AROUND THE WICKET
with historian
Peter Davies

MARSDEN CRICKET CLUB: the second in a fascinating series of club histories

Fairytale beginning but tragedy follows

IT is possible that, in the very early days, the Marsden cricket team was linked to the town's Mechanics Institute.

A new cricket ground in the town - possibly The Tips - was opened with a match between '18 of Marsden' and '12 of Lascelles Hall' on 10 May 1878.

After joining in 1893, Marsden topped the Huddersfield and District Alliance League two years later to earn a place in the Huddersfield and District League.

Marsden won the Lumb Cup in 1896, beating Dalton in the final by 124 runs.

In 1910 the club was involved in a failed attempt to form a breakaway Colne Valley League.

Following the failure of this venture, Marsden dropped out of the Huddersfield and District League.

They moved to their current ground at Hemplow in 1921, 'as the result of the generosity of the late Mr John Edward Crowther, a most influential Marsden mill owner, who presented to the inhabitants of Marsden a wonderful sports arena, consisting of cricket, bowls, tennis and golf!'

It is for this reason that one author has stated that the story of the club 'reads like a fairy tale'.

In total, Hemplow covers 70 acres and is managed today by the Marsden Recreational Trust.

The Hemplow story has its tragic side.

In 1936 the pavilion burnt down - an 'unfortunate disaster,' according to one observer with a penchant for understatement.

A report from the Huddersfield Examiner (Monday 19 October 1936) hangs in the clubhouse:

MARSDEN CRICKET PAVILION DESTROYED

'The Marsden Cricket & Bowling Club's pavilion, a wooden building, was completely destroyed by fire yesterday'.

Even during the wartime period, Marsden cricketers were performing well.

In a match against Huddersfield on 19 July 1941, Fred Haigh, the club professional, bagged 10 for 41 including two separate hat-tricks.

Future England international Basil D'Oliviera - the man who found himself at the centre of a major Apartheid row - played as substitute professional for Marsden in two games during the 1960 season, scoring 104 and taking 6 for 26 at Linthwaite, and scoring 62 and bagging 2 wickets against the same opposition at Marsden.

Sylvester Oliver, the West Indian cricketer, played as professional in 1963. He helped the 1st XI to the Huddersfield League Section B title.

Marsden signed Vibert Rodney, a Guyanese cricketer, as professional in 1964. He took 63 wickets in the season at an average of 16.

The club retained him for the following season, and in 1965 he captured 39 wickets at a price of 12.86 each.

In 1969 the 1st XI claimed the Huddersfield League Section B title and the 2nd XI also scooped their Section B championship. Three years later, in 1972, the 2nd XI bagged the Huddersfield League Section B title, while the 1st XI brought home the Hopkinson Trophy.

Marsden have captured the Section B title three times in the decades since.

Today, Hemplow stands as one of the most atmospheric cricket venues in the area.

●Readers are asked to contact Peter Davies on 01484 472405 or via p.j.davies@hud.ac.uk if they have any more photos or information relating to local cricket history.

D'OLIVEIRA OUTSTANDING IN WHIT GAMES

Three quick fifties and six wickets

Association side lose at Barnsley

District League

Pictured (top): a Marsden line-up from May 1953 (above) a fixture card from 2004; (top right) a press cutting remarking on England Test star Basil D'Oliviera's success at Marsden and (right): heavy snow at Hemplow.