

Notes on History of Holmbridge CC

by Andrew Pearson

EARLY GAMES

The earliest outline scorecard found was in the Huddersfield Examiner dated Weds. 7th June 1871 and refers to a game played the previous Saturday (June 3rd) at home to Little Hayfield. The team is called Holme Bridge Britannia and outline batting scores were as follows: BA Haigh 16; AP Mellor 23; GH Marsden 2; W Booth 3; R Biltcliffe 12; J Booth 18; L Kaye 8 JA Brook 0; M Bailey 4; C Booth 11; F Dawson 0* Extras 21 (Total 118 all out).

Little Hayfield were dismissed for just 12 but no bowling figures were available. The brief report stated, 'This match was played on Saturday last, on the ground of [Holme Bridge Britannia], and resulted in an easy victory for them.'

Just three of this team, BA Haigh, J Booth and F Dawson appeared in a fixture the following season on 25th May 1872 away to Lockwood Mechanics Institute. The hosts batted first and totalled 107 for 8 before the following Holmbridge, referred to thus in the Huddersfield Examiner, replied with just 11 all out. Details: G Roebuck 0; H Wimpenny 1; BA Haigh 3; FW Midgley 3; J Booth 0; D Crosland 0; H Charlesworth 0; R Crosland 0; J Lockwood 0; S Ellis 0; F Dawson 1* Extras 3 (Total 11).

Married v. Single (June 1887)

A game was played between married and single employees of J Watkinson and Sons (Washpit & Holmfirth Mills) on the Holmbridge ground. There was a wager on the game with the losing team paying for supper at the Commercial Inn whose licensee was Mr Willis. The Married XI (129) triumphed over the Single XI (76), 'much to the bachelors' chagrin'. According to the report, 'The evening was afterwards spent in a manner worthy of the occasion, all being quite in a merry frame of mind'. A relatively rare dismissal occurred when one of the Married team was given out 'handled the ball'.

Game v. Scholes (1888)

Reports in the Holmfirth Express of the club's Presentation Dinner in 1954, the first of the two occasions so far that the Allsop Cup has been won, referred to remarks about an incredible game in 1888 when Holmbridge were dismissed for 35 but then bowled out Scholes for just 13. This prompted a letter from someone signing himself as The Lad from Scholes.

Extracts from the letter reveal the rapidly changing moods brought about by the game. The writer 'well remembered seeing that match as I was then a lad from Scholes, just at the beginning of my teen age (sic).' The general feeling was that Holmbridge had already lost with such a low score and there was great excitement and Fred Lockwood, uncle of Kenyon Lockwood the Scholes captain, 'took some of the Scholes spectators to the Commercial Inn in anticipation of Scholes winning easily.' He goes on, 'By the time some of these spectators got back to the field the match was over.'

There were allegations of underhand tactics. Five years before writing the letter, the 'Lad from Scholes' had met the man who had been the Holmbridge wicket-keeper on

that famous day. He said that he had stood up to Tom Redgwick who was the fastest bowler they had experienced. His hands tingled as he took the ball. Early in the innings, he slightly overbalanced on taking the ball and touched the wicket with the toe of his boot. On appeal, the batsman was given out and so he tried it again and again at both ends 'until he had taken more wickets than any of the bowlers although the bowlers were credited with them.' Things apparently happened so quickly that no-one was able to work out what was going on.

The writer, on hearing the story, 'remonstrated with the stumper' but his reply to him was a broad grin and the words, "Well, it truly happened, so that's that."

Past Players v Present

As early as 9th July 1887 there was a game between past and present players of the club. In a low scoring contest the 63 all out of the Past Players was enough to beat the 44 all out of the Present XI. Supper was provided by Mr Willis, the licensee of the Commercial Inn and a member of the victorious team could not resist pointing out that 'nowt beats t' young uns nobbut th'oud uns'.

Second Team Glory Days in the early 1920s

In 1921, 1922 and 1924 the second team were league and cup winners. The knockout final (referred to in the Holmfirth Express as the Plate) in 1921 saw victory over Nortonthorpe in a game played at Skelmanthorpe. Holmbridge totalled 126 with 47* for F Hinchliffe who then became a hero with the ball as his 6 for 58 helped to dismiss the opposition for 107. Due celebrations must have followed. The local paper reports that 'The Holmbridge team had a merry homecoming. When they passed through Holmfirth anybody could tell they had won, without asking a question.'

