

Halifax Parish Cricket League, later Halifax League (1914-)

Extract from *Lost: The Former Cricket Clubs and Cricket Grounds of Halifax and Calderdale* by Andrew Hardcastle (Cricket Heritage Project Publications, 2006, £5)

The League was formed out of dissatisfaction with the Halifax and District Cricket League. This league had been divided into two divisions in 1908, but in 1912 had reverted to a one-division format with 19 teams who played 16 matches each, followed by a top-four play-off. For 1913 an attempt was made to attract some better-class clubs to allow for two sufficiently large divisions. No such clubs were found, but the decision was made that for 1914 there would nevertheless be two divisions, with the top ten in 1913 forming Division One.

Some clubs feared that with an unequal fixture list they might miss out on the top division, and coupled with unease about the standard of pitches on which some clubs played, began to talk of a breakaway. The initiative was taken by Siddal, who in August 1913 called a meeting with Sowerby Bridge, Stainland, Greetland, Illingworth, Norwood Green, Triangle, Clifton Britannia, Lightcliffe and Ovenden. Of those ten clubs, Clifton, Triangle, Stainland and Ovenden would have been in Division Two in 1914, with Pellon, Elland Edge, Mytholmroyd and Warley in Division One.

The breakaway duly took place, though by 1914 Ovenden had become defunct and their place was accepted by Elland Edge. A change from the District League was that no professionals would be allowed, only Siddal, Triangle and Greetland having recently used them anyway. There was also a Parish League rule that all playing members must reside within a radius of five miles of the ground, or have played four successive seasons with that club, unless they gained the special sanction of the league committee. Until the Second World War the league stuck to around 10 clubs, but expanded to 16 in 1952 and to 20 two years later when a second division was introduced. Recently there has been further growth.

Over the years, 52 teams have featured, including the 27 current member clubs, Barkisland (now in the Huddersfield League), Northowram (now Northowram Fields in the Central Yorkshire League), Illingworth St Mary's (now Airedale and Wharfedale League), Lightcliffe (now Bradford League), and Elland "A". The other 20, now defunct, were as follows:

Siddal (1914-15, 1922-39 and 1949-94). Began life as Siddal St Marks Young Men around 1879, their first league cricket being played in the Halifax

Amateur League and the District League. They bought their own ground in 1902 at Park Lane for £450, the money being subscribed by members in the form of shares, adding a brick pavilion in 1903, and became the instigators of the Parish League. A highly-regarded club, they were invited to join a Halifax section of the Yorkshire Council in the 1916-22 period, and again in 1940-48 were Yorkshire Council members, having won the Halifax League title in 1936 and the Parish Cup in 1912, 1928 and 1937. They fell on hard times in the 1990s and were forced to resign after the 1994 season through lack of playing numbers, the ground being taken over by Halifax Association club West End.

Clifton Britannia (1914-15 and 1924-36). Had been playing since at least 1870 on a field behind the Armytage Arms at Clifton, becoming members of the Brighthouse Cricket League and the Halifax and District League. Members of the Halifax section of the Yorkshire Council from 1916 to 1923, they reverted to the Parish League (of which they were winners in 1925) until 1936, when they were given notice to quit their ground by the landlord, who allocated it to Blakeborough's. The club did not immediately disband, remaining dormant pending a revival chance. They amalgamated with Turner & Wainwrights to play at Brookfoot as **Turnwrights & Clifton** from 1937 to 1939.

Norwood Green (1914-40). Previously in the Halifax and District League, 1908-13, and before that in the Amateur League. They were the league's first champions, winning again in 1921. They folded soon after the outbreak of the Second World War, their picturesque ground in Rookes Lane being taken over for a time by Craven Gentlemen. A new Norwood Green team now plays there in the Bradford Central League; this team, formerly known as **Wyke**, was an amalgamation of Wyke Temperance, Wyke Westfield and Lower Wyke Moravians.

Elland Edge (1914-16). A former Halifax and District League and Amateur League club, who were not originally chosen as founder members of the Parish League, but took the place of defunct Ovenden. It seemed the team would fold before the 1916 season, but they struggled on for one last year.

Siddal United (1919). Former Amateur League side with a high quality ground in Park Lane, below that of Siddal. Unfortunately for them, from 1918 it was also used in the winter by Halifax Town A.F.C., the overlapping seasons creating problems with pitch preparation. United were never able to use the ground in the Parish League, playing all matches away from home in their one season and suspending operations in 1920.

Halifax Baptists (1919-22). Elected following successful seasons in the Amateur League, they had a ground at Nursery Lane, Ovenden. They fared

reasonably well, finishing as high as fourth in 1921, but in 1923 joined the newly formed Halifax Association, where they remained until 1940.

Norland (1921). A former Amateur League side elected despite not being particularly successful there. Playing on a field in the village opposite the entrance to the golf course, they inevitably struggled and finished bottom of the league. For the following season they moved to the Halifax and District League before becoming members of the Halifax Association, 1923-39.

