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**THE INTRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF CRICKET IN HALIFAX
AND DISTRICT IN THE 19TH CENTURY**

PAUL ANDREW SMITH

**A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts**

The University of Huddersfield

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Abstract

Much of cricket's historiography has concentrated on the initial development and growth of the game in the south-east of England from the eighteenth century with its attendant features of patronage and later amateurism, rational recreation and moral discipline. This thesis is a case study of the growth and development of the game in a very different locality, Halifax and its surrounding district on the very western extremity of the West Riding of Yorkshire which at the same time was experiencing vast changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution. The development of the game of cricket in this locality has received little or no attention from previous researchers.

Folk games related to cricket had been present in Halifax as early as 1680 but it was not until the early part of the nineteenth century that the formal game began to take an established hold in Yorkshire.

The thesis explores the themes involved as the game struggled to gain a hold in this hilly and inaccessible part of the West Riding. Having the time required to play and the lack of suitable places and facilities to play were significant problems. Disputes were commonplace in the early period and the game and early identifiable clubs remained transitory as the growth of urbanisation and the cost of the game's infrastructure defeated many. Halifax did possess a large area of open common land, Skircoat Moor which was extensively used but ultimately its poor surface stifled the game's further development.

The arrival of the elite itinerant professional game at the mid-point of the nineteenth century was a significant transition point and the study looks at how this professionalism and commercialisation migrated to the local game. Increasing numbers of working class participants with the gradual reduction in working hours also helped the game to grow although even by 1870 few clubs had any continuity and the local game was still largely transitory.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Peter Davies for his enthusiasm and inspiration to commence this journey and Prof Barry Doyle of the University of Huddersfield for his unstinting help, direction and support throughout the course.

Academic biography.

I qualified as an Associate member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors in 1973, was elected a Fellow in 1989 and retired in 2007 following a 41 year career in government service. Whilst I am not a historian by training I have been involved in local history and cricket history groups for a number of years. I attended a Foundation course on the history of cricket in Calderdale and Kirklees at the University of Huddersfield over the winter of 2005/6 and in 2010 wrote and published a history of Illingworth Cricket Club to mark its 125th anniversary.

Literature Review and Research questions.

Introduction

The first evidence of cricket taking place in Halifax is in 1826¹ although there are references to one of its predecessors a game of stool-ball as far back as 1680², and its formal introduction and development in the nineteenth century in a period of rapid social, economic and political change is a fascinating one for historians. The development of a team sport requires a whole range of factors to come together to allow its nurture and growth – knowledge of the game, sufficient people with interest to form a team and that of opponents, somewhere to play, finance for playing equipment and facilities, leadership, organisation and time in which to play. Sports social history has looked at many of these issues together with the contemporary social, economic and political issues but certainly in the field of cricket much of the research has concentrated on the origins and development of the game in the south east of England, an area with a very different social and economic and indeed geographic profile to that of the West Riding of Yorkshire and the Halifax area in particular. I intend to look at the arrival and growth of cricket in this area to consider the similarities and differences to those covered within the established literature.

This literature review, which establishes the context, questions and interpretative tools for the research, is presented in four sections. The first section *Changing Times* examines briefly the historiography of the changes that took place across all aspects of society during the nineteenth century. The aim is to establish how conditions changed to facilitate the development of recreation and cricket in particular during this period. The second section, *Sport and Recreation* examines the historiography of the general development of leisure in its wider historical context. The dominant themes are social class, urbanisation following the industrial revolution and the influence of the establishment, middle-classes and public schools with the ethos of rational recreation, discipline, moral improvement and amateurism. The third section *Cricket* takes the leisure and recreation argument from the general to the specific. Cricket was seen in many quarters to epitomise Englishness and fair play. There was perhaps an elite view that the role of the gentleman amateur was to be at the forefront providing a moral direction to the game which incorporated acceptance of the social order, good sportsmanship and provided leadership for both the game as a whole and of wider society. However these were features which would not necessarily transfer to the different social and cultural conditions of all parts of the country. The final section on *Halifax and district* looks in more detail at the historiography of the area under study –

¹ *Leeds Mercury* 30 September 1826, 19th Century British Newspapers.

² The Rev. Oliver Heywood, *His Autobiography, Diaries, Anecdotes & Event books 1630-1702*, (4 vols ed J. Horsfall Turner, Brighouse, 1884-5)

geographic, demographic, industrial, economic, political and social factors which could impact on the creation and development of cricket and the growth of the game and to ask whether the particular circumstances of this geographic area affected the growth of the game in this locality. This will take the form of a more discursive look at the historiography of Halifax and how this locality relates to the history of the development and growth of cricket elsewhere. There is, too, a need to look into the relationship between the growing urban culture and the economic and social structure of the town and the part that leisure and cricket played in this. R.J. Morris points to the nineteenth-century town as a “focus for power” and emphasises the influence of the town hall and comments that “municipal ceremonies, foundation myths and sport were some of the ways in which the urban places of industrial Britain inspired loyalty and gave meaning to citizens’ lives.”³

Changing Times

In the volume of the Oxford History of England covering the period 1815-1870 Sir Llewellyn Woodward provides a general narrative and analysis of the political, economic, social and foreign affairs of what he describes as a period of rapid and complex changes. Parliamentary reform and agitation over the issues of the Corn Laws and the People’s Charter were accompanied by reforms of local government, the poor laws, education, the criminal justice system, and factory legislation as well as fundamental changes in scientific, religious and cultural spheres. Abroad England’s commitments and difficulties extended from Ireland and the volatile European sphere to the Crimean War, India, and the rest of an expanding colonial empire.⁴ J.F.C. Harrison in his work on the early part of the Victorian era describes the period as “a turbulent era variously labelled as the Age of Reform, the Age of the Chartists or the Hungry Forties.” He places the massive events like the New Poor Law, the repeal of the Corn Laws and the Great Irish Famine as played out “amidst pedestrian political manoeuvrings and violent fluctuations of the economy”.⁵ The traditional political interpretation is extended by Edward Royle who looked at the way society was affected by the interactions of a changing environment, growth and movement of population and the changes in social and class structures, poverty and welfare provision and education as well as the effect of religion and leisure.⁶

Industrialisation, urbanisation, improvement and self- help provide dominant themes and all implied change which meant that the equilibrium of society would be upset to some degree.⁷ Unprecedented urban growth, especially from the 1840s, compounded by migration from agricultural areas, had huge implications for the urban landscape and

³ R.J. Morris, ‘Structure, culture and society in British towns’ in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain Vol 3 1840-1950* (ed. M. Daunton) (Cambridge, 2000) p399-400

⁴ Sir Llewellyn Woodward, *The Oxford History of England The Age of Reform 1815-1870*, (Oxford, 1962)

⁵ J.F.C. Harrison, *Early Victorian Britain, 1832-51*, (London, 1988) p 11

⁶ Edward Royle, *Modern Britain A Social History 1750-1997*, (London, 1997)

⁷ Royle, *Modern Britain*

structure both physical and sociological.⁸ Industrialisation gave new power to the British provinces, particularly the Lancashire cotton district and the West Riding of Yorkshire and intensified local loyalties and pride. Moreover the spread of the railway system to most corners of the realm by 1850 had a dramatic effect on communications, trade and industry with the economy settling down from mid-century to a period of relative prosperity.⁹

The towns of the West Riding and Lancashire were at the forefront of the fundamental impact of industrial change. Factories and mills though were only one aspect of the economic power held by the middle class elite of substantial employers, merchants and professionals. Morris is firmly of the view that the notion of towns as an arena of class conflict driven by the confrontations of wage labour and capital was at best only a partial account of a much more complex set of influences which had varied effects from place to place. Urban settlements had a variety of corporatist urban structures at their centre which had developed from the late seventeenth century. Voluntary and ad hoc agencies dominated until about 1860. Schools, hospitals and libraries were all directed by voluntary societies and offered membership to all who would pay subscriptions. Water, gas, even cemeteries were provided by joint-stock companies which followed the same type of public form. Paving, lighting, police and the care of the poor were provided by a variety of disparate tax-collecting agencies with legal powers and specific spatial terms of reference. Somewhere around 1860 the emphasis changed to the municipal, a representative corporate structure which dominated the urban culture and increasingly developed its activity so that by the end of the century the municipal corporation was a major business enterprise.¹⁰ Despite a growing electorate, the management of the urban environment remained a middle class preserve through their control of the council, the bureaucracy and most of the pressure groups.¹¹ Whilst the economy was generally moving to a period of relative prosperity life was still very hard for a large section of the population and self-help between friends and neighbours was a feature particularly within the lower levels of the working class when either trade depression or ill health struck. Voluntary organisations and mutualist associations such as cooperative movements and friendly societies were important in sustaining sections of the population through difficult times.¹² Class structure and religion too were significant parts of the mix. Royle confirms the widely held view that after the conflict of the 1830s and 1840s the mid-Victorian period saw a hegemony achieved with the middle class leading an “active capitalism” based on competition and the free market economy, individual effort and hard work along with the philosophy of Utility – that

⁸ D. Feldman, ‘Migration’ in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain Vol 3 1840-1950* (Ed. M. Daunton) (Cambridge, 2000)

⁹ Lynn Hollen Lees, ‘Urban Networks’ in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain Vol 3 1840-1950* (Ed. M. Daunton) (Cambridge, 2000)

¹⁰ R.J. Morris, ‘Structure, culture and society in British towns’ in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain Vol 3 1840-1950* (ed. M. Daunton) (Cambridge, 2000)

¹¹ Barry M. Doyle, ‘The changing functions of urban government: councillors, officials and pressure groups’ in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain Vol 3 1840-1950* (ed. M. Daunton) (Cambridge, 2000)

¹² Edward Royle, *Modern Britain A Social History 1750-1997*

which promotes the greatest happiness of the greatest number – as put forward by Jeremy Bentham and evangelical religion.¹³ He also points to overwhelming evidence that by the 1850s, the Church, including non-conformists, did not hold the confidence of the majority of working men in the industrial towns where there was widespread hostility to organised religion. The 1851 Religious Census showed that only half of the adult population went to church which as a result adopted strategies to attract young people into their midst and by late Victorian times were offering their members a wide range of social activities including sports in competition with the secular clubs.

