

AROUND THE WICKET

with historian
Peter Davies

BROAD OAK CRICKET CLUB: the fourth in a fascinating series of cricket histories

'Roadsiders' thrive with volunteer help

BROAD OAK Cricket Club's history dates back to the 1880s.

In the first few years, matches were played at various venues. Barrel's Field, at Well Oil, was initially used, but this was soon superseded by the 'Old School Yard' and a meadow near The Rock.

By 1883, the club had moved to a field owned by Mrs Edmund Walker at Broad Oak Farm, close to Christ Church, which eventually became its permanent home.

The majority of work to clear and level the site had taken place thanks to the free time that the members had due to the 1883 weavers strike. This work also included removing dead trees from the ground.

The gateway into the ground was also constructed with voluntary help. Local stonemasons worked free of charge, which meant that early entrance money (2s 6d per person per game) could be ploughed into club funds.

In 1884 the club engaged its first professional, membership cards were introduced, and the first 'athletic festival' was held at the ground. Initially, the club's nickname was 'The Roadsiders'.

Broad Oak owe a debt of gratitude to a number of people who made a contribution in the 1880s and 1890s, including Joseph Sykes - publican at Th'Alma - who organised a match between married men and bachelors, which helped the club pay its annual rent (he actually donated £5).

Throughout the 1890s the club was involved in various arguments with their neighbour, Mr Varley, occupant of Broad Oak Farm. His cattle would often spend time grazing on the field, thereby ruining the playing area.

When the club painted a farm wall white, in order to create a sight screen, the players returned the following morning to find that Mr Varley had re-painted it black!

Tragedy struck in 1905 with the death of Tom Knight, a member of the Broad Oak team. While playing in a game against Meltham, the 42-year-old former captain, who had only just retired and had agreed to play with Broad Oak's first team, was struck on the head by the ball and dropped dead.

In 1909 Broad Oak's future was placed in jeopardy. But a bid to buy the cricket ground from Mr James Walker, the new occupant of Broad Oak Farm, failed.

A successful campaign was then fought against the attempts of the new landlord, the Vicar of Lanthwaite, to evict the club from the land.

Although forced to disband in 1909, the club immediately re-formed, negotiated a new tenancy agreement, and was re-admitted into the Alliance League.

In 1919 the opportunity to end nearly four decades of uncertainty and disputes with various landlords came about when the trustees of Christ Church offered to sell the ground to the club. It was purchased from them for £383 17s 3d by a board of trustees - on condition that no liquor be sold on Sundays.

Broad Oak began an unbroken 85-year spell in the Huddersfield and District League in 1920.

In 1929, during the preliminary round of the Sykes Cup, Broad Oak smashed league and cup records with a total of 506 against Honley. The team's average was 120 runs per hour. The main contributors were W. Renshaw, who hit 127, and F.C. Whiteley, with 107.

With their off-field problems now behind them, the club enjoyed perhaps its most successful period of on-field success in the early-1930s. After winning the Sykes Cup for the first time in 1930, the trophy was retained the following year and claimed again three years later in 1934.

The club made history when it scooped the Sykes Cup in 1930, beating Bradley Mills in the final. During the match Broad Oak totalled 266; Bradley Mills a mere 50.

Building started on a bar, clubrooms, games and team rooms in 1937, and by 18 December 1937 Mr W. Beaumont had officially opened them. The project was largely financed by two fundraising bazaars in 1937 and 1938, which raised £771 towards the total cost of around £1,200.

The fifties were a fantastic period for Broad Oak due to the team's successes on the pitch. In 1952 the club won the Paddock Shield and in 1953 they claimed the Byrom Shield.

The team's successes did not stop there. In 1955 they were the 2nd XI Section 'A' winners, a feat which was repeated in 1957. Also in 1957 the team won the Sykes Cup, and the decade ended well with the team winning the Paddock Shield once more in 1960.



SMART GUYS: An official Broad Oak CC team photograph from 1953 — the year the club claimed the Byrom Shield.

Off the field, the club was awarded the League's Greenwood Trophy for the best-kept local cricket ground in 1959.

1970 saw the completion of the new dressing rooms, and further improvements took place when money generated by the Ladies Section funded the construction of a new scoreboard. In 1976 an extension to the bar lounge was unveiled.

In 1974 the Broad Oakers won the league championship and then in 1977 the team netted the 2nd XI Section 'A' trophy, a feat they would again achieve in 1978.

Possibly the biggest moment in the whole history of the club came in 1981. Broad Oak went to Lord's to play South Wales side St. Fagans in the 10th National Whitbread Village Cricket Championship.

Readers are asked to contact Peter Davies on 01484 472405 or via pj.davies@hud.ac.uk if they have any more photos or information relating to local cricket history.



MEN OF OAK: A team line-up from July 1960



TOP FACILITIES: Broad Oak's new clubhouse was officially opened by W. Beaumont Esq. on December 18 1937.