

In the last of his features on Cricket and the Community in the Spenn Valley, Dr Peter Davies traces the history of Heckmondwike and Carlinghow United Cricket Club

Sport and worship went hand in hand

HECKMONDWIKE and Carlinghow United Cricket Club was not founded under this name. In 1890 Upper Independent Chapel was built in Chapel Lane, Heckmondwike, and it was this institution that gave rise to Upper Chapel Cricket Club, which later merged with a Carlinghow cricket club to form Heckmondwike and Carlinghow United Cricket Club.

The construction of the Upper Independent Chapel led to the formation of the original cricket team. The church gave the community a meeting place where they could arrange social and leisure events such as cricket matches. Early members of the team are likely to have been closely associated with the church. Later evidence suggests that this was also the case many years thereafter. The original ground is still used today and is situated on Chapel Lane, Heckmondwike. The first mention of a 'Cricket Club' came in Upper Chapel literature of 1892. Links to the church in the early years were clearly very strong. The Upper Independent Chapel 'manual' for 1897 shows that many people were initially attracted to the cricket



club and through this then became attached also to the church. The church encouraged the young men of the team to join their church and Sunday school. Cricket was not the only sport that the church encouraged. Church manuals dating as far back as the early 1900s carry reports about other sports clubs. The bowling club dates back to around 1920 and a tennis club was set up in 1922. The 1930s witnessed the start of a boom period. In 1937 the club achieved their first major success as winners of the Spenn Valley League. In the last summer of peacetime - 1939 - they scooped the Herald Cup. The beginning of the

Second World War led to many problems for Upper Chapel Cricket Club, as it did for most of local clubs at this time. The war meant that the club found it extremely hard to raise a side. 1946 was a year of joy for many with the ending of the conflict. However as the Upper Chapel manual shows, on returning from the forces, many ex-players were shocked at the state of the pitch and pavilion! This shock led to the re-formation of the club, primarily to work on the ground. A meeting of interested parties led not only to the re-launch of the cricket club but the foundation of the now well known church youth movement: UCYD.

Work was done on the field and pavilion. The club was indebted to many volunteers and also to the church for their financial backing during this time of need. The club welcomed back many old members and also encouraged new members to join. They now had the confidence to maintain the good name of Upper Chapel CC. The club also stressed the importance of non-playing members - they had been crucial in the immediate post-war years. The hard work of the late summer of 1946, put in by the members of the re-formed cricket club, was justly rewarded during the 1947 season. The club's 1946 aim to

keep up the high standards, and follow in the footsteps of its forebears, had clearly been achieved. In 1947 Upper Chapel lost no games at all! They won the Batley and District Sunday school League Cup and the Batley and District Challenge Cup. This was a great achievement considering that the club was still in the process of reform. The season saw them playing on half the original playing area and changing in the Sunday school rooms. In July 1962 Upper Chapel won the Batley and District Sunday school final at Mount Pleasant against Cross Bank Methodists. In 1966 the Batley

Cricket League folded and Upper Chapel joined the Dewsbury and District League in Section C. The league handbook shows that in 1960 they won Section C and thus entered Section B for the 1970 season. By 1974 they had been relegated to Section B but were relegated at the end of the 1978 season. In this period, the side was based around three families: the Sykeses, Walkers and Aspinalls. After changing their name to Heckmondwike URC CC, the club amalgamated with another local side to form Heckmondwike and Carlinghow United CC. Today the club is thriving in the Huddersfield Central League, and there is always a great spirit and enthusiasm at Chapel Lane.



An undated team photo from another successful year.

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



ABOVE: Heckmondwike and Carlinghow's team of 1975. LEFT: 1937 spenn valley league winners. FAR LEFT: Time for tea - a tea lady brings out a cuppa for the thirty players.

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