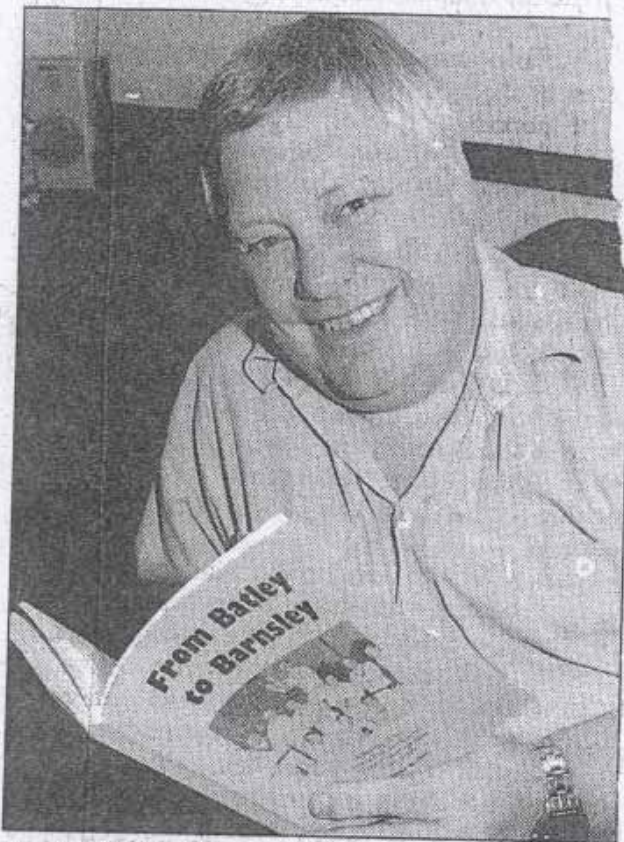


Horbury author logs cup's heritage



HORBURY AUTHOR: Michael Butler with his book. w3828a620

IT is regarded as second only to the ashes in terms of its heritage, but the history of the Heavy Woollen Cup has never been fully told – until now.

Historian Mike Butler, 59, of Northfield Lane, Horbury, illuminates the history of the famous cricket contest in his book *From Batley to Barnsley*.

Mr Butler has lived in Horbury for 29 years, but the first 30 years of his life were spent in the heart of the Heavy Woollen district around Cleckheaton. He attended Heckmondwike Grammar School.

A lifelong sports fan, his research for the book began when he was made redundant from his job as a chartered accountant in 1999.

He soon found another job, but his passion for writing had been triggered and he began to compile his tome in earnest.

His research revealed the origin of the cup going back to 1883 when it took its name from the district into which it was born.

The book reveals that the Heavy Woollen District only came into being in the middle of the 19th century following the development of machines for grinding soft, loosely woven rags into shoddy material and hard rags into what was known as mungo.

That branch of the textile industry which dealt in this area was concentrated in a triangle between Dewsbury, Ossett and Morley supplying low-grade woollen production in local mills.

The success of a match for the benefit of Dewsbury District Infirmary between Hodgson & Simpson soap manufacturers and a Yorkshire County XI provided the spur for the competition's launch.

Speaking after the book launch at Gomersal Cricket Club, near Cleckheaton, Mr Butler said: "I completed the book in 2002 but it was only when Peter Davies, a lecturer at Huddersfield University – who received a grant to research cricket in the Kirklees area – contacted me that I was given funds by him to publish it.

"This is a year-by-year log of of the competition and how it has evolved over the years and, apart from a small pamphlet on the subject, this is the first comprehensive history of the subject and my first book.

"As far as I am aware this is the oldest continuous cup competition apart from the Ashes and I felt it deserved highlighting.

"It is the product of years of research in local libraries and interviews with cricket club contacts.

"The Ashes is a subject about which much is known but hopefully my book can elevate this much neglected contest in the annals of cricket."

The book sells at £5 and a copy can be obtained from Peter Davies at Huddersfield University (01484 472405) or e-mail p.j.davies@hud.ac.uk They are also on sale at Rickaro Books, High Street, Horbury.