

HOLMBRIDGE CC

# WOODHEAD ROAD TODAY



***We've got a superb track, and all credit must go to groundsman John Moorhouse.***

[Club secretary, John Booth]

Situated two miles south-west of Holmfirth, Holmbridge is a sleepy Pennine village, with a strong community spirit, and it is no surprise that one of the most popular picture postcards of the place features summery views of the cricket ground and church. Pop into one of the local pubs and you'll spot the same picturesque scene painted onto a popular ornamental plate.



So charming is the Woodhead Road ground that the producers of the TV series, *Last of the Summer Wine*, once asked permission to film at the venue.



John Booth, Club secretary for 20 years and now league representative, takes up the story: ***'At one point in the late-1970s we received a call from the BBC. They asked us whether they could do some filming at the ground and we were happy to oblige. We put out 13 cricketers and two umpires - and the umpires, batsman and bowler had to wear make-up for the occasion. All in all it took about four hours to film, for about 30 seconds of TV action!'***



Other aspects of the venue add to the effect: the cute white pavilion, the small flower gardens, the turreted white wall at the top end of the ground, and the various poignant plaques and dedications: ROBERT GRIFFITH 'BOB' GAPPER - 3RD DECEMBER 1925-4TH APRIL 1999; IN MEMORY OF NORMAN ELON BARBER 1926-1990 - HOLMBRIDGE C.C.; HOLMBRIDGE C.C. REMEMBERS NEIL RICHARD BEAUMONT, AGED 24 YEARS, CRICKETER AND FRIEND.



Players may complain about the occasional undulation, but one local writer is in no doubt that, ***'the two flattest fields in the Holmbridge area are home to Holmbridge Cricket Club and Holmbridge Football Club.'***



On the local circuit, Holmbridge is renowned for its short boundaries. Booth explains: ***'The ground is approximately 100 yards long and 50 yards wide. This means that at both ends the leg-side boundary is pretty close. Needless to say, a lot of balls get lost in the nearby River Holme and the fields surrounding the ground. It's a horrendous problem.'***



Booth says: ***'I can remember a time when you scored three rather than four by hitting the boundary on the full. Today, in a 45-over match, a par total is about 250. But just because there are short boundaries doesn't necessarily mean that scores are always high. Batsmen can start to cut and pull before they're really in, and this can give the bowler a chance.'***



Not surprisingly, the history of the village and the Cricket Club is linked to water. Holmbridge translates as 'bridge over the Holme', and the river runs straight through the centre of the village and parallel to Woodhead Road for long stretches. The pub next to the Club is called The Bridge and midges are a big problem on the river side of the ground in mid-summer.



Once, the Club considered filling in part of the nearby river and extending the playing surface, but the cost was prohibitive (£200 per square yard). On another occasion, the Water Board dug up part of the outfield at the road end to do some filtering work.



Woodhead Road is also famous for the grass bank that runs alongside the boundary to the left as you look out from the pavilion. A good two-thirds of this banking was cut away and demolished in 1954 - to leave it as it is now. In the mid-1990s, the wall on the same side was rebuilt. In between, in 1980, the pavilion building was extended.