So what are the key questions which emerge from this? How did rapid economic change, urban growth, the emergence of municipal structures, the changes in social structures and religious observance, impact on sport and leisure? This case study will help to throw more light on these questions.

Sport and Recreation

The changes in sporting and recreational culture that transformed leisure in the nineteenth century have been the subject of immense academic discussion. Neil Tranter¹⁴ summarises the efforts of historians to unravel the events and nature of this “revolution” in sporting culture. He considers the principal questions dealt with by historians, particularly whether the initial impact of urban industrialisation led to an increase or decline in the extent of sporting activity among the working classes in the period up to the mid-nineteenth century. He evinces that the earliest academic historians were agreed that the initial impact of urban industrialisation and population growth was detrimental but goes on to quote substantial research to the opposite effect, though this is partial and excludes cricket. Tranter also confirms the more recent reluctance of historians to endorse the previously widely held view that levels of participation in sport declined dramatically from the later decades of the eighteenth century up to the middle of the nineteenth century but again he underlines the lack of empirical evidence. He looks at a number of sports including football, prize-fighting and horse-racing but with little evidence of other sports including cricket. There is, too, evidence of regional and sub-regional differences across leisure activities particularly amongst the working classes and this needs to be further explored in the study area in question.

Tranter also looks at why people played and supported the various sports, the type and numbers of people who were involved and the outcome of those who aspired to be professional sportsmen. He considers the effect these professionals had on a personal and wider level although again the localised evidence of individual sports is relatively scarce. This study looks at two early Halifax cricket professionals, William Swain and Tom Emmett

¹³ Royle, *Modern Britain*

¹⁴ Neil Tranter, *Sport, economy and society in Britain 1750-1914*, (Cambridge, 1998)

and the effect they had on the development of the local game. Tranter acknowledges the many gaps in knowledge particularly that of working-class sport and cites a number of sports and some regional areas which he considers to have been neglected. I suggest cricket in the industrialised areas of the north of England and particularly the development of smaller local clubs should be added to this list.

Robert Malcolmson¹⁵ was at the forefront of the view that a thriving mass sporting culture started to decline towards the end of the eighteenth century and had largely disappeared by the onset of the Victorian era. The reasons were numerous. The factory system required long and regular hours of employment. Enclosure and increasing urbanisation reduced the amount of space for play and there was increasing hostility to worldly pleasures and Sabbath recreations from Evangelical and Protestant factions. More effective policing systems were established and growing use of these was made by local authorities to stamp out some of the more popular sporting pastimes which were seen to be inappropriate to the maintenance of public order in the larger urban communities. There was, moreover, withdrawal of aristocratic and landed gentry patronage of sport as nervousness and the feeling of insecurity grew following the revolutionary events in France.

Others were of a different view. Hugh Cunningham¹⁶ stressed that the double factors of increasing population and rapid urbanisation were as likely to encourage as discourage popular sport. Peter Bailey¹⁷ too provides evidence of growth in some areas. Bailey, in particular highlighted the way in which economic growth led to increasing amounts of free time for some and the need to find new rational ways of spending this time for moral and physical improvement. He argued that “leisure was one of the major frontiers of social change in the nineteenth century, and like most frontiers it was disputed territory”.¹⁸ In particular he questioned the impact of secular and religious reform movements concluding that many members of the working classes used such institutions out of convenience and saw them as a “socially neutral locus for the formation of their clubs and teams”.¹⁹

The idea of working class sport being affected by the withdrawal of aristocratic and gentry patronage similarly is open to doubt on a number of counts. The lack of detailed research makes a definitive conclusion impossible. Evidence across the sports is variable and little research has been done to consider whether other forms of patronage from other social classes filled the void. The case for stating urban communities and their working class sports participants were dependant on patronage by the landed classes appears to be a simplification of a complex array of factors. The most violent and disruptive sports and pastimes undertaken mainly but not exclusively by the working classes such as football,

¹⁵ R.W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society, 1700-1850*, (Cambridge, 1973).

¹⁶ H. Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution, c1780-c1880*, (London, 1980)

¹⁷ P. Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Social Control, 1830-1885*, (London, 1978)

¹⁸ Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England* p5

¹⁹ Bailey, *Leisure and Class* p139.

prize-fighting and bull-baiting and cock-fighting were the most condemned and prone to decline but as Richard Holt argues some of the condemnation and pressure for change came from the more skilled members of the working class, who along with other social groups, were embracing the culture of respectability.²⁰ In this vein Storch²¹ argues that “the new police were domestic missionaries sent out to civilise darkest England.” From the parish constables of the 1830s to the establishment of the newly incorporated Borough police for Halifax in 1848 and for its surrounding areas the West Riding police force in the 1850s, increasing efforts were made by the middle class controlled local authorities to restrain working-class recreational pursuits with varying degrees of success.²² However Tranter argues that policing was not an important factor in removing sports deemed inappropriate for a civilised society, there being little evidence that normal policing methods were effective in removing or reducing large outbreaks of violent activity. But there is evidence of an increasing role played by the police in reducing excesses of bad behaviour connected with sporting activity on a local and smaller scale.²³

So far as the first half of the nineteenth century is concerned this poses a number of questions. Did sport in this locality decline? Was it affected by elite patronage and what effect did increasing urbanisation and population growth and the changes in social attitudes, structures and expectations have on the participation in sport and cricket in particular.

In the second half of the nineteenth century Tranter points to the more widespread evidence of the growth in both sport participation and sport spectating including cricket, particularly at the elite level, but with little or no evidence of the situation at the grass roots. In considering the growth of sport in this period he looks at the considerable debate over the way in which the new culture of sport was spread and the factors involved.²⁴ Many scholars have favoured the downwards diffusionist model whereby organised forms of sport originated in the top public schools and then passed to other public schools, universities, grammar schools and into the upper and middle classes and eventually spreading to the working classes. Tranter agrees that the model is not without foundation but has weaknesses in ignoring the influence exerted by distance, size of community and cultural boundaries. He does consider some regional differences and asks for example why the West Riding textile district of Yorkshire was the last major industrial area to take up professional football despite its proximity to the initial centres in Lancashire and Sheffield.²⁵

²⁰ R. Holt, *Sport and the British – A Modern History*, (Oxford, 1989)

²¹ Robert D. Storch, ‘The Policeman as Domestic Missionary : Urban Discipline and Popular Culture in Northern England 1850-80’, *Journal of Social History*, Vol 9 Pt 4 pp481-509 (1976)

²² David Philips and Robert D. Storch, *Policing Provincial England 1829-1856 The Politics of Reform*, (London, 1999) and David Taylor, *The new police in nineteenth-century England Crime, conflict and control*, (Manchester, 1997)

²³ Ibid

²⁴ N. Tranter, *Sport, Economy and Society in Britain 1750-1914*, (Cambridge, 1998)

²⁵ Ibid

The number of people involved in sport increased dramatically in the second half of the nineteenth century although some sports declined in popularity. The social composition of the participants, the geographical parameters and the types of sporting activity all widened substantially and as Lowerson²⁶ points out the sporting culture of the late nineteenth century and beyond in Britain was unlike anything which had gone before. With the increase in numbers came an equally dramatic increase in the geographic and social range of sport. During the period of this study most sports changed from purely local to national and in some cases international activities. In cricket it began in the 1840s with professional touring teams. The first tour abroad went to North America in 1859 and it is important to ask what effect these national and international developments in cricket had on the development of cricket in the Halifax area.

The extent of working class involvement in sport also increased dramatically from the 1870s onwards as working hours were reduced. The process of club formation proceeded apace. Lowerson²⁷ suggests that the process of club formation was primarily in the last quarter of the nineteenth century but Bailey²⁸ believes it was well under way by the third quarter, while Tranter²⁹ suggests the limited evidence available indicates widely varying timing of club formation from sport to sport. This study will look at the evidence for this in the Halifax locality.

The impact of the broader social, economic, political and cultural events upon the development of sport in general over the middle period of the nineteenth century has been explored by a large number of academic works.³⁰ Richard Holt particularly highlighted the pressures that were brought to bear by middle-class attitudes towards leisure through the concepts of rational recreation and “the amateur gentleman”.³¹ Holt also looked at the changing nature of working class life and the way in which sport became an important expression of identity amongst urban communities which changed so fundamentally over the course of the nineteenth century. He argued that the ‘diffusionist’ view of popular culture needed “close and critical scrutiny.”³² Evidence of diffusion will be sought in the Halifax case study.

In summary, clearly a sporting and recreational revolution took place over the course of the nineteenth century to match that of the social and economic world of which it was part. The precise path of this development and the individual characteristics have varied from sport to

²⁶ J. Lowerson, *Sport and the English Middle Classes, 1870-1914* (Manchester, 1993)

²⁷ *Ibid*

²⁸ Bailey, *Leisure and Class*

²⁹ Tranter, *Sport, Economy and Society in Britain*

³⁰ Richard Holt, *Sport and the British: A Modern History*, (Oxford 1992); John Hargreaves, *Sport, Power and Culture: A Social and Historical Analysis of Popular Sports in Britain*, (Cambridge 1986); J. Lowerson, *Sport and the English Middle Classes*, (Manchester 1993); Dennis Brailsford, *Sport, Time and Society: British at Play*, (London, 1991.)

³¹ Holt, *Sport and the British*

³² *Ibid* p135

sport and region to region and within sub-localities of those regions and this study will attempt to throw light on the evidence of that revolution within cricket in the West Riding of Yorkshire and more particularly the Halifax area.

Cricket

The history of cricket has attracted significant attention from academics although the main focus has been centred upon the early development of the game in the south-east of England before 1800 or its place in the social and cultural surroundings of the late Victorian period.

