

## AROUND THE WICKET

with historian  
Peter Davies

According to the *Huddersfield Examiner*, which published a series of historical articles about leading local clubs in 1932, 'around about 1848, Honley was quite a noted centre of cricket'.

At this time the club was renowned for 'the stern fights which it waged against the strongest clubs in the district, and particularly against the...Lascelles Hall team'.

Apparently, the first 'cricket field was situated at the top of Westgate, being the greater portion of the land which until later built upon was known as the "Feast Ground"'. The celebrated local historian Mary Jagger was also very familiar with the club during its early days.

In her personal recollections, published in *The History of Honley*, she refers to the original ground, behind the George and Dragon, and describes how: 'One of the best cricket clubs in the neighbourhood played upon the ground, nearly all its members being noted cricketers, such as Mr Joshua Robinson and his brother Charles, Mr Robert Heap, Mr Thomas Beardsell and his brother Brook, etc.

"I can remember the batting powers of Mr Joshua Robinson, and the bowling abilities of Mr Robert Heap (the underarm bowling of the latter being termed 'shoddy balls') were considered wonderful."

Over 130 years ago, the cricket club in Honley was closely linked to the Parish Church.

In 1932 the *Huddersfield Daily Examiner* explained that the club was at one time 'run under the auspices of the Parish Church' and was called Honley St. Mary's Cricket Club. However, the relationship was ended in 1879, when the name Honley Cricket Club was adopted.

The reasons for the change of identity were explained in a report of the AGM published in the local press: 'On reviewing the old rules it was found that, to improve the efficiency of the club, some changes were necessary among which the most important were that the title should be altered to that of "The Honley Cricket Club" and that the club should be open to anyone subject to the approval of the committee. This, it was hoped, 'will give the club a better chance of competing with its neighbours' and 'Honley in this respect may not be behind the neighbouring villages.'

G W Littlewood was the first professional cricketer to be employed by Honley Cricket Club. He was engaged in 1884 and paid 35/- per week. The following year Herbert Lodge became both professional and groundkeeper

## HONLEY CRICKET CLUB: the first in a fascinating new sporting series

# From shoddy balls to Sykes cup glory

for the club. Lodge was paid 38/- a week and given a benefit match by the club and, as can be seen, he certainly earned his money. He was required:

1. to be on the cricket ground every afternoon from 2.30 to 4.30 and every evening except Saturday at 6 o'clock ready for practice;
2. to play all matches, whether day or afternoon matches, and no soon as a cricket match is over, the ground played on and damaged during the match must be repaired;
3. to mow the whole ground once every week or oftener if required, to roll the whole ground at any time when it requires it;
4. to do any other work necessary for keeping the ground in proper repair and condition, and at the close of the season, the ground must be left as may be satisfactory to the said Secretary;
5. should the said Herbert Lodge wish to be away from his duties at any time he must ask permission of the said Secretary;
6. should he wish to be away at any time when the said Honley Cricket Club are playing a match he must make application to the committee.

By the end of 1915 the effects of the First World War had begun to bite. The club's annual report for the 1915 season explained that a crisis-point had been reached with



**HONLEY Wesleyans Cricket Club had a shortlived existence. The photo (above) records the opening of their new ground at Grasscroft on 24 May 1902. Their first fixture pitted them against Honley Congregational. Honley were always the major club in the village. Left: a team photo from 1890.**



**□ DISTINCTIVE: Honley's attractive 'pagoda' pavilion and (below) a wartime club document**

'practically all the eligible players having joined the Army or Navy (to the extent of about 60).'

It was later decided, at the 1916 AGM, that 'we discontinue cricket for 1916...write to the League Sec. that we have abandoned cricket' and 'inscribe a Roll of Honour to the men who have joined the Army and Navy during the Great War.'

Throughout its existence, Honley CC has assisted many other local organisations. Between the late-1890s and the 1930s, Honley Tennis Club and Honley Victoria Cycling Club were allowed to use the ground, as was the local Football Club from 1906 to 1921.

In the 1930s Holmfirth Harriers, Holme Valley Grammar School, the British Legion and the Wesleyans also became tenants, while the Huddersfield Hockey Club remained in residence from this time into the 1980s.

Also during 1930s, the club took part in the Lancaster Cup which was played to raise funds for the Holme Valley Hospital - and during World War II it raised money for the Red Cross.

At the beginning of the 1950s, Sykes Cup ties were played to a finish, with no restriction on time or overs.

Each innings was compulsorily suspended after either 2½ hours or when 150 runs were scored, and then played to completion upon its resumption.

This format resulted in a remarkable contest taking place at the semi-final stage in 1952. Honley, who were to win the second division title that year, faced Broad Oak from the first division at Fartown.

In a period of 7 hours 17 minutes Honley had amassed 527 runs in 187 overs, with Jim Wood scoring 189 runs in six hours and 25 minutes.

For Broad Oak the daunting final run chase began that Monday evening and ended on Tuesday 22 July at 269 all out. By this time John Crowther (139) had scored the second century of the match and Jim Wood had completed his mammoth contribution to the game by taking 7 wickets for 70 runs in 39 overs.

The final statistics were incredible. A total of 826 runs had been scored in just over 13 hours of play. An estimated crowd of 6,000 had witnessed the match, paying gate receipts of £145 11s 9d for the privilege. Unfortunately, Honley lost in the final to

Huddersfield by 77 runs.

After their immense contribution to the national war effort, 1939-45, women became increasingly more prominent in many areas of



society following the end of the Second World War. This is demonstrated by the proportional growth in Honley Cricket Club's female membership between 1939 and 1959.

After seven unsuccessful appearances in the final, the Honley Sykes Cup hoodoo was finally broken in 1982, with a seven-wicket victory over Primrose Hill.

Skipper Bruce Jakeman (1 for 34 and 35 not out) and Mike Bocarro (2 for 8 and 37 not out), were prominent in a solid team performance, while 15-year-old Jamie Hinchcliffe took 4 for 45.

For stalwart Peter Green the success had come after 27 years with the club and three previous final appearances.

He summed up the sense of euphoria and relief at Far End, by describing the win as 'the best moment of my crickering career'.

Today, Honley are an ambitious and prestigious cricket club, with a beautiful ground and forward-thinking officials.