The 1924 final saw Cumberworth (105) defeated by five wickets with W Heywood scoring 46. F Hinchliffe was again prominent with figures of 4 for 34. The match report concluded 'As a parting shot F Hinchliffe scored 18 off one over.' The cricket correspondent of the Holmfirth Express expressed his pleasure at the success of Holmbridge 2nd team as, otherwise, little success had come the way of the Holme Valley that year.

Tinker Cup Winners in 1987

This was the first win in this competition since 1958 and followed victory over the favourites Thurstonland in the semi-final. In the final, Almondbury Wesleyans were the opponents and the headline in the Huddersfield Examiner emphasised: All rounder Parr is final matchwinner. He scored 42* and along with 'big hitting David Hinchliffe and junior Dave Milner' the last ten overs saw the addition of 82 runs to give a total of 195/7. Almondbury Wes were bowled out for 103 with Ian Parr taking 4 for 9. Earlier 'juniors Peter Smith and Dave Milner 'kept the Wes in check'.

Allsop Cup triumph 1994

A then record crowd for an Allsop Cup Final at Thurstonland saw Holmbridge enjoy a surprise 39 run victory over Premier League side Denby'. Richard Brooke was Man of the Match with figures of 7 for 64 from 18 overs. Ritchie Howarth took the other three at a cost of 34 runs to bowl Denby out for 105 in their reply to Holmbridge's total of 144/9. Amongst the runs were Ian Parr (42) and Simon Holmes (28).

NAMES OF CLUB

Holme Bridge Britannia is the designation in the first scorecard found (1871) but a report the following year has just Holmbridge. Three players appeared in both games so it seems that this is the precursor of the present club.

The following year (1872), the local press has both Holmebridge and Holmbridge when referring to the team.

GROUNDS

A potted history inserted into a minute book says that there was a club with a ground in Holme in 1868 but visiting teams felt it was 'too far out' so fixtures were presumably a problem.

A 'nucleus' moved to Holmbridge in the late 1870s to a field opposite the pub (the Commercial Inn, now the Bridge Tavern) and behind the church (St Davids). This is adjacent to the pitch used by Holmbridge AFC. It is still recognisable as being of cricket field shape although its size is a little reduced from what it would have been when in use.

The present field has been the club's home since 1886. It was levelled by members and rented from a local millowner (WH & J Barber) until purchased from them on the mill's closure in 1975. A retaining wall was built by the riverside and a spokesperson said that '50 runs was regarded as a good score' in the earliest seasons.

The decision to buy the field was taken at an Extraordinary General Meeting held on 19th October 1975. A sub - committee was formed to co-ordinate fund-raising efforts and the encouraging sum of £65 was collected on the night. It was decided to apply for grant aid to Kirklees MC, which was duly forthcoming, and four club members, T Swift, J Taylor, J Booth and R Gapper, were appointed as trustees.

The following year's AGM (1976) reported that there had been good money raising efforts and particular thanks were given to members of the committee, wives, Kirklees MC with one individual, Mr D Mellor, singled out for special mention.

CELEBRATIONS

November 1956

Sir Len Hutton (Yorkshire and England) was the chief guest at the club's Presentation Dinner in 1956. The proceedings began at 6.30 and continued until 11.30 to allow for the meal itself, toasts, the presentation of prizes and singing entertainment by the Moorland Singers. The last session of singing was from 10.30 to 11.30.

The club was celebrating being champions, the season after winning promotion from the second section. According to the report in the Huddersfield Examiner, former secretary A Armitage wished there were more batsmen like Len Hutton coming along. Sir Len himself said, 'it is a delight to come to a place where everything in the garden is lovely'. He congratulated the team, 'not forgetting the committee and the ladies committee'. He went on, 'At the moment, you at Holmbridge have got a team that is good enough and my advice is not to let it go to your head.' He also mentioned that he hoped to come again and, perhaps, have the pleasure of anking a fifty on the ground.

Afterwards Mrs Butterworth, the wife of the club president, presented Sir Leonard with a suit length.

1978 Sportsmans Evening with Geoff Boycott

Tickets were priced at £12 for this function at Burnlee WMC and 350 were sold. Geoff Boycott had recently been sacked as Yorkshire captain and the headline in the Huddersfield Examiner was Boycott talks - but not about THAT. He arrived late and apologised for the hold up created by a television commitment in London and said that his remarks would be curtailed because of the presence of the national press. He felt that anything concerning Yorkshire was up to the members. The report said that he looked completely relaxed during his ninety minute discussion.