Much of cricket's historiography of the nineteenth century too has concentrated its attention on London and the south east of England following on from the development of the Hambledon club in Hampshire and the patronage of the landed gentry which eventually saw the focus move to London and the MCC at Lords. The influence of the reformed public schools and the social elite was paramount with the rise of the amateur ethos, rational recreation, discipline and moral improvement all essential features of a changed direction to the game. These and related elements were at the heart of the focus for the traditional cricket historians until relatively recently. Birley makes only brief mention of cricket being played in Sheffield in the early nineteenth century and quotes a reference in the Manchester Guardian to a match taking place in Huddersfield in 1826 before the gradual expansion of the game in the north brought about by the activities of William Clarke's All-England XI from 1846.³³ Rowland Bowen whilst looking in detail at the origins and development of the game makes only passing mention of the first reference to cricket in Yorkshire in 1751.³⁴

H.T. Waghorn one of the early cricket researchers found little reference to cricket in the north with the exception of a cricket club in Ripon between 1813 and 1826.³⁵ Rev. R.S. Holmes was perhaps the first local historian to look at the development of cricket in Yorkshire and he found evidence of cricket being played in Sheffield in 1751 and Leeds in 1757.³⁶ In recent times John Major unearthed an even earlier reference to a court roll relating to Hillham, fifteen miles east of Leeds, which notes in 1620 - "*terr in locovoc Crickitt*", which he takes to mean "known to the locals as a cricket ground" although there is no corroborating evidence.³⁷ Few clubs, though, were in existence before 1830 and the game cannot be said to have had any great significance in the region prior to what Keith Sandiford described as "a spectacular cricket explosion" in the second half of the nineteenth century.³⁸ Rob Light is one of the first historians to draw a sharp distinction between the

³³ Derek Birley, *A Social History of English Cricket*, (London, 1999)

³⁴ Rowland Bowen, *Cricket A history of its growth and development throughout the world*, (London, 1970)

³⁵ H.T. Waghorn, *The Dawn of Cricket*, (London, 1906) (Facsimile edition Surrey, 2005)

³⁶ Rev R.S. Holmes, *History of Yorkshire County Cricket 1833-1903*, (Westminster, 1904)

³⁷ John Major, *More than just a game The Story of Cricket's Early Years*, (London, 2007)

³⁸ Keith A.P. Sandiford, *Cricket and the Victorians*, (Aldershot, 1994)

development of cricket in the West Riding of Yorkshire and much of the rest of the country. He cites particularly the early adoption of leagues and values often associated with commercialism, spectatorship and professionalism all of which contrasted with the carefully constructed establishment concept of the sport which up to recently has dominated the sport's historical literature.³⁹ The limits of research caused Light to concentrate his work on the larger centres of population in the West Riding particularly Leeds and the larger clubs.

It is necessary to ask the question as to whether the development of cricket in the Halifax area, an altogether more geographically isolated and diverse locality followed the same development pattern and whether there were noticeable differences between the leading clubs and the many smaller clubs which came into being.

Halifax - the geographic, economic and social context

The novelist Phyllis Bentley observed that "all Halifax history depends on Halifax geography" in her introduction to a volume commemorating the centenary of Halifax's incorporation as a municipal borough in 1948.⁴⁰ John Hargreaves in his history of the town reaffirms this observation, commenting that "an awareness of the geographical constraints and environmental opportunities presented by the Calderdale landscape is a prerequisite to an understanding of the complex economic, social and political history of the town and its hinterland."⁴¹ Hargreaves cites the impervious nature of the bedrock, the poor quality of the top soil, the rough inhospitable terrain and the cold and wet climate as major factors in deterring both invaders and settlers in the period up to 1500 which taken with "its geographical remoteness ensured that Halifax remained a relatively insignificant Pennine backwater."⁴²

The environmental and geographical features which made extensive scale arable farming impossible helped stimulate the development of the textile industry towards the end of the medieval period as a supplementary economic activity to the subsistence agriculture. Hargreaves underlines too how the emergence of the textile industry was helped further by the abundant presence of fast flowing moorland streams and the soft water which was ideal for the dyeing and finishing of woollen cloth. The dual economy of farming and textiles continued to emerge and develop in the upland settlements, stimulating the development of Halifax as the dominant commercial and urban centre for its periphery and providing the basis for the town's rise to regional prominence in the early modern period as a manufacturing and marketing centre of woollen cloth. This phase of industrial production for the wider national and international market in cottage workshops in rural areas

³⁹ Robert F. Light, *The Other Face of English Cricket – The Origins of League Cricket in the West Riding of Yorkshire*, (Huddersfield, 2002)

⁴⁰ P. Bentley, 'The romance of Halifax', in J.J. Mulroy (Ed) *The Story of the Town that Bred Us* (Halifax 1948)

⁴¹ John A. Hargreaves, *Halifax*, (Lancaster, 2003) p1

⁴² *Ibid* p1-2

combined with subsistence agriculture has in recent years been termed “proto-industrialization”.⁴³ Pat Hudson argues that “the West Riding textile area can, however, be regarded as a good example of ‘successful’ proto-industrialization where the inherent dynamics and limitations of proto-industrial production may well have promoted the development of more advanced industrial forms.”⁴⁴

Geographical factors continued to hinder the development of transport and communication systems. Hargreaves points to the “impenetrable shield of hills encompassing Halifax from north-east to south-east” which made “a formidable barrier for eighteenth and nineteenth century turnpike, waterway and railway engineers.”⁴⁵ As a consequence neighbouring Bradford with its earlier connections to both the canal and railway network became pre-eminent as a regional textile marketing centre after 1800.⁴⁶

Halifax had relatively small supplies of coal and the importation of cheap supplies was not possible until the link created by the Calder and Hebble Navigation canal in 1828. Thus Halifax and its hinterland was dependant on water power for much longer than its neighbours Bradford and Leeds and much slower to develop coal fired, steam powered machinery and a large scale manufacturing industry. Hargreaves argues that as a result Halifax developed a more diversified economic base than many similar sized towns and this enabled it to absorb some of the impact of economic recession in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Hargreaves also argues that “the geographical constraints which had sometimes impeded economic and urban development of Halifax, also helped to foster a strong spirit of both individualism and community”⁴⁷ and it is necessary to ask the question whether any of these different characteristics had any impact on the development of sport and cricket in the district?

The growth and change in the local community is highlighted by population statistics. During the age of industrial expansion from 1750 to 1850 the population of the town of Halifax increased fivefold from 5,000 to 25,000 and that of the parish by a similar proportion from 31,000 to 149,000 as a result of the industrial expansion and inward migration.

While Halifax lost its ascendancy in West Riding worsted production by the early nineteenth century to neighbouring Bradford, worsted manufacture continued to grow and new textile industries such as cotton and silk appeared as well as carpet manufacture, trades allied to textiles such as dyeing and the start of a machine-tool industry and card making. The topographer William White wrote that Halifax by the middle of the nineteenth century

⁴³ L.A. Clarkson, *Proto-Industrialization: The First Phase of Industrialization?* (Basingstoke, 1985)

⁴⁴ Pat Hudson, *The Genesis of Industrial Capital A study of the West Riding wool textile industry c1750-1850* (Cambridge, 1986) p

⁴⁵ John A. Hargreaves, *Halifax* p2

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ Ibid

ranked “next to Leeds, Bradford and Huddersfield as one of the principal seats and emporiums of the woollen and worsted manufactures”.⁴⁸

The ever increasing textile competition from Leeds, Bradford and Huddersfield forced technological and structural innovation upon its Halifax counterparts. This in turn had a devastating effect on some sections of the community. As Hargreaves comments “the transition from an extensive web of relatively small-scale domestic manufacture to an all-embracing system of factory production was a slow, painful and inexorable process for the individuals, families and communities most directly affected.”⁴⁹ Large numbers of male handloom weavers and wool-combers faced a marked decline in their income as well as a loss of their independent artisan status and very often a loss of status within their own family as the demand for female and juvenile labour increased and their own diminished. The displacement of large groups of domestic outworkers in the woollen and worsted industries provided the basis for substantial working-class organisation and political agitation during the 1830s and 1840s and Hargreaves points to the considerable support in Halifax for the Factory, Anti-Poor Law, Chartist and Anti-Corn Law movements.⁵⁰

By 1850 Halifax had reached a position of some eminence as a manufacturing and commercial centre with a substantial population but a century of unplanned growth left in its wake all manner of social and physical problems. Extremes of poverty, educational deprivation, unregulated working environments, poor housing and a heavily polluted physical environment all posed considerable problems for the fledgling local authority. Thus, Engels in his survey of the manufacturing districts drew attention to “the disgusting state of the working-men’s districts” of Leeds and Bradford, “chiefly attributable to the unpaved, drain less streets . . . and total lack of the most ordinary means of cleanliness . . . thickly populated districts are without any sewers whatsoever” and said the same was true of the remaining towns of the West Riding, especially of Barnsley, Halifax and Huddersfield. Not content with denigrating the physical condition of the environment Engels, though not an unbiased source, also went to considerable length to detail the extent of overcrowding and the parlous state generally of the working-classes who were poorly clothed, existed on meagre incomes and food, worked long hours and lacked any rudiments of health care.⁵¹

After 1850 the number and size of textile factories in the town continued to expand enormously. Between 1851 and 1865 the number of textile factories in Halifax more than doubled from 24 to 56. By 1871, following a period of sustained expansion in the West Riding textile trade, over one-third of the local textile labour force was employed in factory units of more than one hundred workers and nearly a half in workshops of fifty or more,

⁴⁸ W. White, *Directory of the Clothing Districts of the West Riding of Yorkshire*, (Reprint, Newton Abbot 1969) p546

⁴⁹ John A. Hargreaves, *Halifax* p92-3

⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, (Oxford 2009 – First published in German in Leipzig 1845, translated into English and published New York 1887 and London 1892)

although clearly a considerable number still worked in much smaller units. John Crossley and Co who became pre-eminent carpet manufacturers had 350 employees in 1837. They adopted power loom weaving in the 1850s and by 1871 the workforce had increased to over 5,000. Wool-combing machinery was in use in the Halifax textile industry by 1856 and resulted in much deprivation and some emigration in the transitional period amongst that section of the working population.⁵²

