

EARLY YEARS

BY ROYAL APPOINTMENT?

ORIGINS

The first cricket club to appear in Birstall was Birstall Albert Cricket Club, named after the Prince Consort. They played six matches per year, including Feast matches against Holmfirth.

Apparently, the team played near the Black Bull in Kirkgate as early as 1854. There is a certain amount of debate as to whether this is a direct ancestor of the current club.



This club had a small membership of around 30 people, and these saw fit to change their name in 1860 to Birstall Victoria – in honour of the Queen.

MOVERS AND SHAKERS

1860 – PRE-LEEDS ROAD GROUNDS

In 1860 Birstall Victoria moved from near the Black Bull to a site behind the National Schools, in Scott's Field.

The team remained here for 10 years (occasionally competing under the name Birstall Cricket Club) until notice was served for a housing development to take place.

Therefore, a ground move had to take place yet again.



Leeds Road today

Eventually, the Club settled at its current location around 1870.

VICTORIA LOSS

1869 – EARLY MATCH

LEEDS GRAMMAR SCHOOL V. BIRSTAL VICTORIA.

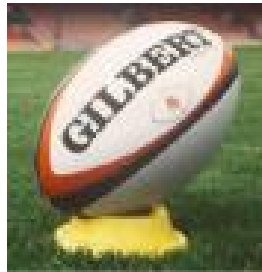
This match was played on the School ground on Saturday, and resulted in favour of the home club. For the School, Griesbach played a good innings, Firth and Wood also scored well. Griesbach and Wood bowled well throughout. Smith played a splendid innings for Birstal. West also played well. We may notice this is the first match the Birstal club have lost this season. Score –

BIRSTAL CLUB.	
A. F. Smith, b Griesbach	25
F. G. Boden, c Templar b Wood	1
H. West, b Wood	11
Preston, c Cooper b Griesbach	1
G. F. Rayner, l b w b Wood	1
Parrand, c Wood b Griesbach	7
H. Yates, b Griesbach	3
W. H. Butler, b Wood	1
W. Oldroyd, c Potter b Griesbach	5
J. Noble, c Topham b Griesbach	1
J. Sykes, (not out)	3
Extras	6
Total	75
GRAMMAR SCHOOL.	
Potter, c Boden b West	0
F. Brown, c and b Smith	0
R. D. Glover, b Smith	10
J. E. Firth, b Butler	11
R. Cooper, b Smith	0
R. Griesbach, run out	14
H. Topham, c Rayner, b Smith	6
B. Wood, b West	12
J. C. Gibson, c Sykes b Butler	5
Templar, run out	5
C. Tuckwell, (not out)	0
Extras	10
Total	73

SPORT FOR ALL

1883 – MERGER AND FIRST ‘GLORY YEARS’

In 1883 Birstall Victoria embarked on a brief merger with Birstall Rugby Club.



However, this was short-lived and the separation of the two establishments in 1885 signalled the official birth of the Cricket Club as an entity



The Heavy Woollen Cup trophy

This development also heralded the arrival of the Club's first Heavy Woollen Cup victory, against rivals Dewsbury & Savile in the final.

HEAVY WOOLLEN DISTRICT CHALLENGE CUP.
FINAL TIE.

DEWSBURY SAVILE V. BIRSTALL.—This match was played on the ground of the former, and was witnessed by a considerable number of spectators, who evinced a keen interest as to the issue of the match. At the time for drawing the stumps the score stood—Savile 242, Birstall 168 (for the loss of six wickets.) A. G. Day and W. France batted well for Savile, the former contributing 40 and the latter 78 runs respectively. For Birstall W. Jubb played a patient not out innings for 60, whilst F. Crowther and J. Barraclough also batted well. Score:—

SAVILE.		BIRSTALL.	
J Wright, c Walker b Barraclough	17	J Milnes, run out	18
A G Day, c Bedford b Wilson	40	G S Walker, b O Hill	7
W France, b Wilson	78	W Ratscliffe, c Jackson b O Hill	0
J Eastwood, c Walker b Wilson	20	F Crowther, b Jackson	32
H Hill, b Wilson	10	J Barraclough, c France b Jackson	30
F Bottomley, run out	15	W Jubb, b O Hill	60
J H Jackson, b Wilson	12	S Noble, c Hill b F Fisher ..	0
S Shaw, c Jubb b Wilson ..	1	J Lister, b O Hill	43
T K Fisher, b Wilson	0	W Fearley, not out	1
O Hill, not out	26	S Bedford, not out	0
F Fisher, c Wilson b Barraclough	5		
Extras	16	Extras	25
Total	242	Total for 9 wkts.	168

This team retained the trophy the following year, beating Dewsbury & Savile again.

