

HOLMFIRTH CC

DOWN YOUR WAY

FLOODS, movies and stockings...

THE TOWN

It seems that Holmfirth has always been associated with the BBC's long-running series *Last of the Summer Wine*. For the last thirty years Holmfirth and the surrounding areas (many of the hamlets around Holmfirth have also had Compo & Co filming on their doorstep) have been affectionately known as 'Summer Wine Land'. This title would certainly have surprised the area's first inhabitants, who began settling in Holmfirth over a thousand years ago.

In Saxon and Medieval times Holmfirth was a hunting forest used by the medieval lords of Wakefield. Indeed, the name Holmfirth means 'sparse woodland belonging to Holme'.

By 1200 there were certainly some settlers in the area – records show there was a corn mill together with a few houses which had been built around the mill. The town, or village as it was then, had begun to grow.



At that time and until the advent of the Industrial Revolution residents built their homes higher up the valley rather than in the valley bottom. This was certainly the case in the 1700s when, although increasing, the population remained overwhelmingly rural – living and working on the farms and cottage industries higher up the slopes.

It was only during the late eighteenth century that this changed. In 1784 John Fallas, a woollen clothier, acquired some properties in the valley bottom and the mills (which had to be built near rivers thus requiring workers and their dwellings to be nearer the river) came to Holmfirth. The Industrial Revolution had arrived and it would transform the small village into a thriving mill town. Ironically, the one thing that brought the mills to Holmfirth – the abundant supply of water – would also cause tragedy: the 1852 Flood. It is certain that the area had been prone to floods in the past but prior to the Industrial Revolution the valley bottom

would have been virtually empty, so the effects of these floods would have been less severe.

Indeed, in 1738 and 1777 floods occurred but did not have the consequences of the 1852 Flood in which 81 lives were lost, whole families were wiped out, property amounting to £250,000 was destroyed and thousands of people were left homeless and jobless.



From the late eighteenth century until the twentieth century many of the people living in Holmfirth and the district found their livelihood in the textile industry.

And even as late as 1941 Holmfirth was described as a ‘town busy with wool’. The town still has strong links with the textile industry, but it is fair to say that Holmfirth’s prosperity today, arises to a great degree out of the success of *The Last of the Summer Wine*.

Of course, this is not the first time that film crews and cameras have been seen on the streets of Holmfirth. Early in the twentieth century Holmfirth’s streets were settings for many of Bamforth’s moving pictures.

James Bamforth, a talented artist, started painting the backgrounds of life models for lantern slides. The ‘king of the

lantern slides’, as he became known, then began producing films and indeed his company was the first in Britain to make films for entertainment.



The streets of Holmfirth were often brought to a standstill when the films were being made and locals were often seen in the streets plastered with custard pies, being drenched by fire hoses or buckets of whitewash!

Holmfirth is no longer a ‘town busy with wool’ but is a town bustling with tourists willing to spend their money at Sid’s Cafe, looking for Nora Batty’s house and even traces of her wrinkled stockings!

Films and fires

HOLMFIRTH (THE TOWN): FOUR KEY FACTS

1. A local resident, Mrs Brook, acted in one of Bamforth’s comedies. She had to appear at the window of a cottage that was on fire. As films were silent at this time a caption was to appear on the screen saying ‘Help! Help! The house in on fire!’ Unfortunately for Mrs Brook, the set, which was made of canvas,

did catch fire and she was stuck in the frame of the window shouting ‘Get me out, get me out. It’s burning me arse!’



1852 Flood

2. John Whitely – one of three runners who set off from Bilberry Reservoir on 5 February 1852 to warn people of impending disaster – was criticised at the flood inquest by the foreman of the jury, Mr Mellor, who said Whitely’s warning had been ‘too late’ (despite the fact he had managed to warn three communities and probably saved many lives while risking his own; and that 300,000 tonnes of water was chasing him)!

3. George Leather, the man who designed Bilberry Reservoir, was asked by the Coroner at the Inquest to give an opinion on what expense would have prevented the flood. Leather said he believed ‘twelve pounds ten shillings’ would have done the job. Bamforth & Co produced more than 100 films between 1913 and 1915. And but for the war – during which production was halted in Holmfirth – could have become Holmywood. Frank Bamforth certainly believed this; when production ceased in 1915 he claimed that Bamforth & Co ‘were streets ahead of American production methods and techniques’. After the war production did not recommence and the film-making crown passed to America.



1944 Flood

4. The 1777 flood, which was caused by a thunderstorm, swept through Holmfirth town centre. The force of the water carried three men away in front of hundreds of people. Their bodies were later found at Horbury, near Wakefield. This flood was known as the Great Flood until 1852.

Towzer and Jenny...

HOLMFIRTH – KEY DATES BEFORE THE CRICKET CLUB WAS FOUNDED

1000-1200 First recorded settlers, although it is likely that the area had been inhabited prior to this.

Late-1300s There were 175 taxable inhabitants in Holmfirth (a married couple counted as one).

1476 First stone church built. It is probable that there had been a wooden one on the same site prior to this.

1500 A chapel-of-ease is built in Holmfirth. Worshippers no longer had to travel the four or five miles to Almondbury Parish Church.

