

AROUND THE WICKET

with historian
Peter Davies

HOLMFIRTH CRICKET CLUB: the eighth in a fascinating series of cricket histories

Temperance roots and top grumblers!

HOLMFIRTH CC — whose club crest features a stag's head — was founded on May 5, 1850 and the first meetings it held took place in the Crown Hotel, although there is also a school of thought which puts this date as 1860.

According to 'King Willow's Haunts', a regular feature in the *Huddersfield Examiner*, the club was at one time known as Holmfirth Temperance Cricket Club and played at Crown Bottom.

A ground at 'Hill' was also used before a move to the current ground in 1862.

In this period we are told that committee members had to send their apologies to meetings - otherwise they were fined - and that unauthorised persons playing on the cricket field could be fined one shilling per incident.

But the most interesting rules were these: 'No fielder be allowed to smoke or lie on the ground during play; any member violating this rule will be fined one penny for each offence... If any member appear intoxicated on the cricket ground or in the meeting room or conduct himself in a disorderly manner, he shall be fined for the first offence 1/-, for the second offence 2/6, for the third offence 5/-, and for the fourth offence he shall be expelled.'

Around 120 years ago, the club hosted a visiting side which contained two Yorkshire and England stars and five other players who had represented the county. They were part of the United North of England XI which met 'XXII of Holmfirth' in 1880. The 'United North' was one of a number of celebrated professional elevens which toured the country between the 1840s and the end of the 1880s.

However, as the *Huddersfield Examiner* explained: 'It could hardly be said that the United North were well represented, as several well known performers were absentees'. The locals were not discouraged and 'the attendance on this occasion was particularly good'.

When Holmfirth played Armitage Bridge in the 1888 Lumb Cup semi-final, a controversial decision was given in favour of a Holmfirth player.

This caused some of Armitage Bridge's female supporters to attack the player in question with their umbrellas and run him off the field! Fortunately, the incident did not dampen the Holmfirth players' resolve, and they progressed to the final in only the second year in which competition was held.



□ **RURAL IDYLL:** Holmfirth's Bridge Fold ground in picturesque winter snow

After the first Byrom Shield triumph in 1897, a 'Holmfirth Cricketers Anthem' was written and dedicated to Mr A. Robinson, the 1st XI captain. The first verse went as follows:

*Come all ye folks in Holmfirth Town,
Just gather round me while I tell
The story which has brought renown
To all who love our district well.*

The 1910 Huddersfield & District Byrom Shield was decided by a championship match between Holmfirth and Golcar, which was played at Paddock.

Horace Hawksworth, remembered that: 'Golcar batted first and scored about 120 to 130 runs. Holmfirth won the match with the last two batsmen in, A. Robinson (captain) and Fred Sandford, elder brother of Joe Sandford... Sam Fleischer, the Golcar pro, so nearly beat us in that memorable final with his spin bowling... what a game, what a victory.'

After the game, members of the Holmfirth club decided to make a light-hearted gesture to a group of supporters who had spent most of the season complaining about the team.

This seven-man group of hard-to-please fans was known as 'The Grumbling Committee'. In appreciation of their efforts a 'Grumbler's Medal' was struck for each of them.

The iron medals were cast by C.E. Marsden and struck in J and J W Longbottom's foundry in Holmfirth.

They were then gilded by Mr J R Hodgley, set in chains made by Tom Battye and presented to the supporters in question.

The story of the medals was unearthed 76 years later when Mrs Mavis Broadhead, the granddaughter of 'Grumbling Committee' member Joe Collins contacted the *Holme Valley Express*.

She still had the medal, which her grandfather had been proud of, and wondered if there were other descendants of the 'Grumbling Committee' still in the area.

The article prompted Phyllis Taylor, Nellie Rolinson, John and Frank Sandford and Dora Robinson, to come forward, along with Horace Hawksworth who, as a 12-year-old, had walked all the way to the Paddock ground to watch the championship-decider.

Leonard Sandford died of wounds at the Number 20 General Hospital, Garnia, on Monday 18 September 1916.

He was one of the pre-1914 Holmfirth players and to some fans he had seemed to be 'among the immortals'.

The club scooped its fair share of silverware in the 1930s and 1940s.

In 1950, the general committee of Holmfirth Cricket Club discussed two proposed League rule amendments which seem incredible today.

'**Law 65 (XXII):** The six-ball over shall be in operation in all games under the jurisdiction of the Hudds. & Dist. Cricket League. The management committee shall have power to make necessary alterations for occasional matches.

'**Law 65 (XXV):** No 2nd team matches shall be played on either Saturday during Huddersfield Textile Week.'

The late 1960s and early 1970s was a vintage period for the Holmfirth Club.

In 1969 the 1st XI won the Byrom Shield and Sykes Cup double and the 2nd XI won Section A of the Huddersfield & District League.

In 1970 the 1st XI bagged the Byrom Shield and Sykes Cup double. In 1971 the 1st XI won the Byrom Shield and the 2nd XI the Section A title. And in 1972 the 2nd XI won the Section A title again. The club did the double again in 1975.

Even in mid-winter, some cricketers like to dust off their whites and get out into the middle. Hence the tradition at Holmfirth of an annual festive fixture against Delph.

Even all-women teams also competed in a special tournament at Bridge Fold in 1982. Poignantly, the side representing the Cricketers Arms, Deanhouse, won out on the day.

Unfortunately, like many other local cricket clubs, Holmfirth have fallen victim to mindless vandalism.

In 2004 the Holmfirth CC matchday programme revealed that two club officials had caught two graffiti vandals red-handed!

● Readers are asked to contact Peter Davies on 01484 472505 or via pj.davies@hud.ac.uk if they have any more photos or information relating to local cricket history.



□ **HOLMFIRTH CC:** Players were obviously on a slope when this line-up from 1951 was photographed

**HOLMFIRTH
CRICKET CLUB**

MEMBERSHIP CARD
SEASON 2002
Tel: 983553

PRESIDENT
Mr B Gilbert

CLUB CAPTAIN
1st XI: A. ARND
2nd XI: Peter Wainwright