After the turbulent years of economic and social dislocation in the mid-Victorian period and the culture of popular radicalism the scene gradually inclined more towards consensus than conflict and with better communications, wider education, rising real incomes and shorter working hours for those in employment, the opportunity for leisure grew in the latter period of the Victorian era. Until quite late in the century Sunday was the only day when any form of leisure was feasible for most of the population and even then opportunities for leisure were few. The first public park in the town opened in 1857 on land gifted by a local benefactor.⁵³ Mid-week band concerts were allowed but there was little provision for physical games. The annual mid-summer fair and early autumn rush-bearing festivals, which often involved fairground attractions, circuses and other theatrical attractions as well as the consumption of alcohol, were the main catalysts of popular leisure. Sunday school anniversaries were also important occasions drawing large attendances across the district.⁵⁴ The musical tradition of the area was strong with the Halifax Choral Society being founded in 1817. Brass bands were increasingly popular and by the end of the century nearly every village in the locality supported its own band. The Mechanics Institute movement began in the 1820s with offshoots across the district and by 1857 possessed a purpose built hall in the centre of the town which hosted lectures and concerts as well as a large library. Many of the clubs and societies not connected with churches or chapels met in public houses where the publican would allow the use of rooms to the benefit of both parties. New public swimming baths were opened in 1859 and the Halifax Swimming Club was formed in 1864. By the 1870s the leisure “revolution” was in full flow.⁵⁵

Questions to address

How did cricket come to be played in Halifax and district, a small industrial town away from the main communication routes isolated by its geography and topography? How did it develop? Who was involved in its development? Was it socially inclusive or the preserve of certain sections of society and what were the reasons for the social make-up? Was the game established under the diffusionist model from the top down or did it develop from the grassroots upwards? Where was the game played and what facilities existed? Did it differ from the game we know today? Did the movement for rational and respectable recreation

⁵² John A. Hargreaves, *Halifax*

⁵³ E. Webster, 'Leisure and Pleasure in 19th Century Halifax', *Transactions of the Halifax Antiquarian Society* (1989)

⁵⁴ *Ibid*

⁵⁵ *Ibid*

have a part to play in the development and what, if any, was the role and effect of the new police? Did the establishment of the game of cricket play any part in the consensus and compromise which gradually emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century? Is there any evidence of a relationship between the growing urban culture and the economic and social structure of the town, and what part, if any, did leisure and cricket play in this?

Did the early professionals in the local game William Swain and Tom Emmett, influence its development and growth in any way?

These are the key questions which have arisen out of the literary review and to address them I am going to do a case study of the Halifax area. Little research has been undertaken on leisure in Halifax and even less in relation to cricket and this is reflected by the major historians of these areas largely passing it by and this case study will help to fill that void. The isolation of the area may have been an important factor in the shaping of the game in this locality and again this study will help to throw more light on this factor. Tranter himself has underlined the variations found both in the development of other sports and from region to region,⁵⁶ and this case study of the Halifax area will be a contribution to the knowledge and understanding of the development of “grass roots” cricket in this locality and its relationship to the regional and national situation.

The study will be broken down into three broad areas or chapters, the first examining the development of cricket across Yorkshire as a whole, the second, looking at the early period of development in Halifax up until 1850 and the third chapter covering the final period of the rapid development of the game in Halifax from 1850 to about 1870.

The primary sources are the contemporary newspapers which are available. Up to 1832, the main source is the regional paper the *Leeds Mercury* although this only appeared weekly and for the first part of the period with only a four page format. The first continuous local newspaper, the *Halifax Guardian and Halifax and Huddersfield Advertiser* appeared in 1832 again as a weekly with a four page format but gradually increasing in size before being joined by the *Halifax Courier* in 1853.

⁵⁶ Tranter, *Sport, Economy and Society in Britain*.

Chapter 1 - Early cricket in Yorkshire up to 1870

This chapter will provide a brief summary of cricket in the county up to the last quarter of the nineteenth century drawing particularly on Lillywhite and Holmes and research in the main regional newspaper the *Leeds Mercury* along with the first established paper local to this study, the *Halifax Guardian*, to assess what they reveal about the early game of cricket. Furthermore it will examine the key themes of the early form of the game in this area.⁵⁷

The lack of space in the early newspapers presents the first difficulty for researchers and is summarised by the Rev. Holmes

the newspaper of that period (1737-1806) was a small sheet of four pages, issued once a week at the cost of sixpence. Consequently as it had to chronicle political, court and other news of national importance, along with all important communications from the Continent, and . . . advertisements . . . cricket had to be put into a very modest corner.⁵⁸

Moreover there seems to have been a lack of interest in the game in the Yorkshire area at that stage and Holmes highlights this also

In a long and careful search through old Yorkshire newspapers dating from 1737 to 1806 . . . only a few items of interest have cropped up. Cricket is seldom mentioned, and for a very sufficient reason. It was not then nearly as popular as boxing, cockfighting, and pedestrianism.⁵⁹

Much of course would depend on the interest and views of the editor and newspaper and even as late as 1827 the *Leeds Mercury* made its position clear – “We really cannot find room for any long details on the subject of Cricket Matches, which, however interesting to the parties engaged are not of very high importance to the public.”⁶⁰

Pre-Victorian Yorkshire was far removed from the mainstream of eighteenth century English cricket which existed in London and the counties that surrounded it. Newspaper references to cricket in London and the south-east are relatively common from the early 1700s onwards.

References to cricket in Yorkshire prior to 1830 on the other hand are scarce. Two important primary works give a valuable picture of cricket in this area prior to this date and were published at either end of the period under study.⁶¹ The first volume of Lillywhite covering the period between 1746 and 1826 contains 750 scores of cricket matches in England, only

⁵⁷ Frederick Lillywhite's *Cricket Scores and Biographies of Celebrated Cricketers Vol 1 1746-1826* and Rev. R.S. Holmes, *History of Yorkshire County Cricket*

⁵⁸ Ibid p9

⁵⁹ Holmes, *History of Yorkshire County Cricket* p9.

⁶⁰ *Leeds Mercury* 19 August 1826.

⁶¹ Frederick Lillywhite's *Cricket Scores and Biographies* and Holmes, *History of Yorkshire County Cricket*

17 of which involve Yorkshire sides and 14 of these involve teams from Sheffield.⁶² Holmes finds a few more newspaper references to cricket in Yorkshire and focuses heavily on the moral influence of cricket. He showed too how in both Sheffield and Leeds the authorities used cricket in attempts to improve behaviour. Thus in Sheffield, one of the first centres of Yorkshire cricket and for a long period the strongest, he noted that in 1751 “The Sheffield authorities engaged professional cricketers to amuse the populace, and so draw them from cock-fighting exhibitions.”⁶³ He also quotes evidence of the early moral influence associated with the game in Leeds in 1757 where the Church Burgesses paid 14s 6d to cricket players on Shrove-Tuesday, “to entertain the populace and to prevent the infamous practice of throwing at cocks”.⁶⁴ Cricket in Sheffield developed quickly with occasional but high profile challenge matches for high stakes against Nottingham a feature of its growth.⁶⁵ The popularity of and enthusiasm for single wicket matches amongst MCC members at Lords in the first years of the nineteenth century seems to have transferred itself very quickly to Sheffield and a major new ground at Darnall on the outskirts of the city, which opened in 1822, was instrumental in cricket establishing a major presence in the region. Four years later a second major venue was added in the city with the opening of the Hyde Park ground.

Away from Sheffield, Holmes makes reference to thirteen other Yorkshire teams which represented a town or village before 1833.⁶⁶ Whilst Yorkshire cricket had clearly not developed to the same extent as it had in the south-east, the structure of the development was very similar. Much of the very early development was due to patronage by the major land owners of the region. The first recorded match in Yorkshire was between sides representing the Duke of Cleveland and the Earl of Northumberland at the latter’s Yorkshire seat at Stanwick near Richmond in 1751.⁶⁷ In 1797 a match took place between Wetherby, under the patronage of the Hon. George Monson and Scruton, near Catterick, under the patronage of Mr Millbank, for a hundred guineas aside.⁶⁸ The Harewood House estate also had a team from at least 1813. Many of the early references are loose collections of players rather than formalised teams such as “the Gentlemen of York” and the “Gentlemen of Doncaster”.⁶⁹ A formal club was established in York in 1784. This organisation was set up by the gentlemen of York with the subscription, hours of play and on-going costs clearly excluding participation by the lower classes. Holmes reproduces a facsimile of the first rules headed Cricket Articles for 1784

⁶² Lillywhite’s *Cricket Scores* and Holmes *History of Yorkshire County Cricket*

⁶³ Holmes, *History of Yorkshire County Cricket* p10.

⁶⁴ *Ibid* p11

⁶⁵ *Ibid* p19

⁶⁶ Holmes, *History of Yorkshire County Cricket* – The clubs and teams mentioned are Bradford, Harewood, Leeds, Ripon, York, Huddersfield, Dewsbury, Wakefield New Club, Hallam, Stannington, Halifax, Woodhouse, Armley, Wetherby, Scruton, Knaresborough, Lascelles Hall and Dalton.

