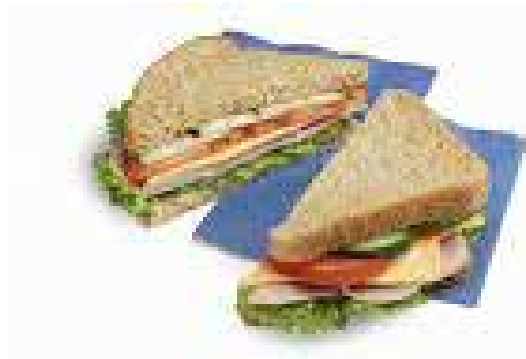


# SANDWICHES & CAKES!

## TEA LADIES

In the early days, inns and public houses were prominent in the provision of refreshments at cricket matches.



For example, at Keighley CC in 1873 Thomas Cowgill of the Burlington Arms was granted the 'privilege' of catering rights at the cost of £10. It is possible too that churches put on light refreshments, especially where clubs had a church link or where a club's ground was close by.

'Tea ladies', as we know them today, probably emerged in the inter-war period. They would be volunteers who wanted to help the club on the catering side.



**On duty at Booth CC**

At Illingworth St. Mary's CC there are minute-book references in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to the club ladies baking and making other contributions to the club's social events.



**In the kitchen: Warley CC (left) and Walsden CC (right)**

Illingworth allowed lady members of the club from October 1920. This led to an old 'tent' being refurbished for serving refreshments, and then to the formation of a Ladies Refreshment Committee in March 1921, which enabled Illingworth to provide teas for the 1921 season.



**Some modern-day Illingworth tea ladies**

There is something quintessentially English about the traditional cricket tea – and the traditional cricket tea lady.



**With their aprons on: at Todmorden (left) and Sowerby Bridge Church Institute (SBCI)**



**Brewing up at Blackley CC**

Traditional fare might be cheese and cucumber sandwiches plus a slice of chocolate cake and a cup of tea.



**Cakes at Mytholmroyd**



**A fine spread: Norwood Green**

This kind of light meal between innings has engrained itself in the national psyche.



**Copley CC (left) and Norwood Green CC**

And, of course, in the main, it is women – cricketers' wives and girlfriends, mothers and daughters plus friends and supporters – who have been responsible.

Over the last century and a half it would be fair to say that women's main role at local cricket clubs has been in the kitchen.



**Barkisland (left) and Blackley (right)**

With weekend matches in mind, they will order food, go out and pick it up, and then prepare it while the first innings is taking place.



**Ready for action at Copley CC**



**Mytholmroyd Methodists CC (as was, left) and Mytholmroyd CC**

Tea ladies at some clubs have also had to serve tea in portakabin facilities (Badger Hill) or in old wooden pavilions devoid of electricity and running water (Mytholmroyd Methodists).



**Badger Hill CC, Rastrick – above and below**





**The Badger Hill CC tea ladies**

The tea ladies at Mytholmroyd Methodists actually became famous:



**B**ETWEEN them they've notched up an impressive total of 183 - almost a double century.

Now we are talking cricket - but not batting averages.

Instead, the figure refers to the staggering combined number of years that three delightful Mytholmroyd ladies have been keeping the cricketers of their village refreshed with tea, sandwiches - and home-made cakes.

Mary Grace welcomes me to her home in Ewood Hall Avenue and not surprisingly, the first thing on offer is a nice cup of tea.

She is joined by Margaret Boocock and Gwyneth Boulton who make up this formidable cricket tea lady threesome, a tradition they reveal, began at Mytholmroyd Methodists' Cricket Club when they were teenagers.

"Well I was just 14," says Mary, who is now 77. "So that was 63 years ago. "We'd go and watch the matches and I got roped in, I suppose. Then I met my husband Russell and he started playing so that was it. I've been involved ever since."

Margaret Boocock, of Nest Estate, now 83, adds with a laugh: "It was a case of if you can't beat 'em . . ."

She reveals that she started serving on the tea rota back in 1948 when her late husband, Wilfred was a regular player.

That leaves Gwyneth, of Cragg Road, who has just celebrated her 80th birthday.

"Well I got involved before I was married. I was only 16. Then I met my husband, Harold, who was a cricketer and so I carried on. I became a regular."

The ladies recount tales of how they started in the club's original "tea hut" with barely room to swing a cricket bat.

"It measured 6ft by 4ft," says Mary laughing. "It was no bigger than a garden shed."

There's more to cricket than the play - the tea for a start. Three very special tea-makers share their secrets with Virginia Mason

# It's 183 not out for tea-making trio



**At the crease: a batsman despatches the ball during a match at Mytholmroyd Methodists' Cricket Club**

"And we had no equipment to speak of, says Gwyneth.

