

The Friarmere Affair

Golcar Cricket Club was shocked to its foundations when two of its outstanding players left the club without warning and signed to play for Friarmere shortly after the end of World War I.

The players involved were John Allen Meal, who was Percy Holmes's opening partner at Golcar from 1907 to 1910, and Arthur Milnes, who came to Golcar from Leymoor.

It was not so unusual for cricketers to move clubs, but why Friarmere? The place was particularly difficult to get to and when Golcar travelled there they usually hired a 14 seat char-a-banc.

Colne Valley cricketing circles were awash with well-founded rumours that a Mr Byrom, who owned a mill at Friarmere, offered well-paid employment to cricketers who would play for the Friarmere team. Meal, a secretary, and Milnes, a joiner, had skills which Mr Byrom could use both in the mill and on the cricket field.

Such enticements were far from unknown across the north of England, and not just in the world of cricket. As early as the 1880s there is evidence that employment was used to attract good quality footballers, rugby players and musicians in the highly competitive world of brass bands.

Golcar Follows Suit

In the 1930s Golcar Cricket Club followed this trend. Simeon Sykes was a keen, active and generous supporter of the club who, amongst other things, bought tables and chairs for the new clubhouse when it was opened in 1933. He also offered employment to any promising cricketer who moved into the village.

Furthermore, a rumour still abounds about a second 'benefactor'. It is said that the owner of Thorpe's Mill on the hillside between Golcar and Bolster Moor used employment to attract players to the club in the 1930s. There is circumstantial evidence to support this - the captain of the first eleven from 1933-35, a period in which Golcar's first and second elevens both won their leagues twice, was a Mr George Thorpe.