⁶⁷ *Newcastle Journal* 10 August 1751

⁶⁸ Holmes, *History of Yorkshire County Cricket* p12

⁶⁹ *Ibid* p11 and Robert F. Light, *The Other Face of English Cricket The Origins of League Cricket in the West Riding of Yorkshire* p14

The enclosed named are hereto subscribed do agree to meet upon Heworth Moor every Tuesday and Friday morning at four o' clock until the fifth day of September next for the purpose of playing Cricket, to play for One Penny a Game, and to fine Three pence if not within sight of the Wickets each Morning before the Minster strikes five o' clock, every person to be hereafter admitted a Member to pay One Shilling.⁷⁰

Alongside these matches patronised by the landed gentry and upper and middle classes, cricket was becoming more popular in the region's urban centres. The lower classes in the main were limited to a basic folk and informal level of activity with largely impromptu games. Joseph Lawson, a Pudsey woollen manufacturer and merchant looking back to the 1830s said of the game

We remember the time when Cricketing was unknown in Pudsey, except as played mostly in the lanes or small openings in the village, with a tub leg for a bat, made smaller at one end for a handle, a wall cape for a bat, or some large stone set on end for a stump . . . and a pot taw or some hard substance covered with a listing and sometimes sewed on top with a twine or band. They were all one ball overs if double wicket was played; no umpires, and often those who cheated the hardest won.⁷¹

It is important to recognise the cultural practice from the standpoint of those who are engaged in it as Dr Emma Griffin argues in her historiographical review of popular culture but she also adds that "the challenge for historians of popular culture must be to integrate popular cultural experiences with the power structures that variously encouraged, permitted and suppressed them".⁷² Lawson from his elite position as a manufacturer and employer clearly regarded cricket as a civilising influence, "Cricketing has had a most wonderful influence for good on the young men of Pudsey – not only on the players, but on the spectators as well." In the early part of the period Lawson was writing about, the 1820s and 1830s, he commented that there were no policemen, only village constables and they had limited ability to stop the more unruly practices. Fighting often for wagers was commonplace as was dog and cock fighting and the consumption of alcohol was endemic.⁷³ Clearly there was a belief amongst some of the elite at least that cricket was a counter civilising balance and with the political mood also changing to one of control of the unruly elements by the introduction of police forces circumstances were improving for the growth of the game.⁷⁴

Newspaper references to cricket in Yorkshire start to appear on a more regular basis from the early 1800s onwards but these featured largely the middle and upper classes who had

⁷⁰ Holmes p10-13

⁷¹ Joseph Lawson, *Progress in Pudsey* p62-63

⁷² Emma Griffin, 'Popular Culture in Industrializing England,' *The Historical Journal*, Vol.45, No.3 (Sep., 2002), pp.619-635

⁷³ Joseph Lawson, *Progress in Pudsey* p57

⁷⁴ Taylor, *The new police in nineteenth-century England*

the time and the money to play and whose activities would be of interest to the newspaper proprietors of the day. Primitive transport links made travel an uncomfortable and lengthy undertaking which necessitated challenge matches being organised on a largely local basis. The *Leeds Mercury* reported matches taking place between Wetherby, Linton and Harewood in 1808⁷⁵ and in York and Ripon during 1813.⁷⁶ It would seem that cricket was being played in Leeds before 1814 when in that year a parcel of land in Chapel Allerton, known as the cricket ground, was offered for sale by auction for building purposes.⁷⁷ This also illustrates the lack of security and continuity which was a feature of the early game with many of the first grounds swallowed up by the increasing urban growth.

City cricket became more established after the Napoleonic wars. Leeds were reported as playing in 1817⁷⁸ and by 1822 there was evidence of increasing competition and rivalry with several letters to the *Mercury* newspaper arguing as to whether Leeds or the Wighill Club (a mixture of Wetherby and Tadcaster players) could lay claim to being the second Yorkshire club behind Sheffield.⁷⁹ Sheffield's rivalry with Nottingham had started as early as 1771 but then saw just one further match the following year until the turn of the century when two more matches were contested.⁸⁰ However the matches resumed in 1822 when challenges were issued for two matches and their importance was confirmed with 60 guineas a side at stake, albeit Sheffield with fifteen men and Nottingham the normal eleven.⁸¹ The opening of a new ground at Darnall in Sheffield in 1822 is evidence of the growing popularity of the game in the North, generating huge excitement with a large crowd. Unfortunately it was also an example of one of the first ground accidents when a temporary stand gave way during the course of the game with two spectators killed outright and about 50 more severely injured.⁸² This and subsequent developments at Darnall indicate the casual and transitory nature of the game in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Even though it housed a large crowd and was the scene of many more matches over a number of years, the new ground had little in the way of infrastructure. Much of the tiered seating was created by temporary scaffolding and facilities for players and spectators were in marquees and tents erected for the occasion. Clearly if this was the case for the premier ground of the region it is likely that other clubs had little in the way of permanent facilities. They too, were usually dependant on rented facilities, and very much beholden to private landlords.

Not unnaturally many of the cricket reports in the *Leeds Mercury* centre on its immediate local area and by the 1830s regular matches were taking place both involving the Leeds club

⁷⁵ *Leeds Mercury* 30 July, 10 and 17 September 1813

⁷⁶ *Leeds Mercury* 11 September 1813

⁷⁷ *Leeds Mercury* 11 June 1814

⁷⁸ *Leeds Mercury* 9 August 1817

⁷⁹ *Leeds Mercury* 5, 12 and 19 October 1822

⁸⁰ Holmes, *The History of Yorkshire County Cricket*

⁸¹ *Leeds Mercury* 20 July 1822

⁸² *Leeds Mercury* 31 August 1822

and others within the Leeds area.⁸³ With now regular cricket reports there was clearly a change in editorial view. The continuing interest of the upper class in the elite game may have helped with the publicity. The *Leeds Mercury* in a report of a match between the Leeds and Harewood clubs in 1831 made a point of commenting that “The Earl of Harewood, the Hon. William, the Hon. Henry, the Hon. Edwin and the Hon. Arthur Lascelles, were in the field during a great part of the day, and were much interested in the sport” and this at a time when Baines, the editor and proprietor of the Liberal paper was no lover of the aristocracy.⁸⁴ Patronage by the landed gentry was also referred to indirectly a few years earlier when a cricketer featured in a legal case at the Yorkshire Lent Assizes in a case brought for the violation of a written agreement for employment and dismissal without sufficient cause. Reference is made to the man missing work to play cricket with Lord Harewood and on another, to play cricket at Woodhouse-moor without leave. Other evidence of unacceptable behaviour was submitted and the termination of employment upheld.⁸⁵ Clearly in this case patronage was no protection.

Most of the references to the Leeds club at this time involve them playing their home matches at Woodhouse-moor, an area of common land and presumably on a wicket with little or no preparation on fairly rough terrain and to which the public would have rights of access.⁸⁶ The report of a thunderstorm in May 1833 does throw some light on the game’s infrastructure. The thunderstorm including hail stones did extensive damage in which at least two people were killed. Amongst the many items of damage was “the tent belonging to the Leeds Cricket Club pitched on Woodhouse Moor . . . struck by lightning, and rent asunder, and one of the poles which supported the tent was split,”⁸⁷

The game of cricket in West Yorkshire was becoming more widespread, as were the reports of matches taking place. Matches were still arranged by challenge, sometimes with sizeable stakes which suggests some wealthy backers were still involved with the game. Leeds and Armley played for ten guineas a side in 1817,⁸⁸ a match was arranged for the 1825 season between Leeds and Wetherby with a £20 silver cup to the winners.⁸⁹ Holmes makes reference to two further matches in the same year, one in August, a match in Harewood Park between the Leeds and Harewood clubs with no reference to any stake and one in September, a two day challenge match between Sheffield and Leicester for 100 guineas a side.⁹⁰ In 1833 Armley and Hunslet played for eleven sovereigns⁹¹ and York and Malton for £50 a side.⁹² Much of this was a development of the traditional form of the game with most

⁸³ *Leeds Mercury* 30 June 1832, 4 and 18 August 1832, 15 September 1832, 22 June 1833

⁸⁴ *Leeds Mercury* 13 August 1831

⁸⁵ *Leeds Mercury* 9 April 1825

⁸⁶ *Leeds Mercury* 23 October 1824, 5 August 1826 & 30 June 1832

⁸⁷ *Leeds Mercury* 25 May 1833

⁸⁸ *Leeds Mercury* 9 August 1817

⁸⁹ *Leeds Mercury* 20 November 1824

⁹⁰ Holmes, *The History of Yorkshire County Cricket*

⁹¹ *Leeds Mercury* 10 August 1833

⁹² *Leeds Mercury* 2 November 1833

of the matches taking place in the height of summer, mainly July and August and some part of a local holiday feast. Attempts were made to add commercialism to the traditional approach as part of a new sporting and entertainment culture. In 1833 a grand three day cricket match was held in Ripon as part of the annual August Saint Wilfrid's Feast holiday between eleven of Nottingham and twenty of Ripon. Entrance was 6d and gate takings amounted to over £80 which suggests a paying crowd of over 3,200 with the Nottingham club being paid £60 in expenses.⁹³ Evidence of increasing interest and attendances has already been given for the Sheffield area and the *Leeds Mercury* reported a crowd of upwards of 3,000 spectators for a match between the Knaresborough and Husthwaite Clubs at Helperby in 1828, despite these villages having very small populations.⁹⁴

Although Yorkshire cricket had not developed to the same extent as it had in the south-east of England before the 1830s the early references do indicate the sport had developed in a similar way to its southern counterparts. The initial matches played by teams associated with the region's major landowners had led to the growth of the game in the region's urban centres.⁹⁵ The concept of challenge matches and commercialism developed by the elite cricket in the south-east comprising great patrons, rival villages, growing market towns and an increasingly dominant London was transferred to a rapidly growing industrial and commercial Yorkshire. Gambling continued to be an important feature and was not confined to wagers between the participants or to the gentry. Matches were increasingly attracting considerable numbers of spectators and the not uncommon references to odds in match reports seems to confirm the likelihood of betting taking place amongst the spectators of all classes. For example in 1826 the *Mercury* reports "a match that had excited considerable interest was played on Woodhouse Moor between the Wakefield New and the Leeds Old Cricket Clubs. On the first innings the superiority remained on the side of the Wakefield Youths, and betting ran five to four in their favour."⁹⁶ At this juncture the radical newspaper is showing an interesting neutral tone in relation to gambling which is unlikely to have been the case a couple of decades later.

