

CRICKET

Focus on - Sowerby St Peters CC

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

Saints extend the hand of friendship

LOCAL cricket historian Andrew Hardcastle refers to a team in Sowerby in 1855. There is also mention of a game between 'Sowerby' and Triangle in 1862.

According to Hardcastle, 'Sowerby' opened a new ground in 1869, 'more spacious and better adapted to the game' with a match against SBCL.

It is not clear whether any of these early Sowerby teams became 'Sowerby St. Peters C.C.' at a later date. All we can safely say is that cricket was played in the village at some point in the later nineteenth century.

Around the turn of the century we come across a 'Sowerby Division League', though no sign of Sowerby St. Peter's CC.

The earliest record of the club's existence is a fixture card, dated 1904, which is currently on display in the club's pavilion. In this period there was also another team in Sowerby - St. Georges.

The fixture card from 1904 shows that the club's president was the Vicar of St. Peter's Church, the Reverend John Walker MA.

The church had a central role in the community and being able to play for the village cricket team made membership of the congregation an added attraction.

At this time, whist drives and beetle drives held in the school hall across the road from the church provided much needed funds for the cricket club. Another major source of money was collecting and selling old newspapers.

During the Second World War,

when the War Office requisitioned Sowerby Bridge cricket ground for use as an army detention centre, the St. Peters club showed true wartime spirit by taking in their homeless rivals for the rest of the war and beyond.

They also issued a joint membership card.

Sowerby St. Peters were a force to be reckoned with in the post-war decades.

And in 1983 the first XI crowned one of the greatest years in their history by winning the Parish Cup for the second year running.

Today, St. Peters Avenue is a top-class local league ground. A visiting fan comments: 'Excellent facilities, good atmosphere and great for children. A traditional ground with a nice ambience.'

FACT FILE

Founded: c 1904

Ground: St. Peters Avenue

Nearest landmark: St. Peter's Church

Nearest other clubs: Sowerby Bridge

(SBC)

League: Halifax

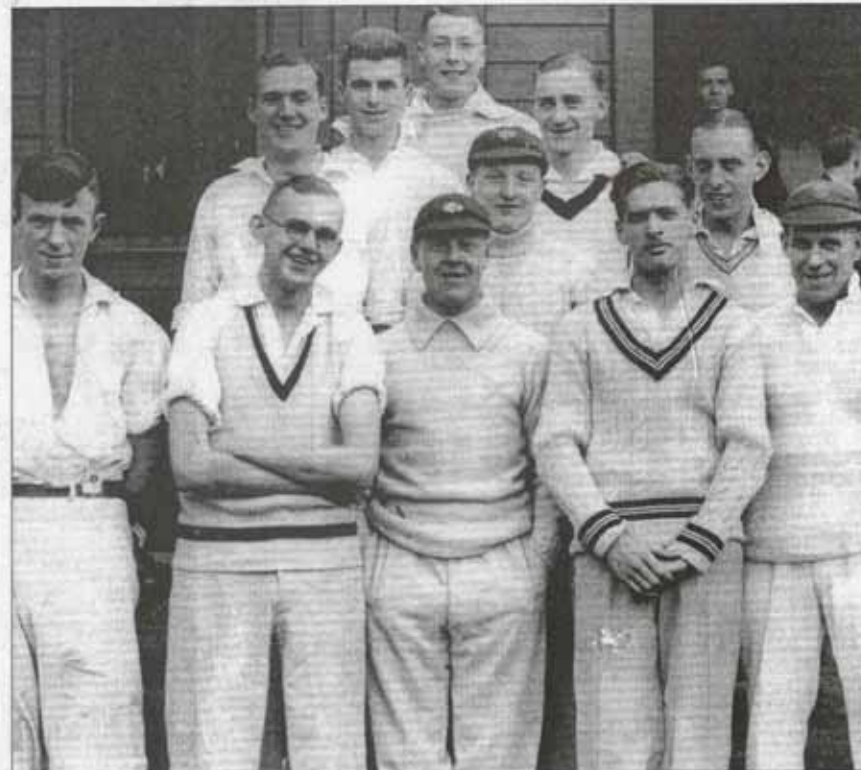
Former league: Halifax & District Amateur

League

Greatest moment: 1926 - winning the Parish Cup for the first time.

Local hero: Donald Hoyle, successful captain of the 1950s and club stalwart.

Bizarre fact: In days gone by sheep were fattened up for market on the ground to keep the grass short. Club officials remember having to clear up the droppings from the wicket before play could commence!



Old timers: A Sowerby St Peters side from the 1980s