

Victory parade for all-conquering Heck

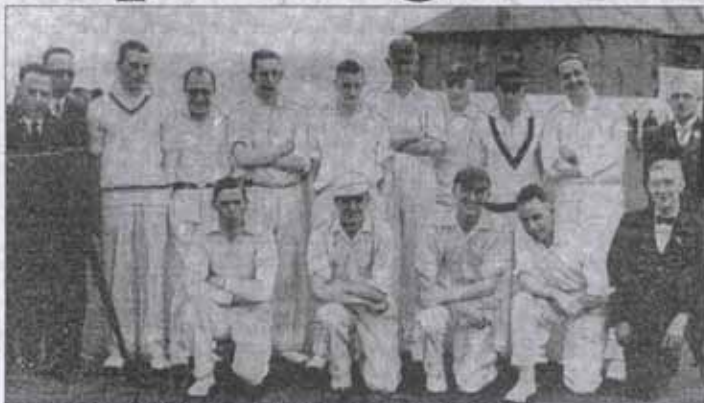
HECKMONDWIKE Cricket Club was officially founded on May 28 1864, and is the oldest club in North Kirklees. However its origins are, in reality, much earlier than this.

In 1838 a businessman from Nottingham, Dean Allen, and a group of prominent local merchants, such as William Wharton and Thomas F Firth, are credited with being founders of the club.

These men arranged matches for their new team against Wakefield, Crosland Moor (Huddersfield), Bradford, Halifax and Harrogate. When September of the club's first season came around, this is how the results panned out: Won 10, Drawn 4, Lost 6.

This was deemed to be an excellent record considering it was the club's first season as a recognised team. Celebrations took place at the Woodman Inn (which was next to the Red Lion), where all the players and honorary members joined in. After this, the first annual meeting was held. The treasurer of the club deduced that, after paying expenses, they had made a £13 profit for the season, and immediately put it in the Heckmondwike bank.

The team originally played close to where the current Market Place is sited, moving shortly after to Royle Fold. It was in 1873 that the club moved into Cemetery Road, and that is where it has played ever since. Heckmondwike were the first ever club to win the Heavy Woollen Cup, way back in 1883. In this period only clubs located within a six-mile radius of Batley town hall could enter the competition! This distance was later extended to nine miles in 1885, 12 miles in 1901, 15 miles in 1925, and finally 18 miles in 2000. The victorious Heckmondwike side were met by a crowd of several thousand locals on their return to Heckmondwike. The



MAKE MINE A DOUBLE: Heckmondwike's double-winning side of 1934. **BELOW:** A letter from 1883 declining an offer of a season at Heckmondwike CC.

team were given a rapturous reception by the crowd, who were led by the Flax Mill Band. The team then paraded the trophy to the Sir Robert Peel Inn, and of course the Cricketers Arms (and why not?). The victory also received significant attention in the local press.

Not only was the cup victory a great achievement; it also came just a year after the club had nearly faced closure. In 1882 Heckmondwike CC's finances were in such dire straits that creditors had already begun to seize valuables. However, a young committee team took on the responsibility of improving the club's fortunes, and they did a marvellous job. In addition to winning the



Heavy Woollen Cup, they ended the season in profit by £3. With a famous cup win and an improved bank balance, the

prestige of the club began to rise. Heckmondwike joined the Yorkshire Council in 1911 - which had them locking horns with cricket clubs from all over the county. This was a very prestigious cricket competition.

After further Heavy Woollen Cup final victories against Ossett in 1907, and East Bierley in 1927, Heckmondwike retained the trophy in 1938. The final that year against Morley saw an amazing display from three young players who piled on the runs: W Knowles - 66, G Mayman - 62 n-o, and G Blackburn - 56. These three batsmen helped to increase the Heckmondwike score from 120 for 7 to 327 for nine wickets. This is all the more remarkable when it is realised that all three were tail-enders! Heckmondwike went on to win the match by 217 runs - and also the Heavy Woollen Cup!



In his latest feature on Cricket and the Community in the Spen Valley, Dr Peter Davies looks at the history of the oldest club in North Kirklees - Heckmondwike CC.

Roaring Thirties

The 1930s were an incredibly triumphant decade for the club. They won the Heavy Woollen League four times, the Heavy Woollen Cup four times, and the Crowther Cup once.

The Heckmondwike 1st XI of 1934 were double victors; they were successful in both the Heavy Woollen League and Cup - where they beat Liversedge in the final by five wickets.

This 1936 side continued the club's winning tradition. In this year, Heckmondwike became Heavy Woollen League champions, in addition to winning the Heavy Woollen Cup. This time it was Cleckheaton who they defeated in the final, by five wickets.

A year later, in 1937, Heckmondwike and their officials played an important part in the formation of the Central Yorkshire Cricket League in 1937.

With the Second World War over, it was time to return to winning ways for Heckmondwike Cricket Club. The first major victory came in the form of the Heavy Woollen Cup. They defeated arch-rivals Batley by 68 runs in the final of 1945.

This was followed by successive victories over Dewsbury and Hanging Heaton in the same competition in 1947 and 1948. 1948 also saw Heckmondwike crowned champions of the Central Yorkshire Cricket League. Between 1946 and 1974 Heckmondwike appeared in five Heavy Woollen Cup finals and won four of them. The last of Heckmondwike's 14 cup wins came in 1981 against Liversedge. Their last appearance in a final came two years later, when they were surprisingly

beaten by Chickenley. Heckmondwike have the remarkable record of winning 14 of their 19 Heavy Woollen Cup finals - a success rate of 74 per cent, which is much superior to that of any of the other multiple winners. Heckmondwike occupy third place in the all-time list of Heavy Woollen Cup contestants.

The Heckmondwike ground at Cemetery Road has hosted the Heavy Woollen Cup final on 22 occasions, more than any other venue except Savile Town. It is, however, almost two decades since the final was last held there.

1964 marked the 100th Anniversary of the formation of the club. No doubt this event led to lots of nostalgia - and thoughts about the future.

A year later, the club staged a 10-mile sponsored walk to help raise money for ground improvements.

Once again, Heckmondwike produced the goods when it mattered. The seasons 1976, 1977 and 1978 were arguably the greatest in the history of the club.

The 1st XI were crowned Central Yorkshire Cricket League champions in all three of these years. They also won the Bradley Trophy for the most points gained in the last six matches of 1977.

1977: not only was this the year of punk and the Queen's Silver Jubilee; it was also the year that the new Heckmondwike clubhouse finally opened its doors. It had been 12 years in the making, but now the wait was finally over. Today, Heckmondwike play in the Huddersfield Central League together with Mirfield CC and other clubs in South and North Kirklees and beyond.

BELOW: The team of 1978 celebrate winning the Central Yorkshire Cricket League three times in a row



□ 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 Crackenedge Lane, Dewsbury. The books are published by Sigma Press. Call Dr Davies on 01484 472405 for more information.