The trophy was won again in 1892, this time beating Batley in the final, making Birstall the second most successful team in the competition at this point.

LUCKY 13 – BIRSTALL'S FINEST!

1885 – EARLY ELEVEN



BIRSTALL 1885

Standing – W. Ratcliffe, W. Fearnley, N. Gibson (*scorer*), S. Bedford, F. Crowther (*captain*), T. Noble, B. Woffenden (*umpire*), O. Wilson, and J. Barraclough.
Front Row (*seated*) – G. S. Walker, W. Jubb, J. Milnes, and J. Lister.

Note the fact that the Birstall 'squad' includes scorer and umpire.

Note also the 'ornamental' ties and the variety of headgear on display – often a sign of socio-economic background

HOME IMPROVEMENTS

1886 – FIRST DEVELOPMENTS

Plans for a grandstand were passed in April 1887 and around 5,000 people were reported as attending that year's Heavy Woollen Cup semi-final (loss) against Dewsbury & Savile.

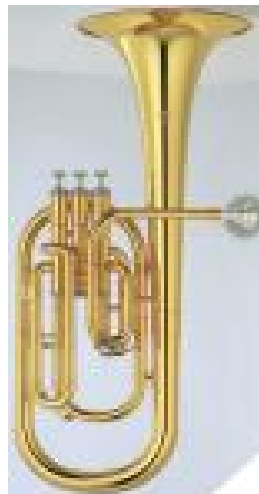
Money was ploughed into ground improvements and in 1892; the pitch was leveled out using pit waste from the local industries.



This off-field investment seemed to have a knock-on effect on the field of play - one of the reasons (possibly) why the Club scooped the Heavy Woollen Cup in 1892, defeating Batley in the final.



However, as the team walked home through Batley, some disgruntled opposition supporters pelted the team and the accompanying Birstall Band with grass sods.



This didn't dampen the celebrations, which lasted for a full week and, as one local historian states, ***'the cup was hardly ever empty of alcohol'***.

BRICKS AND MORTAR

1896 – OWNERS AND BENEFACTORS

The Club initially purchased the Leeds Road ground in 1896.



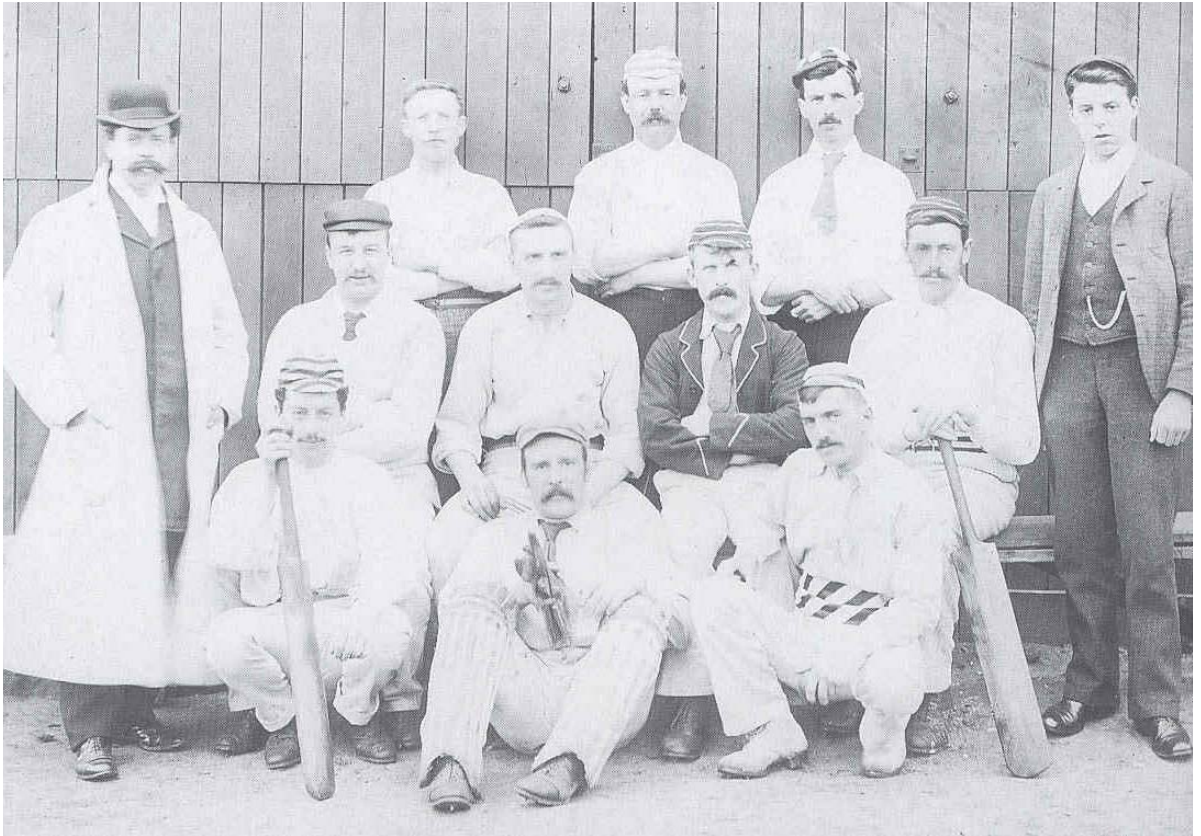
However, problems with mortgage payments led to an appeal from the Club to potential local benefactors.