The working classes had little if any time in which to take part either as a player or as a spectator. Working hours were long. In the 1830s men, women and children from the age of nine were required to work in the early mills and mines for at least twelve hours a day and for six days a week. Other occupations had similar conditions. It was not until 1847 that the campaign for a ten hour day under Richard Oastler's leadership bore some fruit whilst still leaving loop holes which could be exploited by employers. The 1853 Factory Act finally established an effective ten-and-a-half hours' day which was as near as the ten-hours movement came to success in Richard Oastler's lifetime.⁹⁷ If working people were engaged

⁹³ *Leeds Mercury* 24 August 1833

⁹⁴ *Leeds Mercury* 12 July 1828

⁹⁵ Light, *The Other Face of English Cricket*

⁹⁶ *Leeds Mercury* 5 August 1826

⁹⁷ John A. Hargreaves and E.A. Hilary Haigh Eds, *Slavery in Yorkshire Richard Oastler and the campaign against child labour in the Industrial Revolution* (Huddersfield,2012)

in leisure it would be connected with the public house or beer house or a very informal knock about game in a suitable small space. As has been seen Joseph Lawson a mill owner of Pudsey published a series of letters in 1885 of his reminiscences of the previous sixty years. In the early period he refers to boxing, fighting, dog fighting and cock fighting and time spent in the pub as the most common ways of men spending any spare time they had and many involved some form of wager. There was much pressure exerted by the local authorities from the 1830s to curb the more violent and disruptive sports and the newly formed police were at the forefront of this move to embrace a culture of respectability.⁹⁸ Lawson also makes reference to more innocent pastimes such as knur and spell and more violent ones such as “folk foot”.⁹⁹

Lawson rather pithily sums up how people of the village spent their spare time –“ there were only two places to go in spending spare time away from one’s own house – the church or chapel, and the alehouse; the former were seldom open, while the latter was seldom closed.”¹⁰⁰ I have already made reference to his memories of the early game of cricket in the village in what would have been the late 1820s and clearly the game as far as the working class was concerned at this stage was an impromptu affair with little in the way of equipment or organisation and played by the ordinary young people and men of the village.

On a wider regional front the opening of the Darnall ground in Sheffield in 1822 seems to have been pivotal. Holmes refers to the attention it drew from the rest of the country including the famous picture painted by Cruikshank.¹⁰¹ In 1825 the MCC visited Sheffield for the only time and in the same year Twenty-two of Yorkshire played All England and although hopelessly beaten it did much to popularise the game. If the first development at Darnall in 1822 reflected the casual and transitory nature of the game at this stage, the popularity was such that a new and larger ground in the same vicinity was opened only two years later. This had a brick pavilion with an artificial terrace creating seating for 8,000 spectators. Holmes quoted Bell’s Life as saying it was “second to none.”¹⁰² It was also on the cusp of a huge development in technique. The Sussex bowlers had developed a new round arm style of bowling and when three test matches were arranged between Sussex and England to decide whether this was superior to the old style of “underhand” bowling, the venue for the first game was the Darnall ground.¹⁰³ Again Holmes concluded “The effect

⁹⁸ Storch, ‘The Policeman as Domestic Missionary’

⁹⁹ Joseph Lawson, *Letters to the Young on progress in Pudsey during the last sixty years*. First printed in the Pudsey District Advertiser Dec 1885 – Aug 1886, Stanningley, 1887, re-printed 2012 as part of the British Library Historical Collection p58

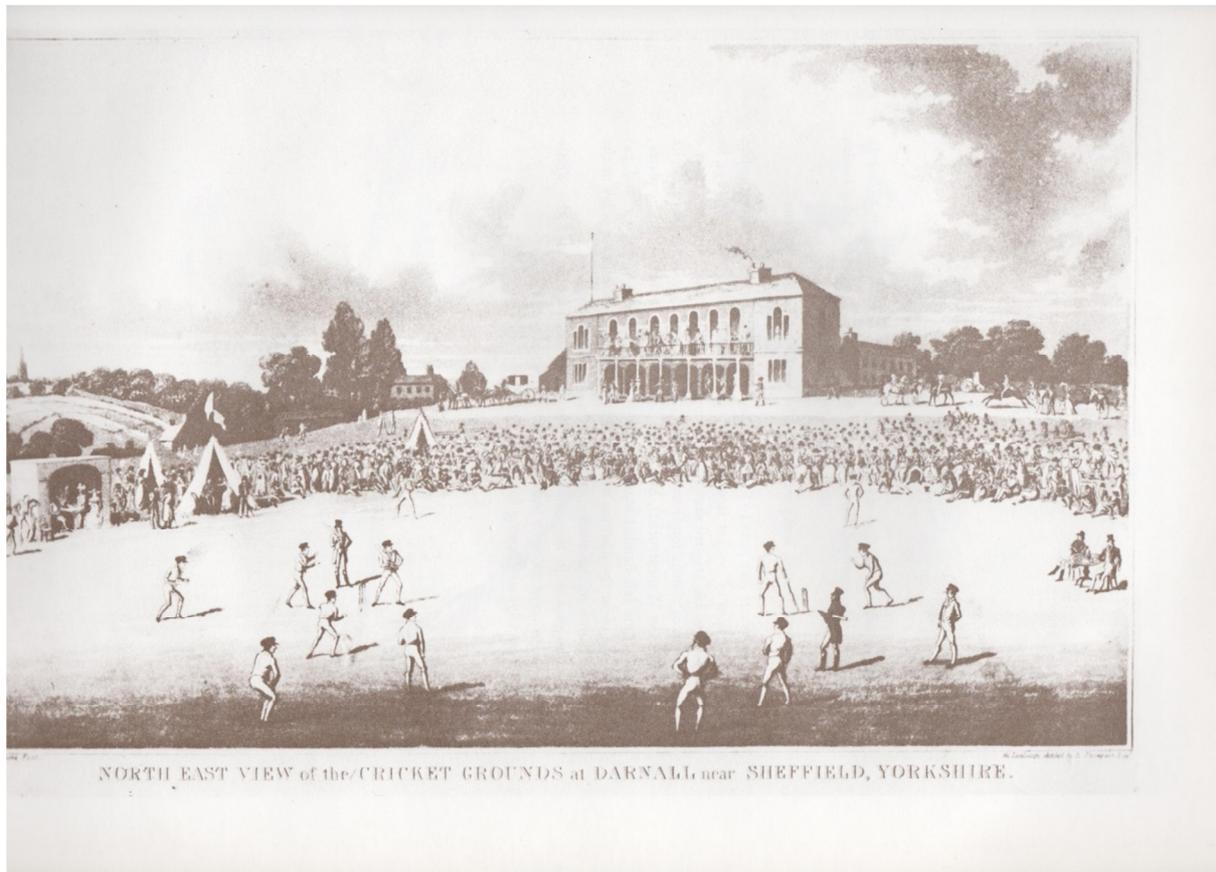
¹⁰⁰ Ibid

¹⁰¹ Holmes, *The History of Yorkshire County Cricket* p14

¹⁰² Ibid

¹⁰³ Ibid

of this was very marked in Yorkshire; cricket clubs sprang up everywhere, more particularly in the West Riding.”¹⁰⁴



The Darnall Ground, Sheffield in 1825 by James Cruikshank

The growing popularity and affordability of newspapers and their increasing size also helped to reverse the previous restraints on match reporting, the *Leeds Mercury* doubling in size from the 14 July 1832 with no increase in the price. The readership, though, was essentially middle class. In 1815 the combined effect of newspaper stamp duty, a further duty on advertisements and on paper itself meant that a four-page newspaper cost at least 7d. or the equivalent of over £2.00 today based on the relative cost of wheat bread and over three times as much in terms of a labourer’s wage.¹⁰⁵ By 1832 the *Leeds Mercury* professed

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. In the period 1825-1850 Holmes quotes the clubs of Leeds, Harewood, Sheffield, Wakefield, Dewsbury, Huddersfield, Halifax, Woodhouse, Armley, Wetherby, Ripon, Knaresborough, Dalton, Bedale, Thirsk, Beverley, Bradford, Otley, Rotherham, Kellmarsh, Mexborough, Harrogate, Keighley, Scarborough, Redcar and Barnsley.

¹⁰⁵ Edward Royle, ‘Press and People’ in *Slavery In Yorkshire*, Eds John A. Hargreaves & E.A. Hilary Haigh

the largest circulation in its increasingly important regional centre but it did not remain unchallenged with the *Leeds Intelligencer*, *Leeds Patriot* and *Leeds Times* all having significant readership. Towards the end of the decade the *Northern Star and Leeds General Advertiser* became the first newspaper to rival the middle-class press by pushing the working class view and giving voice to the Chartist movement's demands for reform.¹⁰⁶ There were still varying degrees of literacy especially amongst the working classes and newspapers were often bought communally to be read aloud amongst groups of friends and work colleagues. The *Northern Star* enjoyed great popularity in the West Riding and it has been calculated that each copy reached at least twenty people.¹⁰⁷ The growing significance of the local press also had a significant impact on the competitive nature of cricket throughout the region. Newspapers were founded in Huddersfield, Bradford and Halifax during the 1830s and 1840s and they played a key role in the growth of cricket in the region both through the publicity which they afforded to the challenges and the reports and commentary which were increasingly part of their coverage.¹⁰⁸

The continued attraction of "big match" cricket¹⁰⁹ whether for its sporting entertainment value alone or its appeal to gamblers or a combination of both, led to the sport developing a presence in the popular culture of parts of the region. The development of another new major venue in Sheffield at the Hyde Park ground in 1826, only a mile and a half from the city centre gave cricket in that conurbation another major boost. Holmes quotes from Pierce Egan's *Book of Sports* – "During the month of September 1830, so great was the interest for the game of cricket in Sheffield, after they had beaten the Notts, that nine double wickets were pitched on the Hyde Park ground where upwards of two hundred players were at work at one time."¹¹⁰ As this suggests, the Sheffield and Nottingham games, albeit sporadic continued to be an important aspect and focus of cricket's development in South Yorkshire right up until 1860. William Clarke of the Nottingham club, in a letter to *Bell's Life* in 1828, accepted a challenge from Sheffield home and away for the huge sum of £500.¹¹¹ The popularity of these challenge matches also made it possible for professionalism to become established in the county for the first time. When a combined side of Sheffield and Leicester played Nottingham in the 1826 match Tom Marsden established himself as the county's first star player with a remarkable score of 227 in his side's only innings, only the second double century ever scored. In two innings the highest score on the Nottingham side was just twenty.

¹⁰⁶ Royle, 'Press and People' p169. The *Northern Star and Leeds General Advertiser* was first published in November 1837.

