

THONGSBRIDGE CRICKET CLUB: the 15th in a fascinating series of cricket histories...

A faithful Captain, floods and trophies

AROUND
THE
WICKET

...with
historian
Peter
Davies

THONGSBRIDGE Cricket Club was founded in 1860 — and by the 1870s matches featuring them were being featured regularly in the local press.

Sadly very few records have survived from the early days and little is known about it before it re-formed in 1919.

However, Thongsbridge CC do appear in 1893 as one of the founder members of the Huddersfield and District Alliance League.

Another notable fact is that all-rounder W W Lancaster, who started his career at Thongsbridge, played first-class cricket for Yorkshire in 1895.

The year 1910 was a very important one for Thongsbridge. It was the year that the club's original pavilion was built, and this structure stayed in place for over 70 years. In 1910 the club also scooped the Huddersfield Association League and the Lumb Cup.

During the First World War (1914-18) the club went in to temporary hibernation, as most players had signed up to fight in the armed forces. Sadly, some did not return to see the club re-open, and start playing again, in 1919.

At the end of the First World War it was decided the club should re-open, a move that did much to help morale in the difficult post-war years.

The club joined the Huddersfield Central League in 1919 and won their first post-war trophy in 1922 — the Tinker Cup.

In 1926 — the year of the General Strike — the club began their unbroken membership of the Huddersfield & District League.

It was not long before they netted their first prize, with the second XI bagging the Paddock Shield in 1929.

In 1932 the club joined the local cricket elite by winning the Byrom Shield — the Division 1 Championship — for the first time. The 1933 *Holmfirth Almanac and Yearbook* said Thongsbridge had been 'worthy champions'.



□ SATURDAY BEST: The priceless Ladies' Tea Committee of 1950 and (right) the Thongsbridge club's 1960 Sykes Cup winning line-up



□ WELL DIDN'T IT RAIN: Volunteers are seen mopping up the square after a very heavy downpour in 1972

of their efforts, the players who remained organised, and then played in, a special benefit match to help raise money for Christmas gifts to be sent to 70-80 local men fighting in the conflict.

Against all odds, the club managed to field two cricket teams during the Second World War. However, they came up against a major obstacle at Whitsuntide 1944, with the arrival of the Holmfirth Floods.

The waters were so heavy they caused the pitch to be waterlogged and unplayable for five weeks, and resulted in tons of sand and silt having to be removed in order to make the pitch playable again.

Thongsbridge came up against red tape in 1944 which stopped them from being able to win the Hopkinson Trophy. Despite this legislation, the club went on to have a successful year, winning both the league and the Hinchcliffe Cup, though sadly not the Hopkinson Trophy.

The beginning of the 1950s were a very successful period for Thongsbridge. They won both the second XI competition and Johnson Cup in 1950 and 1951 — a double double success!

The 1950s were very important in establishing women as key individuals at Thongsbridge CC. They weren't just players' wives or family members, but active and crucial members of the club. They provided players and supporters with refreshments on matchdays — and in time became known as the 'Tea Committee'.



□ CUTTING THE TAPE: The club's new lounge is unveiled in March 1976

The year 1960 marked the 100th birthday of Thongsbridge C C and also proved to be one of their most successful years. The club scooped both the Byrom Shield and the Sykes Cup, and held a special dinner and dance to celebrate their success...and the club's longevity.

Thongsbridge's cricket and bowling clubs had always been two separate entities. However, in 1964 it was decided that they should be joined and the clubs were amalgamated together, becoming 'Thongsbridge Cricket and Bowling Club'. The club has remained so-called to this day. The 'merger' has benefited all concerned — financially and in opening up the club to a wider audience.

The year 1965 saw a return to the top flight

for the Thongsbridge first XI as Second Division champions.

The footbridge over the River Holme — which has become the main entrance to the cricket ground — was opened on Whit Saturday, May 1966. It was built especially to provide easy access for cricket fans.

Thongsbridge Cricket Club had always rented their ground — until 1968 when they were finally able to buy the land from Bass North. When the Bowling Club later bought their premises in 1972, Thongsbridge Cricket and Bowling Club finally had headquarters they could truly call their own.

Volunteers helped to build a new boundary wall, a new tea room and a new car parking area in 1969. They helped to supply the necessary labour and materials. Thongsbridge's junior team proved themselves to be just as good as their elders in the 1970s, winning the Section A Junior League Thornton Trophy six years in succession between 1971 and 1976. They then went on to win it again in 1979!

The curse of the British weather struck Thongsbridge once again in 1972, with torrential rain flooding the pitch.

In 1975 the second XI netted the Paddock Shield for the eighth and most recent time. Local rivals Holmfirth were defeated by three wickets in the final as David Berry kept his nerve with an unbeaten 56 to take his side to the 133-run winning target.

The coming of the 1980s heralded the opening of a new cricket pavilion at Miry Lane. The opening of the new building, and scoreboard, attracted a good turnout of players, fans and club members.

Over the past decade or so, the Miry Lane ground — like others in the area — has been blighted by vandalism, and both main buildings are regularly covered in graffiti.

One club member says: "It's a very big problem for us. We repainted the front of the tea room and pavilion three times one season, and still the local vandals came and ruined our walls."

"Our other bugbear is litter. When I turn up for practice on a Friday night, I have to spend 10 minutes tidying up the field before I do anything else. A lot of kids walk across the ground to and from school, and we think that this is the root problem."

"Others come to play on the field; that's absolutely fine, but they've got to behave when they are on our property," he added.

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Thongsbridge Cricket Club

Cups and Shield Celebration Dinner

The President (Mr. A. Lancaster)
receives the presents of

Mr. A. Wainwright
Secretary of the Albert Hotel on
Saturday, Sept. 30th, at 6-0 p.m. 1944

Assisted by Mr. J. Smith, Mr. E. Jones, Wainwright,
Thompson, Mr. G. Martin, Sept. 28th.

During the 1930s the club used a horse called 'Captain' to pull the lawnmower which cut the outfield at Miry Lane.

However, in 1937 donations from supporters A Lancaster and E Batley meant the club could now afford a motorised lawnmower and concrete garage to house it.

Faithful Captain was thus 'pensioned off' and a club tradition was put to rest to make way for mechanisation.

Through the hard work of members, the playing area at Miry Lane was extended by 15 yards in 1934.

The end of the 1930s saw another league title win. This time a successful campaign in Section B helped guide the first XI back into the top flight.

Thongsbridge Cricket Club lost some of their greatest players during the Second World War, when many of those who were able to signed up to fight. In gratitude and support