The event raised £156 towards funding extensions to the pavilion. Geoff Earnshaw and other helpers were thanked for their wonderful efforts.

HONOURS AT LEAGUE LEVEL

Team (1st eleven)

Huddersfield Association

Champions: 1909

Lumb Cup Winners: 1909

Huddersfield Central League

Champions: 1929; 1931; 1953; 1956.

Allsop Cup Winners: 1954; 1956.

Second section winners: 1955; 1961; 1995.

Team (2nd eleven)

Huddersfield Central League

2nd team championship: 1921; 1922; 1924; 1930.

Knockout competition winners: 1921; 1922; 1924.

Tinker Cup winners: 1957; 1958; 1987.

Section winners: 1972; 1991; 1994.

INDIVIDUAL PRIZES AT LEAGUE LEVEL

1st Eleven

Batting

1955 H Schofield
1973 J Tinker

Bowling

1978 R Mee
1984 R Parkin

Wicketkeeping

1966 J Booth
1971 J Booth
1980 P Berry (Sect A)

1981 P Berry (Sect B)
1984 P Berry (Sect A)
1992 A Bissett (Sect A)
1992 M Hollingdale (D)

Geoff Booth Trophy
1971 T Swift

Six Hit Trophy
1991 D Hinchliffe

Scorers' Prize
1997 P Hirst

Fred Stallard Trophy (For services to a club and to cricket)
1998 H Earnshaw

2nd Eleven

Batting

1960 K Jackson

1985 D Hinchliffe (Sect E)

Bowling

1963 S Wade

1987 D Hinchliffe (Sect D)

Catching

1951 E Keeling

1972 D Gapper

1986 N Beaumont (D)

Wicketkeeping

1981 B Sykes (Sect D)

1987 M Hollingdale (Sect D)

CHAMPIONS 1956

The trophy was presented by the League President (L Broadbent) at the tea interval of the last game of the season which was at Holmbridge. He said that he was 'very pleased that Holmbridge had won the trophy 'and continued, '[I am] delighted to come to Holmbridge where there is always a very friendly atmosphere.' The report in the Huddersfield Examiner concluded by stating: 'After the match the players adjourned to the local hostelry, where the team's success was duly celebrated in proper style.'

CRISES AND CONTROVERSIES

1966 - An Extraordinary General Meeting was held 'concerning whether the club still carries on in season 1967'. No formal record of what was said at the meeting is recorded in the minute book but it was decided to carry on and, indeed, soon afterwards it was decided to approach S Cartwright with a view to his being engaged as a professional.

1967 - A serious lack of funds meant that it was not possible to purchase a motor mower which was available at a reasonable price.

1969 - The financial situation was still difficult and Cawthorne CC asked informally about the purchase of a roller if the club was to fold up.

1972 - At the AGM the urgency of cutting the outfield was stressed or else the club might have to drop out of the Central League.

1979 - The club expressed its concerns to Kirklees MC and the Parish Council about house building plans between Digley and Field End Roads, noting that other clubs had had difficulties with householders. The remarks were noted by the official bodies but they did not appear to be concerned.

1982 to 1985 - There was a proposal to create a bus turning circle and this would mean that a section of what was already the smallest ground in the league would lose part of the outfield. Club objections were well supported by, amongst others,

Kirklees Sports Council, the Huddersfield Central League, the Yorkshire Cricket Association and near neighbours Cartworth Moor CC. Initial opposition succeeded in putting the plan on hold but the issue resurfaced in 1983 when a public meeting was held. Yet again, no firm decision was taken and the issue of the turning circle was still not settled in 1984 although it was said that the likelihood of part of the field being used was remote. A questionnaire was circulated in the local community in 1985 which suggested that local opinion was in favour of the proposal but it was felt that this view reflected, for the most part, the feelings of those who lived lower down the valley. To the club's relief, the matter was shelved and a modified pull in bay was constructed which had no effect on the playing area.

Official presentation of club caps

These were officially handed over by Mrs Barber (in the centre of the photograph), wife of the owner of Barber's Mill. The club rented the ground from the firm until purchasing it for £750 in 1975 when the mill closed down.

Workshop competitions

These were held on a regular basis and in Tales of the Mills (Holmfirth Friend to Friend supported by the Heritage Lottery Initiative, 2004) there is reference to 'internal as well as external rivalry in the mills, particularly at cricket. On Easter Monday afternoon 1905 the day men and the night men at Digley Mill had an enjoyable cricket match at Holmbridge. The day men won but it is said that the night men excelled at the supper at the Commercial Inn. '

Workshop competitions were also a regular feature of local life with many games played at Holmbridge CC. At some time there was a ladies cricket league and pictured here is the victorious team from Lower Mill. The informant in Tales of the Mills says that each team member received a silver teapot and everyone was treated to a day trip to Blackpool.