¹⁰⁷ James Epstein, 'Feargus O'Connor and the Northern Star,' *International Review of Social History*, vol. XXI (1976) pp.51-97 p.70 and Janette Martin, *Chap 6, 'Oastler is welcome': Richard Oastler's triumphant return to Huddersfield, 1844, Slavery in Yorkshire*, Eds John A. Hargreaves & E.A. Hilary Haigh

¹⁰⁸ Dr Peter Davies and Rob Light, *Module Tutors, Module Handbook AFH1021. Bat & Ball : Cricket & Society in Calderdale & Kirklees c 1800-2000.*

¹⁰⁹ Light, *The Other Face of English Cricket*

¹¹⁰ Holmes, *The History of Yorkshire County Cricket* p35

¹¹¹ *Ibid* p23

Marsden was championed as a local sporting hero and his feat was immortalised by a local poet in a rhyme of thirteen stanzas. It had clearly made a great mark on the local sporting population and beyond, as despite it being 81 years later, Holmes quotes extensively from the poem

For Tom kept hitting the ball in the crowd
Who in its applause grew boisterous and loud . . .
For Marsden and Gamble we filled up our glasses
As brimful as when we toast favourite lasses;
And then drank success to all cricketers true
Who with honour this noble diversion pursue.¹¹²

The poem is clear evidence that whilst a professional cricketer, Marsden is seen as a folk hero and a representative of the people who had been elevated to “star status”.¹¹³ Marsden’s status was used in subsequent years to promote and prolong his success as a single wicket champion.

The single wicket game was the game’s most popular early feature and doubtless was the vehicle for its purest form of gambling. It was also the form of the sport which most clearly expressed the culture of pre-industrial recreation.¹¹⁴ Matches were made by backers either singly or in groups and usually involved professional players for a set purse, similar to the prize fight in boxing. The nature of the challenge and its representation as part of the traditional sport is evidenced by Tom Marsden’s letter to the *Sheffield Independent* on 26 September 1828 and again quoted by Holmes.¹¹⁵

SIR,- You will please to state in your next paper that my friends are ready to back me to play any man in England a match at single wicket for the sum of £50. The game to be played on the New Ground, at Darnall, on Monday, the 13th, or Monday, the 20th of October; and the person accepting the challenge to receive £10 for his travelling expenses. Upon receiving an answer to this challenge, the stake will be immediately sent to your office. Yours, &c,

THOS. MARSDEN

These matches were viewed as commercial ventures by the organisers with the publicity and the purse designed to attract a large audience although often exaggerated to catch the public’s attention.¹¹⁶ Although formalised rules for cricket had developed by the nineteenth century, the character of the big matches and single wicket contests for large stakes demonstrates the influence the pre-industrial practices still had on the game. There was no regulated structure binding the challenges for stakes and championships. The number of

¹¹² Holmes, *The History of Yorkshire County Cricket* p35

¹¹³ Light, *The Other Face of English Cricket* p19

¹¹⁴ Ibid

¹¹⁵ Holmes, *The History of Yorkshire County Cricket* p27

¹¹⁶ Ibid p12

players on either side was negotiable. Sheffield joined forces with Leicester to provide a suitable challenge to Nottingham in 1826. Holmes gives details of the two single-wicket matches between Marsden and Fuller Pilch for the championship of England and £100 a side in 1833 when no fielders were allowed and wides were scored for the first time in such matches.¹¹⁷

These public challenges also reflected basic aspects of the pre-modern culture, containing an element of theatre which built up public anticipation as some sort of ritual. The challenge issued by letter or publication in the press, the acceptance, a set of suggested stakes, venues, dates and other details were all part of the accepted format and issued in such a provocative way as to make rejection more difficult.¹¹⁸ The challenges themselves were expression of deep rivalry in a similar way to that which had built up between Sheffield and Nottingham. The rise of cricket in Sheffield in the 1820s had lessened the gap in playing standards between the two and this rivalry increasingly turned in other directions.

One of the most significant changes was the formation of a cricket team in the hand loom weaving village of Dalton near Huddersfield in 1831.¹¹⁹ This coincided with very difficult economic times for hand loom weavers and this together with their work being based at home meant they were able to fit what work they had to their cricket and practice and as a result were soon vying with Sheffield for supremacy. As early as 1842 Dalton had played Sheffield for what the *Sheffield Independent* billed as the championship of Yorkshire and for £100 although other sources quoted £30.¹²⁰

Increasingly Sheffield cricket was no longer on its own. Cricketing rivalry and indeed economic and civic rivalry came from the rapidly burgeoning urban textile districts of the West Riding and beyond. The evidence of playing for stake money stretched into the 1850s¹²¹ but the number of games which involved such money diminished markedly with the exception of single wicket matches. Stakes too were adapted in their format on occasion and reflected a lowering of prize money and the increasing participation by the working class. In 1847 four clubs, “the Salt Horn Club of Oakenshaw, Birkenshaw, Dudley Hill and Pudsey played in a tournament for a fat pig valued at £10”.¹²²

Despite the lowering and often removal of stakes there is, however, no evidence that the on and off field rivalry diminished in any way and the amount of reported cricket in the region continued to grow. To underline the degree of rivalry the reporting of disputes was common place. As early as 1834 the *Bradford Observer* reported “On Tuesday last on Bradford Moor a match between Fairweather Green and Bradford Moor Clubs ended in dispute. A player of the Bradford Moor Club refused to give up his bat after being given out by the umpire, and

¹¹⁷ Holmes, *The History of Yorkshire Cricket* p27 – both matches were won easily by Pilch

¹¹⁸ Light, *The Other Face of English Cricket*

¹¹⁹ Holmes, *The History of Yorkshire County Cricket* p91

¹²⁰ *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* 1 Oct 1842

¹²¹ Sheffield v Yorkshire at Leeds for £50 a side –*Halifax Guardian* 6 Aug 1853

¹²² *Leeds Times* 20 September 1847, also quoted by Light, *The Other Face of English Cricket* p26

even some of his own party acknowledged he was out".¹²³ A different element was introduced in 1841 when a dispute causing the premature end of a match between Leeds Victoria and Bradford in a stake match was referred to Bells Life to act as arbitrators. *Bells Life* regarded the incident as a breach of gambling's code of ethics and the *Halifax Guardian* quoted from "the remarks from this arbiter".

In the match between Bradford and Leeds Victoria clubs, the batter was bound to go out in accordance with the decision of the umpire. The former club wins, and the bets go with the stakes.¹²⁴

As far as club cricket was concerned Yorkshire boasted clubs across the county by the early 1850s.¹²⁵

Nationally and regionally the opportunities for professionals to play in big matches diminished from the 1840s. The first small wave of county clubs was formed¹²⁶ but a new approach to sport was started in the reformed public schools. The concept of amateurism began to take hold and within the game many thought gambling should no longer form a part. Much of this change was achieved through the conduit of the public school and the transformation that took place within those organisations. The elite public schools themselves were tainted by practices first established during the Georgian period. Standards were low with gambling, drinking and bullying all endemic and the system was ripe for reform. This was achieved largely as a result of the muscular Christian movement which introduced a new set of ethics based on strength and power which was directed to noble purposes and which would reflect the more industrious and respectable times.¹²⁷ Sport was viewed as the chief instrument for achieving a new breed of English gentleman and cricket came to be viewed as the ultimate expression of manly combativeness, physical and mental discipline, and ethical fair play.¹²⁸ Apart from perhaps generating added publicity and respectability there is little evidence that the increasing acceptance of cricket by the establishment and particularly in the elite public schools had any immediate direct effect on the growth of the game in Yorkshire. It was clear though that over time, with the continued growth of interest in cricket in the public schools and a natural spread to the Universities, the Church and the army this would contribute to the overall growth of the game.

¹²³ *Bradford Observer* 19 June 1834

¹²⁴ *Halifax Guardian* 21 August 1841 and also quoted by Rob Light, *Bat & Ball : Cricket & Society in Calderdale & Kirklees c 1800-2000*

¹²⁵ Holmes, *History of Yorkshire County Cricket* p18. He quotes evidence of clubs at Sheffield,, Huddersfield, Dewsbury, Wakefield, Halifax, Leeds, Knaresborough, York, Bedale, Dalton, Thirsk, Beverley, Otley, Rotherham, Harrogate, Keighley, Scarborough, Redcar and Barnsley.

¹²⁶ Sussex (1839), Nottinghamshire (1841) and Surrey (1845)

¹²⁷ Keith A.P. Sandiford, *Cricket and the Victorians*, p35

¹²⁸ Light, *The Other Face of English Cricket*

The development of county cricket saw Yorkshire play its first match in 1833 against Norfolk and the team was made up entirely of Sheffield players.¹²⁹ But in the 22 years up to 1855 Yorkshire played just 21 matches illustrating the lack of opportunity for the elite players. The other source of elite cricket in the North, the big matches between Sheffield and Nottingham started again in 1822 but then only 13 games were played in the years up to 1841.¹³⁰ This dearth of opportunity for the elite players was not only evident in the north of England. Professionals had been employed by public schools for a number of years. As early as 1823 a professional bowler was taken on by Harrow¹³¹ and most of the others, after first believing amateur coaching was the answer, soon followed suit. Rugby, for example, engaged Deacon of Nottinghamshire in the late 1830s as its first regular cricket professional.¹³² But whilst individual employment for cricket professionals continued to increase there was still little opportunity for them to play in elite matches. The inaugural Gentleman versus Players fixture took place at Lords in 1806¹³³ and the fixture destined to become the most important of the season, North versus South started in 1836¹³⁴ but these games were few in number and rarely took place in the north.

