draw—Armitage Bridge 229, and Brighouse 48 for eight wickets. At Batley Armitage Bridge won by six wickets.

In 1901 the club were admitted into the Huddersfield Alliance. In the years 1902, 1903, and 1906 the club were at the top of this organisation. In 1910 the club won the Central League, losing only one match in the season, and that against Thongsbridge.

Prominent members of those days were T. E. Oldfield, E. E. Benson, George Moorhouse, Ed. Robinson, I. Hirst, Ben Hawkyard, G. W. Oldfield, D. L. Atha, J. H. Barrand, W. A. Oldfield, Joe Moorhouse, B. Langrick, and Fred Ryan. T. E. Oldfield followed Harry Hirst as the club's professional. He was a first-class batsman and fielder, and headed the average list in 1892, 1891, and 1893. At the time he was playing for the Stamford club.

much in the limelight, although it has always been fairly strong and able to put up a good game. Mr. B. Langrick, to whom I am indebted for practically all my information, says that the lack of interest shown by the older men in the younger players of to-day is, in his opinion, largely responsible for the club's falling to shine as it did in the days gone by. "There is good material among the young men playing to-day as there was, perhaps better," he said. "The trouble is that they receive no encouragement. When I was a young man playing for the club the older men, men like Harry Hirst, would gather round the practice nets and give us advice. They would tell us where our weakest points lay, and show us how to correct them. They were always ready to help and encourage us in any way. This means a lot to a young man, and if some of the older men would just gather round and help and encourage the youngsters of to-day I feel quite sure that Armitage Bridge club would become just as famous as it was in the days of Harry Hirst and Schofield Haigh."