Mary adds that a Primus stove on which to heat the water for the tea was about as luxurious as it got.

"I remember one occasion when I was on tea duty on my own and I

had no utensils. I didn't even have a spoon. The tea wouldn't brew and it needed a good stir so there was only one thing for it - I used a wicket.

"It was the clean end though," she adds to gales of laughter.

Over the years facilities have

improved and the present tea pavilion gives them more room to serve up their delicious fare - for which they have become well-known.

"People do talk about our club," says Margaret. "We get some nice comments about our sandwiches and cakes."

"Well, there are some clubs you know where players have to take their tea."

Gwyneth, understandably, looks shocked. Famous for her sponge cake ("I can make a good fatless one although my Victoria sponge is a bit heavy"), she begins to list the mouthwatering selection that the three of them serve when play stops for tea.

"Well you need a good selection of sandwiches - boiled ham and tinned salmon and salad, they're good old favourites. And of course everyone likes a nice slice of home-made cake. Chocolate is always popular."

Mary reveals she has just baked her famous orange cake ready for the club's annual meeting.

Despite having young families all those decades ago, the three ladies reveal that they never shunned their rota duty.

"We'd just take the children with us," says Margaret who has one

daughter and three sons - their son, David is still a regular player.

"They would be off all day amusing themselves, although from time to time they'd return as black as soot."

"We have had some good chats while we've been on duty as well," says Gwyneth. "It gives you chance to have a good natter - although you have to keep your eye on the game."

"Yes," adds Mary. "You can be caught out if you're not careful. Sometimes the team has been all out and so before you know it, they're coming in for their tea before you've finished making the sandwiches!"

Keeping an eye on the game was even more important for Mary who used to be the scorer.

"You really do have to watch every ball then," she says. So will they be dishing up their afternoon tea delicacies this coming season?

"Well we keep saying we're giving up," says Gwyneth. "But somehow they always manage to talk us into carrying on."

Mary and Margaret nod, knowingly.

These are Gwyneth Boulton's memories:

***I got involved before I was married. I was only 16. Then I met my husband, Harold, who was a cricketer and so I carried on. We had no equipment to speak of. I can make a good fatless sponge cake, although my Victoria sponge is a bit heavy. You need a good selection of sandwiches – boiled ham and tinned salmon.***



***And of course everyone likes a nice slice of home-made cake. Chocolate is always popular. We have had some good chats while we've been on duty as well. It gives you chance to have a good natter – although you have to keep your eye on the game. We keep saying we're giving up, but somehow they always manage to talk us into carrying on.***

And Margaret Boocock's:



***People do talk about our club. We get some nice comments about our sandwiches and cakes. There are some clubs you know where players have to take their own tea.***

And Mary Grace's:

***I was just 14. So that was 63 years ago. We'd go and watch the matches and I got roped in. Then I met my husband Russell and he started playing so that was it. I've been involved ever since.***



***I remember one occasion when I was on tea duty on my own and I had no utensils. I didn't even have a spoon. The tea wouldn't brew and it needed a good stir so there was only one thing for it – I used a stump. It was the clean end though!***

***You can be caught out if you're not careful. Sometimes the team is all out and so before you know it they're coming in for their tea before you've finished making the sandwiches!***

Teamwork is also important. There is great solidarity among tea ladies.



**Sowerby Bridge CC**



**Sowerby St. Peter's CC**



**Mytholmroyd CC**



**Barkisland CC**

Club tea ladies will make teas and coffees to go alongside the sandwiches and cakes, and then wash up – hopefully with a little help from the cricketers!



**Sowerby St. Peters CC (left) and Bradshaw CC**

Tea ladies also have to be extremely sociable as players and spectators will always want to pass the time of day with them.



**Barkisland CC**



**King Cross CC**

Then they might sit down for a bite to eat, or a glass of wine, themselves!



**Mytholmroyd CC**



Triangle CC

Some clubs are fortunate in that they can rely on 'voluntary' tea ladies – and the money they make from teas can thus be ploughed back into club funds.

Over a full season of maybe 30-odd games, this can make an enormous difference to a cricket club's balance sheet.



**Sowerby Bridge CC**

Others have to 'hire' outside caterers or allow in-house folk to make a 'mini-business' out of teas – with the money raised being kept by the caterers. And of course, the catering does not stop at this.

There are 'drinks' to make for the cricketers every 15 or 20 overs. Some women might also work behind the bar. There are also cup finals...



**Elland CC (left, Sykes Cup) and Mytholmroyd CC (Crossley Shield)**

And also food to prepare for social and fundraising events from January to December, such as this one at Illingworth St.Mary's CC in 2006 which celebrated the opening of a new pavilion extension.



















