

The History and Profile of Honley CC

Honley CC are a Holme Valley club and in many ways they are like your typical local league cricket club in Yorkshire. The cricket club in Honley started out as St. Mary's Cricket Club, like many clubs in their early years they had a close relationship with the local Parish Church.

In 1879 the club reverted to being called Honley Cricket Club when the club ended its relationship with the Parish Church. It was explained in a club AGM at this time that the change would "give the club a better chance of competing with its neighbours." Honley CC was beginning to grow and significant changes were about to be made that would make the club what it is today. 1879 was also the year that the club moved the Far End Lane Ground, where they have played ever since. The lease arrangement for this ground was signed two years later. The Far End Lane Ground was extended for the first time in 1883 when the ground was extended 10 yards each side in length and 5 yards each side in width. Club Secretary Tim Hirst explains that the Far End Lane Ground is now known for one particular amenity, "The Church end is often referred to by visiting teams as the Toilet End," this is because of the public toilets next to the boundary on one side of the ground. Tim Hirst also added "not many clubs have toilets next to the boundary." Some of the facilities at the ground haven't changed much!

Honley Cricket Club employed its first professional in 1884. G.W Littlewood was to be the first of many famous professionals to wear the jersey of Honley CC and the following year Herbert Lodge was the professional as

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well as the groundkeeper. G.W Littlewood earned around 35/- per week. This hardly compares to the figure that the club now pays its professionals. Rajesh Pawar, the club's overseas professional during 2005 earned slightly more than this. Honley Cricket Club now hold annual raffles to finance the wages of their professionals.

Honley Cricket Club played a big part in the formation of the Huddersfield and District Cricket Association as the founder members in 1886. This helped to organise the Huddersfield and District Cricket Association Alliance League in 1893. It was only a year after this that Honley Cricket Club decided to join the Huddersfield and District League, little did they know how long it would be before their name would be on the trophy. 1894 was also the year that the famous pavilion was built. The pavilion proudly displays the photos of the victorious Honley cricket teams up until the present day.

Perhaps the first and still most famous player to pull on the shirt for Honley CC was Alfonzo Drake who debuted for the club in 1907. Drake went on to play for Yorkshire County Cricket Club and his place in the history of Honley CC is still very prominent today. Veteran player Peter Dibb says that even today "Honley is known as the club that produced Alfonzo Drake." Drake is still regarded as one of the famous players in the club's history even though nearly 100 years have gone by since his debut. Alfonzo Drake went on to play 157 matches for Yorkshire taking nearly 500 wickets. Drake would be the first in a long line of Yorkshire players to turn out for Honley CC. Since Alfonzo

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Drake made his debut for the club the likes of Fred Jakeman, Craig White and more recently Matthew Wood have played for the club. Second XI captain Peter Dibb rates Jakeman as “the best player I ever played with.”

The history of Honley CC was curtailed in 1916 during the war when at a club AGM the decision was taken to abandon all cricket. The First World War resulted in great financial loss for Honley CC and this loss only really started to be regained in 1921 when the club installed a bar in the pavilion, and you thought cricketers always drank!

Honley's performance on the field improved in 1923 when the second XI won the Paddock Shield for the first time. The first eleven would have to wait until 1938 before their form started to improve. They reached the Sykes Cup Final for the first time only to lose to Elland by 75 runs. Elland are the club famous for producing Yorkshire cricketer Richard Blakey, who hails from Huddersfield. Five years later in 1943 they won section B of the Huddersfield and District League for the first time. They would have to wait a lot longer for their first Huddersfield and District League Title though. The second XI then recorded a 'double' of Paddock Shield and the Johnson Cup in 1954.

The facilities at Honley CC's Far End Lane Ground were about to go through major changes in the late 1950's and early 1960's. The club was awarded the Greenwood Trophy in 1957 for having the 'best kept ground in the league.' The pavilion was then extended in 1962. The new scoreboard was then opened in 1968.

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Honley CC celebrated their centenary in 1980 and this was marked by the release of a centenary brochure priced at 50p. Honley CC had made it to seven finals before they finally lifted the Sykes Cup in 1982. This was the first major trophy that the club had won although they had won section B of the Huddersfield and District League many times throughout the fifties and sixties.

Every club is known for its famous players and their individual achievements and Honley CC are no different. Players that have represented Honley CC over the years include Craig White, the former England all rounder and Simon Burris, who plays for St. Kilder in Victoria, this is the home club of Shane Warne. Honley CC were also represented by former Yorkshire players Fred Jakeman, Brian James and Alfonzo Drake. As far as achievements go, Simon Walker once hit 40 off an over in a second XI match against Meltham CC on 13th June 1992, this included six sixes. The Australian Grant Swift once took five wickets in five balls in a match in for Honley CC in 1999. Adam Polkinghorne, of Tasmania, came close to the double milestone of 1,000 runs and 100 wickets in a season. Some of the club's leading wicket takers include James Hinchliffe with 550 wickets since the 1980's and Jonny Lawrence who took over 300 wickets in three years with the club. Honley CC are also well known for their long serving players. Peter Green, John Sanderson, John Hutchinson and Ian Waddington have all been recipients of the Lady Sykes Candlesticks Award, which recognises player's loyalty and service to a club. Peter Green is still at Honley CC as the club's groundsman. John Sanderson was the groundsman at the club during the 1970's and is credited for improving the pitches at Honley because of the soil he added to the pitch

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One thing was still missing from the history of Honley CC though and that was the Drakes Huddersfield and District League title. That was until 2005 when the club won the 'double' of the Drakes Huddersfield and District League Title and Sykes Cup. This ended a 125 year wait for a league title win. Honley were awarded for this achievement by winning the Huddersfield Examiner's sports team of the year for 2005. Club Secretary Tim Hirst recalls that the Honley CC were not expecting to win the award and only when the words "Honley CC waited for one award (the Huddersfield and Drakes League Title) and then two came along," were announced that the club knew that the award was theirs.