Turner & Wainwright's (1922-36). Formed in 1920, playing two seasons in the Amateur League with employees only. On election to the Parish League membership was thrown open to outsiders and the Parish Cup was won in 1925, but by the 1930s there were problems with numbers. In 1933 and 1934 their 2nd XI fixtures were fulfilled by Heath Old Boys, and in 1935-36 by Blakeborough's. When Blakeborough's went alone, on Clifton's old ground, it was expedient to amalgamate with the otherwise defunct Clifton to become Turnwrights & Clifton for the period 1937-39. When war broke out in 1939, the pleasantly-situated ground by the canal at Brookfoot was ploughed up and was later largely covered by industrial premises.

Smith Bulmers (1929-30). Halifax Association champions in 1927 and 1928, the textile workers found life more difficult in their new sphere, finishing bottom in 1930, this leading to their demise. Their ground was on Beechwood Avenue, Holmfield.

Halifax 'B' (1930-34 and 1940). Initially the third team of Yorkshire Council side Halifax, enjoying one of their more successful periods at this time, with Heath Old Boys taking their 2nd XI fixtures. Later though, it was the Halifax 2nd XI, which won the league in both 1932 and 1933.

Heath Old Boys (1930-34). A cricket section from the Rugby Union club of this name, they never operated in the 1st XI's league, but took the 2nd XI fixtures initially of Halifax 'B', then Turner & Wainwright's, playing in this latter period at Brookfoot. After finishing bottom in 1934 they did not reappear, their place being taken by Blakeborough's. An earlier Heath Old Boys team had played season 1921 in the Halifax and District League.

Blakeborough's Sports Association (1939-42, 1944-46 and 1951-56). After taking the 2nd XI fixtures of Turner & Wainwright's in 1935 and 1936, they went alone in 1937, joining the Huddersfield and District Cricket Association after poaching Clifton's Armytage Arms ground by dealing with the ground's landlord. Moving to the Halifax League in 1939 was seen as a step up, as was their switch to the Central Yorkshire section of the Yorkshire Council in 1947. Problems with lack of a groundsman meant they had to cancel their entry for 1948 and become temporarily defunct, but they were back in 1950 in

the Huddersfield Association, and were welcomed back to the Halifax League in 1951. They withdrew for a final time after the 1956 season, the Clifton ground being left to decay before houses were built on the site.

Dean Clough (1939-79). Champions in 1938 of the Halifax Association, where they had played since 1932 on the Mason Green ground at Ovenden, formerly known as Moss Cottage. They changed their name to **Crossley's Carpets** in 1963, won the Parish Cup in 1970, and were a Division One side at the time of their demise. The carpet firm became part of the Kidderminster-based Carpets International, the Dean Clough site closing in 1982. The team reappeared in the Halifax Association as **Crossley's** in 1981 still at Mason Green, but merged with Illingworth Liberal Club to become **New Illingworth Libs** in 1982, playing at Roils Head. There had been an earlier Dean Clough team which took part in the Parish Cup in its first season, 1888, and was in the Halifax and District League in 1894.

Army XI (1944-45). A team formed from soldiers based at the Barracks (Wellesley Park) during the Second World War. They had a couple of successful seasons, being well-placed in the final tables, but ceased to exist when the War ended.

3-Redep (1945). Another war-time side, representing the Royal Engineers Depot, who had played in the Halifax Association since 1942, winning the Collinson Cup in 1944 and probably the League as well, though no final tables survive. They played on Copley's ground, Copley having ceased playing during the 1941-45 period.

Webster's (1951-78). Brewery-based side who had played in the Halifax Association since 1926, at first on a sloping field in Ovenden Wood Road, before moving to Cross Roads, Wainstalls, in 1935. They had been Association champions in 1950. In 1956 they won the Parish Cup, but by 1978 they were in difficulties and after finishing bottom of Division 2 resigned just before the start of the 1979 season. They merged with **Wainstalls** of the Halifax Association, who still play on the ground.

Salem, Hebden Bridge (1954-62). Previously in the Hebden Bridge League, having earlier featured in the Calder Valley League and Sowerby Division League. They had never been particularly successful, but had a picturesque if very small ground at Hollins Holme, and were one of four teams added in 1954 (the others were Blackley, Bradshaw and Warley) to allow the league to expand to two divisions. They remained a Division Two side and switched to the Halifax Association in 1963, later changing their name to Hebden Bridge.

Mackintosh's (1962-95). Formed in 1960 as **Mackintosh's Saturday C.C.**, this works side played first in the Halifax Association. With a fine ground at

West Vale they were quickly admitted to the Halifax League, where they enjoyed some success. In 1995 they finished third in Division 2, but at the end of the season lost their ground when it was sold by owners Nestles. Players who had joined them from defunct Siddal that year found themselves without a club again.

R.A.F.A. (1983-88). Previously long-serving members of the Halifax Association, the Royal Air Force Association side had improved their profile when moving in 1981 to a new field at Old Earth, some of their players having connections with the soccer team there. Playing success was rare though, the team being wooden-spoonists in 1983, 1984 and 1988. They were replaced by Southowram, and folded.

Salendine Nook Old Boys (1998-2004). Huddersfield-based side who had figured in the Huddersfield Central League and Huddersfield Association, having been formed in 1975 at Salendine Nook High School. They folded due to a shortage of players and repeated vandalism at their school base.