1597 Th'owd Towzer is believed to have been built in this year. Th'owd Towzer is a building near Holy Trinity Church. It was originally the church lockup. It has had various roles over the years: a mortuary, an ambulance station, a jail and a fire station.

1642 English Civil War begins. Town sends 100 musketeers to Cromwell's armies (the Roundheads).

1650 Holmfirth people petition for the chapelry of Holmfirth to be a separate parish.

1651 Holmfirth becomes a separate parish.

1660 Post-Restoration, Holmfirth loses its status as a separate parish and reverts to a chapel-of-ease. Perhaps a punishment for its role in the Civil War!

1738 Sunday 7th May – first recorded Holmfirth flood. Fortunately, there was no loss of life.

1776 first Spinning Jenny is introduced in the area.

1777 Wednesday 23rd July – a thunderstorm causes the River Holme to burst its banks. Three lives were lost as a result of this flood.

1788 The present day Holy Trinity Church is built.

1801 Th'owd Genn is erected to mark the end of the war with France.

1812 Luddite activity begins in Holmfirth and the surrounding villages.

1821 21st September - heavy rainstorms cause yet another flood. Again there was no loss of life.

1838 The Town Hall is built by public subscription.

180 NOT OUT!

KEY DATES IN THE EARLY HISTORY OF CRICKET IN KIRKLEES

1825: Lascelles Hall Cricket Club founded.

1842: Dalton play Sheffield for £30.

1867: *Huddersfield Examiner* publishes scores or reports on 209 matches featuring 107 different teams.



**1868: Fartown ground leased by Huddersfield St. Johns C.C..
Savile Ground, Dewsbury, hosts game between All England
XI and United All England XI.**

1873: Batley legend Louis Hall makes Yorkshire bow.

1883: Lumb Cup and Heavy Woollen Cup born.

1886: Huddersfield Cricket Association is formed.

**1887-9: Dewsbury Savile C.C. win hat-trick of Heavy
Woollen Cup titles.**

1892: 10 Clubs take part in inaugural Huddersfield & District
Cricket League competition.

MILLERS, Workers and Tea-totallers!


SOME OTHER HOLMFIRTH CRICKET CLUBS

**Digley Mills CC – Won Holmfirth Workshop Competition in
1919.**



Holmfirth Working Men's Club CC – Won local cup competition in 1867.

The Holmfirth 1867 Cup Team.



<p>1—Firth Beardsell. 2—William Biltcliffe. 3—James S. Thewlis. 4—Herbert Booth.</p>	<p>5—George Henry Mellor. 6—Joseph Beaumont. 7—Henry Hardy. 8—Alfred Cuttell.</p>	<p>9—Wilson Hinchliffe (capt). 10—Noah Beaver. 11—James Roberts.</p>
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Through the kindness of Mr. Alfred Cuttell, we are enabled to give a reproduction of the above photograph (taken by Mr. James Bamforth) of the winners of the first cup won by Holmfirth in 1867. The photograph was taken in front of Eldon House, then the headquarters of the Working Men's Club. It is interesting to note that only three of the above eleven now survive: Messrs. Alfred Cuttell, Noah Beaver, and Wilson Hinchliffe. A third player in the cup ties was Mr. Joshua Barrowclough, of Cross Roads, who was, however, unable to take part in the final, and his place was then taken by Mr. Joseph Beaumont, of Hollowgate.

The cup shown on the table in front of the team was subscribed for by publicans in the Silkstone district, and the competing clubs paid an entrance fee of 5s. each. Holmfirth played three matches, the toughest round being their first match on Silkstone Faast Monday, when Holmfirth beat the strong Barnsley eleven. It was in that match that Mr. Cuttell, a champion wicket keeper, was badly hit by a fast ball which left the seam mark on the Holmfirth stumper's forehead. Holmfirth won all their three matches and won the cup out and out. We believe the second and third matches were against Strafford Main and Stainborough. The winners came to Brockholes by train and were met at Thongs Bridge by the Holmfirth Temperance Brass Band. The team was escorted to the White Hart, where the victory was celebrated and the cup was replenished time after time. The heroes of the day were Messrs. Henry Hardy, Geo. H. Mellor, and F. Beardsell. Mr. W. Hinchliffe did not wait long enough to take possession of the cup but went to his home at Hill. He left word with Mr. Barrowclough (who lived at Holt) to take up the cup in the evening and deliver it into his possession. Two other players had designs on the cup and were forcibly taking it from Mr. Barrowclough when the latter declared he would throw it into the river before give up possession. Pressure was still applied, and Mr. Barrowclough aimed the cup to the river, but it struck the Owd Gen. The cup cost 14/- to repair, and was afterwards given to the Holmfirth Working Men's Club, then at Eldon House, and when the Club was removed to the Town Hall later on the Cup was sold by auction with the effects of the Working Men's Club. It was ultimately purchased by Mr. Jas. Roberts and the last heard of it was that it was in Mr. Joseph Beaumont's possession.

We hope in a later issue to publish further reminiscences of the old days of the Holmfirth Cricket Club.

Holmfirth Temperance Recreation CC - Precursor of Holmfirth CC.