A key local personality, Dr Forsyth, responded to the plea.

PRIDE OF THE CLUB!

1900 – TEAM PHOTO



This photo was probably taken around the turn of the century. It looks like one umpire (far left, standing) and 11 players, dressed in a variety of garments!

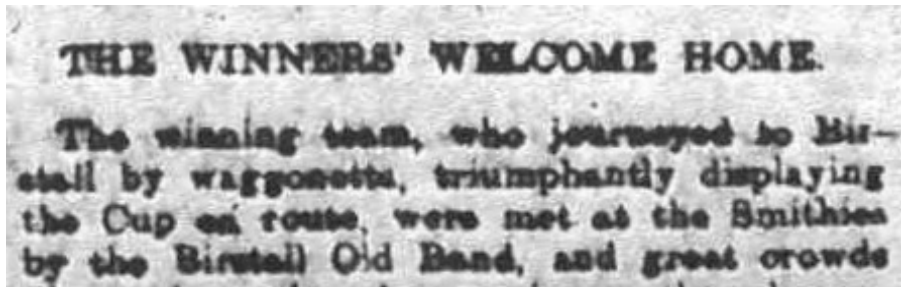
Note the fact that caps in this era were non-function – the peaks being extremely tiny! E. Dickinson, the local greengrocer, is in the middle of the three players sat on the floor.

TROPHY JOY AS HOPTON MILLS VANQUISHED!

1909 – HEAVY WOOLLEN CUP VICTORY



And a great reception was reserved for the successful Birstall players.



The *Dewsbury Reporter* described the journey home:

The winning team, who journeyed to Birstall by wagonette, displaying the cup en route, were met at the Smithies by Birstall Old Band, and great crowds of people gathered to welcome the players. The wagonette journeyed up Station Road, followed by the crowd, and then on Low Lane, where there was a monster assembly.



