

Focus on - Sowerby Bridge CC

Bridge no longer taking prisoners!

The fourth in a Saturday series on Calderdale cricket clubs by Dr Peter Davies of the Cricket Heritage Project at Huddersfield University

A set of 'rules' exists that was adopted by Sowerby Bridge Cricket Club on 26 April 1852, at what appears to be the club's inaugural general meeting.

This club played at White Windows and was disbanded some time before the current Sowerby Bridge CC was formed.

Rule 6 specified that 'any Gentleman desiring to join this club, shall communicate his intention in writing,' so membership was clearly restricted to those of higher social status.

In the period between this club being disbanded and the formation of the current Sowerby Bridge CC, cricket retained a strong presence in the town.

The current club was formed in 1877 and eventually moved to the Walton Street ground.

It was stated, in the 'History of Sowerby Bridge Cricket Club,' published in 1925, that: "In the early years...a heavy roller was purchased from Mr. Albert Siddall, Engineer, and although this roller has since been many times repaired it is yet one of the most useful articles under the heading of 'ground tackle.'"

The club purchased its Walton Street ground in 1936. The original scoreboard was erected two years earlier, in 1934.

During the Second World War, Walton Street was used by the War Office as a detention barracks or prisoner-of-war camp.



Bridge over troubled waters: Sowerby Bridge's Walton Street ground is flooded in 1992

One barracks official remembers: 'The ground itself was tar-maced for a parade ground, and two mills on either side of the entrance housed the gym, workshop, sleeping quarters and sergeant's mess'.

Approximately 200 soldiers were held there. One morning one of them broke away and swam across the river and escaped. Someone went after him

and caught up with him at the Friendly pub!

As such, the club had to find an alternative venue for its wartime fixtures, and so it lodged temporarily at Sowerby St. Peters CC.

Because of the 'merging' of the two clubs between 1939 and 1945, some Sowerby Bridge players switched to the St. Peters club and vice-versa.

For the duration of 24 years, between 1961 and 1984, Sowerby Bridge competed in the Central Yorkshire League.

Over the decades, Walton Street has suffered its fair share of natural disasters - including fire and floods - but Sowerby Bridge remains one of the oldest and most distinguished clubs in the area.



Blast from the past: the Sowerby Bridge first team in 1980

FACT FILE

Founded: 1852
Ground: Walton Street
Former ground: White Windows, Fore Lane, Burnley Road
Nearest landmark: The River Calder runs by on one side of the ground
Nearest other clubs: SBCI, Sowerby St. Peters
League: Halifax
Former leagues: Central Yorkshire League
Greatest moment: 1904 - the club's first Parish Cup triumph
Local hero: Fast bowler David Pickles - played 41 times for Yorkshire in the post-war years
Bizarre fact: A campaign was started in 1947 to return Walton Street to its status as a cricket venue after wartime requisitioning. The War Office relented - but only in 1951!