Within the mills there were competitions between teams of men and women although the men had to bowl underarm.

12th August 1933

Mythombridge and Honley Wesleyans contested the final of a Workshop Competition promoted by Holmbridge CC. Mythombridge were the winners. As well as the team trophy, each member of the team received an overmantel. The runners up each got cases of spoons. (Tales of the Mills).

CLUB IMPROVEMENT SCHEME (CIS)

This was set up in 1952 and continued until 1967. Its aim was to increase the amount of money coming into the club by involving more people. The incentive of a prize draw was offered and, for example, in 1964 there was a first prize of £5 and five of £1. The treasurer pointed out the vital part played by the CIS in keeping the club running. A separate table shows the percentage of club income from this source and from subscriptions, related to total turnover, in the period 1952-1964 when the CIS figures are itemised separately in the annual balance sheet.

By its last year, 1967, the prize offered was 50% of total takings but a diminishing number of sellers was the main cause of the demise of a scheme which had been a lifeline for fifteen years.

Other interesting sources of income

The 1950s, and just before and after that decade, resonate with balance sheet references to the sale of scrap. Some examples include the sale of scrap iron (1949 & 1963), scrap lead (1953), and the more generalised scrap material (1954). Bricks were a source of revenue in 1950 with iron posts (1950, 1951 & 1952) also sold. It was the turn of old wood in 1958 and an all-encompassing and terse detailing of scrap in 1959.

The sale of jam brought in £1/1/0 (£1.05) in 1937 whilst 1952, 1953 and 1956-58 saw income from grazing.

Competitions to raise money organised in 1947 and 1948 had the incentive in the first of those years of egg (presumably the Easter variety rather than a single hen's version!) whilst the following year eggs were a prize in one effort with rice, jam and cigarettes also appearing.

Vicars at St Davids

Although there may have been other unrecorded contributions, there are seven specific references to subscriptions to club funds from the incumbent vicar at St Davids. In chronological order they are: 1924 Rev JF Beamish £1/1/0 (£1.05); 1931 Rev JP Makeham 2/6 (12.5p); 1933 Rev JP Makeham 3/- (15p); 1947, 1948 & 1949 Rev BH Bishop 10/6 (52.5p) each year; 1963 Rev SJ Streek £2/2/0 (£2.10).

CLUB STALWARTS AND BENEFACTORS

The club had a long connection with local mills and, as is referred to elsewhere, the ground was rented from Barber's Mill until the business closed in 1975 and the ground purchased. Harold Barber was president of the club throughout the period between the two world wars (1919 -1939).

A Vice-President from 1930, Edward Butterworth of Yew Tree Mills became President after the Second World War and continued in that office until 1962. He then became a Vice-President again in 1963.

The local pub, originally called The Commercial and renamed The Bridge Tavern about 1970, has always had a close link with the club. Celebratory events on the premises are referred to as far back as the 1880s. In more recent times, Bob Gapper served as licensee for 36 years until his retirement in 1992. The club presented him with an inscribed tankard to mark the occasion. He was club president from 1986 for over a decade and before that date there are many references to the support he gave, financially and in kind. Mrs K Gapper acted as President from 1977 - 1984 and she is on the photograph taken when Geoff Boycott was the guest speaker at the Sportsmans Evening in 1978.

Long serving elected officials have been a regular feature in the history of Holmbridge CC. Treasurers over lengthy periods have been: Arthur Roberts from just after World War 1 until 1929, Ernest Heap from 1930 to 1936 and Harold Turner who took office in 1937 and only relinquished the post in 1957. From 1973 to 1992, J Taylor was in charge of finances.

The club acknowledged the service of Ronnie Moorhouse by presenting a trophy in his name, awarded to the Man of the Match in the Allsop Cup Final, to the HCCL in 1975. He was secretary in 1935-1936 and again from 1946 to 1962. He was then treasurer from 1967 to 1971. John Booth was elected to that position in 1978 and stayed in office for twenty years.

Long service records as chairman were achieved by H Marsden (also President in 1963 & 1964, the year of his death) after the Second World War until 1962 and Haydn Haigh who was elected in 1988 and served for over ten years.