£1,000 FACILITY

1921 – PAVILION EVENT

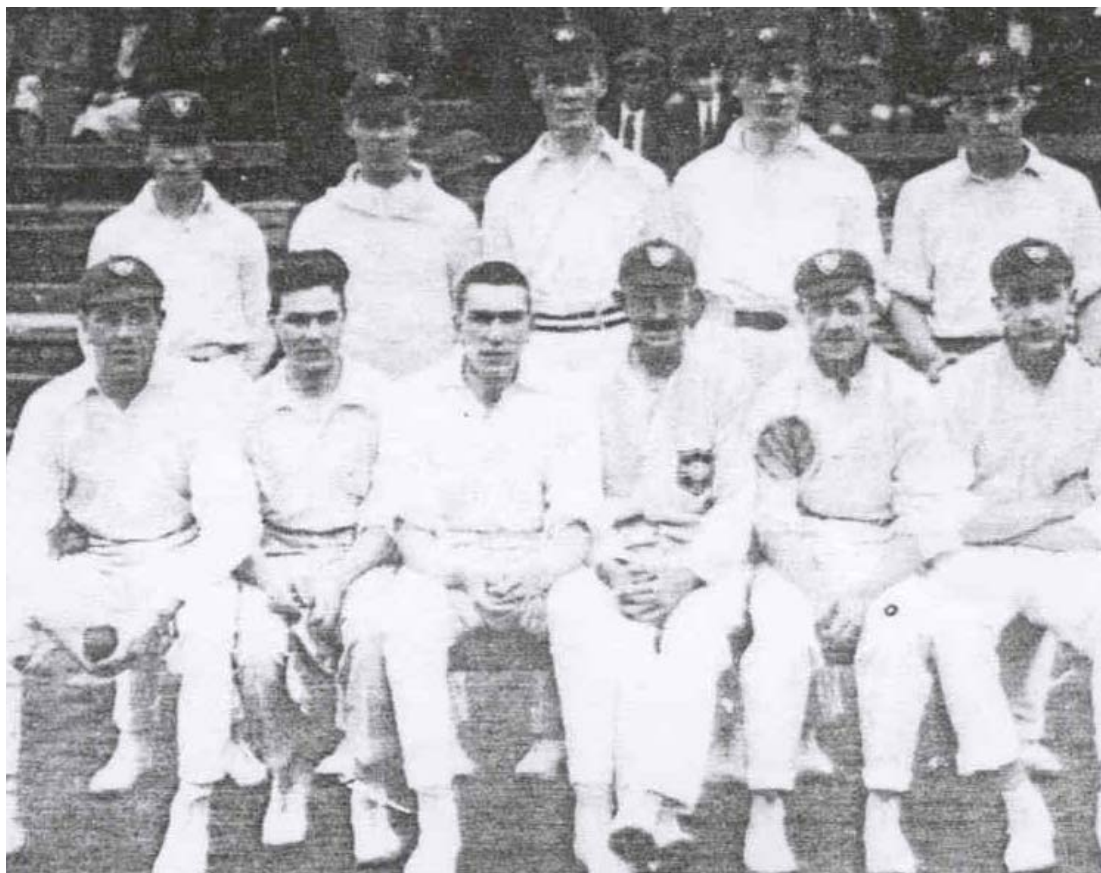


The report details how a charity fundraising game took place after the opening ceremony, between Birstall and a team captained by local councillor and manufacturer (and coincidentally, captain of Batley C.C.) Mr F.W.H. Auty.

Victory, and by no small margin, was to Birstall.

ELEVEN OF THE BEST!

1923 – OFFICIAL RECORD



This official team photograph was taken on the day of the Heavy Woollen Cup semi-final match against Dewsbury at Dewsbury.

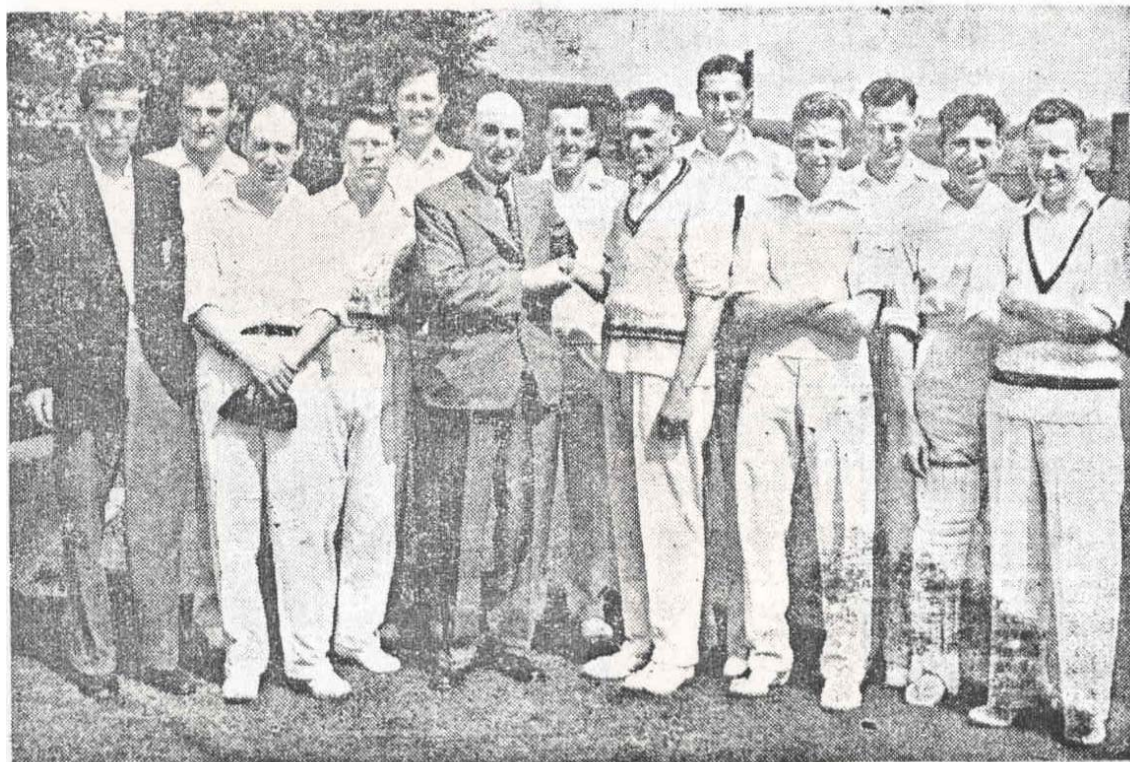
Dewsbury totalled 137; Birstall managed 111, and thus lost by 26 runs.

