

In the second of his features on Cricket and the Community in the Spen Valley, Dr Peter Davies looks at Cleckheaton CC

# A treat for fans of cricket

**C**LECKHEATON CC was formed in 1864. It was originally known as Hunsworth Mills Cricket Club and was set up as a workshop team.

As the club website announces: 'In that year [1864] a strip measuring 40 yards by 10 yards was laid out in the field on which the club still plays to this very day, and a year later in 1865 members subscribed to have a wooden hut erected to provide proper facilities. A further year down the line the pitch was extended to a much more impressive 40 yards by 40 yards. The year 1872 saw the building of a brick pavilion to replace the wooden hut that had by now become too small for the ever-increasing band of new members.'

This pavilion, built by the club's own members at Moorend during their leisure hours, probably stood close to where today's main bar area is situated.

In 1872 also, the club operated with 1st and 2nd teams for the first time, and William Hatton, a wicketkeeper from Liverpool, became the club's first professional player to be engaged for a full season. Only 19 years after formation, in 1883, Cleckheaton became one of the 'original' teams to compete in the highly prestigious Heavy Woollen Cup.

The club changed its name in 1885 - from Hunsworth Mills CC to Cleckheaton CC. This was a popular move, as there was no cricket club bearing the town's name. Cleckheaton Alexandra, who had played near Whitcliffe Mount, had ceased to exist in 1863.

Cleckheaton's ground, close to the mills, underwent some major changes in 1894. Over 30,000 square feet of turf was re-laid. The president of the club officially opened the 'new' ground on 19 May 1894. This was a joyful day and the occasion was marked by an unforgettable cricketing encounter.

A match was arranged against Rastrick - and Yorkshire star J Tunnicliffe joined the Cleckheaton side. In 1896 the cricket club amalgamated with the Crown Green Bowling Club. Then, in 1903, Cleckheaton joined the prestigious Yorkshire Council cricket competition, having previously competed in the Spen Valley League. During the 1930s Cleckheaton

RIGHT: An aerial view of the Cleckheaton ground back in 1981.

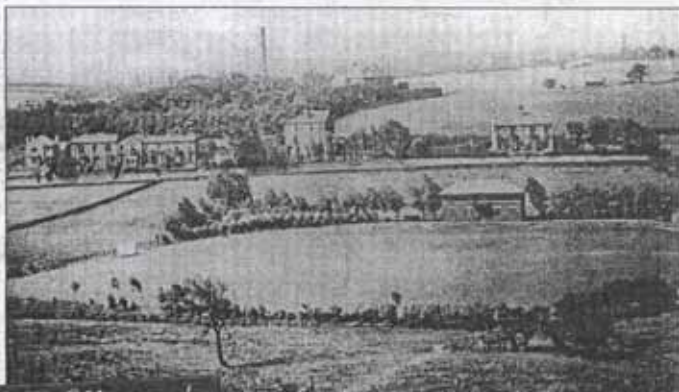


LEFT: Cleckheaton Cricket Club's first XI from 1980. BELOW LEFT: The ground pictured around 1910. INSET: A matchday programme from two years ago.

CC became the proud owners of their ground, and also Frank Morton became one of the main driving forces at Moorend. He was also one of the founding fathers of the Central Yorkshire Cricket League in 1937, and remained its president until 1958.

After a spell in the Heavy Woollen League, Cleckheaton joined the Central Yorkshire League (CYL) as founder members in 1938. They remained there until 1975, playing such teams as Ossett, Batley, Staincliffe, Birstall and Mirfield. After coming close so many times in the past, finally, in 1939, as war approached, Cleckheaton became Heavy Woollen Cup winners. They beat local rivals Scholes by 65 runs in the final at Hartshead Moor.

The period between 1939 and 1959 did not witness very much success at Cleckheaton. In the process. This was their highest score in the competition. Cleckheaton not only won the Heavy Woollen Cup in 1939, but also went on to scoop the trophy the year after, in 1960. They beat Hanging Heaton in both finals. 1964 marked the 100th anniversary of the formation of the club. No doubt this occasion led to lots of nostalgia - and also thoughts about the future. Cleckheaton merged with the local rugby union club to form Cleckheaton Sports Club in 1972.



However, in 1948 Cleckheaton managed to achieve an astonishing victory against Birstall in the second round of the Heavy Woollen Cup, posting a total of 411

anniversary of the formation of the club. No doubt this occasion led to lots of nostalgia - and also thoughts about the future. Cleckheaton merged with the local rugby union club to form Cleckheaton Sports Club in 1972.

## HONOUR

This was an innovative move and following on from this, in 1973, the club was chosen to host the Heavy Woollen Cup final again, an honour that had not come their way since 1943. After hosting two major cup finals, and also doing well on the field, Cleckheaton had the confidence they needed to apply to join the Bradford Cricket League. (This meant they withdrew temporarily from the Heavy Woollen

Cup). The club's first match in the Bradford League came on April 24 1976, with Windhill the opponents. Cleckheaton got off to an excellent start. Opening bowler Seb Grose recorded figures of six for 16 and Windhill were bowled out for just 37!

The decision to recruit overseas players was made in 1977, when the 1st XI was in urgent need of strengthening. Since this date, local cricket-watchers have been treated to some of the best in foreign cricketing talent.

The match at Moorend on July 18 was the defining moment of the 1998 season. Against Ben Rhydding, Cleckheaton posted the highest total recorded in the history of the

Bradford League. Their total of 427 runs beat the record previously held by Bradford and Bingley who scored 406 for eight in 1990.

Today, Cleckheaton CC stands as an ambitious and progressive club, with a high-quality junior set-up and wonderful facilities only a six-hit away from Chain Bar and the M62.

● Dr Davies and Rob Light have co-written three books about the history of local cricket and the series is called *180 Not Out*. They are part of the £50,000 Cricket Heritage Project sponsored by the Heritage Lottery Fund, and copies are available from Dewsbury Books at Crakenedge Lane, Dewsbury. The books are published by Sigma Press. Call 01484 472405 for more information.