THORNHILL DEFEATED

1932 – CUP WINNERS AGAIN

This time Thornhill were defeated in the final of the Heavy Woollen Cup. Club skipper on this occasion was J.E. Thurmand – seen here with a later Birstall side.

CUP FINAL HANDSHAKE



Captain of Birstall's 1932 cup winning side, Mr. J. E. Thurmand shakes hands with Herbert Hainsworth, captain of Birstall before he led Birstall on to the field at Cemetery Road on Saturday. Others (left to right) are J. Howden (12th man), W. B. Smith, H. Sugden, S. Speight, M. Womersley, K. Haley, D. Kershaw, R. Thompson, E. Blakeley, G. Bruce and J. Bedford.

OSSETT SAGA

1935 – HEAVY WOOLLEN CUP CONTROVERSY

The Birstall v Ossett semi-final started on the Saturday and continued on the Wednesday and Thursday evenings without completion.

Ossett failed to turn up on the Friday evening, claiming an agreement to continue on Monday had been made. Birstall refused to continue the match on the Monday, claiming Ossett had failed to complete the match on the Friday.

The match was awarded to Ossett!

HEAVY WOOLLEN CRICKET CLUB DEADLOCK.

OSSETT AWARDED SEMI-FINAL.

Were Birstall Given A Fair Hearing?

Ossett will meet Chickendeay at Heckmondwike this week end in the Heavy Woollen Cup competition final.

This was decided by the Cup Committee on Monday, when, after hearing Birstall's claim to the semi-final with Ossett, on the grounds of the non-appearance of the latter to continue the game at Birstall cricket field on Friday, Birstall were ordered to complete the match this week.

With four of their regular players not available the Birstall Committee declined to play this week and the Cup Committee awarded the match to Ossett.

When play was completed last Thursday, after a full day on the previous Saturday and two hours each on Wednesday and Thursday evenings, Birstall were 221 all out and Ossett had scored 109 for three wickets.

Ossett would not have been at full strength on Friday, and alleged that agreement had been reached with Joe Blakeley, the Birstall captain, that if the game were not complete on Thursday play should be continued on Monday. Blakeley, knowing that his side would be handicapped by absentees this week, denies that any agreement was reached.

Messrs J. H. Margetta and H. Stone (Birstall representatives) were then invited into the room, and the Chairman, addressing them, said:

"This Committee has decided that the match be continued this week, and you have the choice of two nights—Tuesday or Wednesday."

Mr. Margetta: It can't be played this week. My instructions from my committee are that on no account can we play this week.

The Chairman: For what reason?

UNFAIR AND UNJUST.

Mr. Margetta: It is unfair and unjust. The men can't possibly get there. The first reason to me is much more important. You can't possibly expect us to finish the match under these conditions—not if you are fair cricketers. The wicket would not be the same. Have you ever heard of a match being finished under such conditions? The wicket can't be the same after a rest. This is an exceptional case and that is why we are here. Why didn't Ossett turn up on the Friday? That is what you are here to inquire about.

The Chairman: The captains disagreed. Mr. Margetta: You must consider the circumstances and give each side a hearing.

The Chairman: We have done. Mr. Greenough has been here all the time.

After this dispute, the Club left the Heavy Woollen League and spent the 1936 season in the Leeds League before re-joining the Heavy Woollen League for the 1937 season.