The lack of elite cricket changed dramatically from 1846 when William Clarke, a renowned professional from Nottingham, formed the All-England Eleven. As John Major comments

Clarke's timing was perfect. The railways were facilitating long distance travel, interest in cricket was high, and the professional cricketers, with few exceptions, were working men of modest means, keen to add to their income while their fame and skills lasted.¹³⁵

Only three games took place in that inaugural season but all were in the north of England.¹³⁶ The concept grew quickly. In 1847 the Eleven played ten games at Leicester, York, Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool, Sheffield, Leeds, Newcastle upon Tyne, Stockton and Stourbridge and the following season added Derby, Bradford, Coventry, Sunderland, Darlington, Chelmsford and Southampton to the list.¹³⁷ Spectating was clearly the important factor; the whole focus was on getting a crowd. The very best of the early Victorian cricketers were attracted to Clarke's side and "the demand to see this team of all-stars was colossal".¹³⁸ In a link back to the days of challenge matches the high degree of interest attracted huge betting on the outcomes and in one game at Manchester £40,000 was said

¹²⁹ Holmes, *History of Yorkshire County Cricket* p29

¹³⁰ Ibid p19

¹³¹ Sandiford, *Cricket and the Victorians* p37

¹³² Ibid p38

¹³³ John Major, *More than a game The story of Cricket's Early Years* p126

¹³⁴ Ibid p161

¹³⁵ Ibid p179

¹³⁶ Ibid p180-181, against 20 of Sheffield, 18 of Manchester and 18 of Yorkshire.

¹³⁷ Ibid p181-2

¹³⁸ Major, *More than a game* p183

to have been staked.¹³⁹ The All-England Eleven won most of its games and did much for the development of cricket both in terms of players and of interest in the game. By 1851 it reached its zenith with thirty-four games across the country but right up to the late 1870s they played at least twenty matches a year. Frederick Lillywhite in 1851 said “owing to the exertions of Clarke cricket has become a very popular game in the North, even as far as Scotland”¹⁴⁰ Matches in the main were hugely successful and before long other competing elevens of professional players were established. The United All-England Eleven entered the scene, soon to be joined by the United South of England Eleven, the New All-England Eleven, the United North of England Eleven and a number of others. This marked an important element of the transition of the game as it was taken to the people on special occasions in the form of a remarkable spectacle.

In all nearly twenty such touring professional teams sprang into being, some short lived and some played on until the 1880s before finally fading away.¹⁴¹ The itinerant elevens were greeted enthusiastically in the industrial areas of the north and midlands. These special occasions had much in common with the early travelling shows and fairgrounds researched by Professor Vanessa Toulmin.¹⁴² The first appearance in Leeds of the All-England Eleven in 1846 generated huge excitement and crowds. The visit attracted widespread coverage in the local press and the *Leeds Times* reported

Long before the hour for pitching the wickets, half past ten on Monday morning, the road leading from Leeds to Woodhouse was thronged with wayfarers, equestrian, pedestrian, and vehicularian . . . and notwithstanding the price charged for admission was as high as one shilling; from two to three thousand people were upon the ground before the stumps were drawn at night.¹⁴³

This fixture was so successful that it went on to become a permanent feature of the local cricket calendar for the next thirty years. Throughout the 1850s the popularity of the All-England Eleven was high. There are frequent passing references in Lillywhite’s *Guide to Cricketers* - “a great occasion”, “very large attendance”, “the town was never so much enlivened”, “promenading by the ladies” and “neither expense nor trouble spared”.¹⁴⁴ These brief comments make it clear that the visit of the Eleven was an important social occasion which demanded attendance by the local dignitaries, their ladies and tradesfolk.¹⁴⁵ The continued involvement of some of the aristocracy was another indication of the high

¹³⁹ Major, *More than a game* p183

¹⁴⁰ Ibid

¹⁴¹ Matches against teams representing towns and districts in Yorkshire can be traced including Sheffield, Bradford, Harrogate, Dalton, Ripon, Wakefield, Batley, Hallam, Pudsey, Rotherham, Dewsbury, Clayton, Mirfield, Ossett, Halifax, Elland and Todmorden and these teams varied from 22s, 20s, 18s, 15s, 14s and occasionally 11s.

¹⁴² Professor Vanessa Toulmin of Sheffield University, Director of the National Fairground Archive.

¹⁴³ *Leeds Times* 12 September 1846 and also quoted by Light *The Other Face of English Cricket*

¹⁴⁴ *The Guide to Cricketers* was published annually between 1849 and 1866, edited by Frederick Lillywhite

¹⁴⁵ Ric Sissons, *The Players A Social History of the Professional Cricketer*, London 1988 p37

regard in which the Eleven was held. Lord Henry Paget was President of the All-England Eleven in 1860¹⁴⁶ and others were involved in sponsoring matches against them. Right up to the 1860s the cricket establishment did not see the existence of the professional, itinerant teams as a threat to the future of cricket. Indeed matches between the All-England Eleven and the United England Eleven were one of the highlights of the season from the end of the 1850s up until 1870. This was very much a transition stage linked to an age of spectacle. In those twelve years the two teams met nineteen times sharing the honours with the majority of the games taking place at Lord's but with two at the Oval, two at Old Trafford and in its two final years at the Savile Town Ground, Dewsbury. Whilst the County game was very much in its infancy the influence of professional cricketers was at its height.

In the 1854 edition of Fred Lillywhite's Guide 110 professional cricketers in England are listed, 27 in Yorkshire, 21 in Nottinghamshire, 16 in Sussex, 13 in Surrey, 9 in Kent and 7 in Cambridgeshire with more than one also listed as resident in Derbyshire, Durham, Northumberland, Middlesex and Suffolk.¹⁴⁷ The relatively few professional cricketers established their own Friendly Society, the Cricketers' Fund Friendly Society in 1857 which was largely funded by the gate receipts from the All-England versus United fixtures.¹⁴⁸

As the evidence of the professional game suggests, cricket was effectively regionalised with Lord's and the MCC failing to exert any national control. Within the counties parochialism was rife and before 1862 only Sussex, Surrey and Nottinghamshire existed as playing entities.¹⁴⁹ Yorkshire County Cricket Club was established in 1863 under the powerful patronage of Mr M.J. Ellison, the agent for the Duke of Norfolk who was Sheffield's principal land owner. However, being Sheffield based the new venture commanded little respect elsewhere in the county with Bradford and York also vying to be host club. In that first year the county club only organised one fixture, against Surrey, with six clubs providing the players and only three coming from Sheffield.¹⁵⁰ In the same year Bradford arranged matches with Nottinghamshire. Holmes commented that "as late as 1866 the 'Cricketers' Companion' remarked:- At present it is difficult to define which is the County Club, as York, Bradford and Sheffield aspire to that honour. . ." ¹⁵¹

The mid 1860s saw the start of the decline of the professional's dominance partly as a result of the disastrous split between North and South which had arisen through tensions between the gentleman amateur and professional factions. A number of disputes caused arguments between the Surrey and Nottinghamshire clubs which resulted in a number of northern professionals refusing to play against Surrey or in the prestigious Gentlemen versus Players

¹⁴⁶ Ric Sissons, *The Players*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid* p10

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid* p41

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁵⁰ Holmes, *History of Yorkshire County Cricket* p42

¹⁵¹ *Ibid* p43

or North versus South fixtures. There was also a split in the All England Eleven ranks with the southern professionals forming the United South of England team.¹⁵²

The MCC seemed reluctant to become involved in the dispute¹⁵³ although there was some evidence that its members were becoming tired of what they perceived to be unbecoming behaviour. The MCC did respond in 1867 when they set up the Marylebone Professional Cricketer's Fund, a rival to the players own Cricketer's Fund Friendly Society and which pointedly was only available to "cricketers who, throughout their entire career shall have conducted themselves to the entire satisfaction of . . . MCC"¹⁵⁴ and this was the first of a number of occasions that the cricket establishment used its economic influence to exert authority and impose discipline over the professional players.

By the early 1870s the travelling elevens were in decline and the county game increased in importance with the amateur gentleman lobby regaining control of the game.¹⁵⁵ In 1873 the counties in conjunction with the MCC stipulated that a cricketer could only represent one county per season, and that could either be the county of birth or the county of residence provided there was residence for at least two years. This had far reaching consequences for the professionals, restricting their mobility and bargaining position.

The part that professional players played in the development of the game up to the 1870s has been very much over-looked in the historiography. But the amateurs had now regained control of the sport and the professionals were in a subordinate position and this was to be perpetrated for nearly a hundred years by a combination of economic control, paternalism, dependence, deference and strict discipline. In this respect they were in exactly the same position as most other Victorian workers and it was largely met with acceptance. As Benson puts it

Often, of course, such acquiescence in the inequalities of the class structure was brought about by fear and/or by the demands of earning a living.¹⁵⁶

The concept of the amateur gentleman was fundamental to the Victorian period. Rigid class distinctions existed throughout society and the position in cricket reflected the larger ideological whole. Public Schools were at the forefront of the development of sports such as cricket which were regarded as healthy and manly and the Schools too were at the vanguard of the Victorian ethos of Corinthian principles and convention that birth, blood and wealth bestowed in-built advantages of both personal and leadership qualities. Society and the establishment were controlled by the upper and middle classes and these same sections took control of cricket and its development at a national level.

¹⁵² Holmes, *History of Yorkshire County Cricket*

¹⁵³ Birley, *A Social History of English Cricket* p101

¹⁵⁴ Ibid p102

¹⁵⁵ John Major, *More than a game* p 273

¹⁵⁶ John Benson, *The Working Class in Britain 1850-1939* p154

The Rev James Pycroft, an influential early author, was an early spokesman of the gentleman amateur lobby and in his major works *The Cricket Field*¹⁵⁷ and *Cricketana*¹⁵⁸ and elsewhere, he took every opportunity to disparage the All England Eleven and their like as well as questioning the professional's cricketing abilities and character as compared to those of the amateur. Some of these criticisms may have been true in some cases but there was clearly a lot of evidence to the contrary. What is clear is that the end of the travelling professional era coincided with the great growth of grassroots cricket in the provinces whether led by gentlemen amateurs or by local enthusiasts. The impact of the itinerant game varied substantially across the regions but it was certainly a considerable influence in the growing industrial areas of the north of England and the West Riding of Yorkshire in particular.

From a sparse beginning at the end of the eighteenth century largely played amongst teams organised by the landed gentry and upper classes and with some anecdotal evidence of a folk game played at an informal level, the game by 1870 had moved to the position where it was played throughout the region and in virtually every town and village on a formal basis and attracting great interest and for major events great crowds of spectators.

¹⁵⁷ Rev .James Pycroft, *The Cricket Field*, London, 1922 originally published 1862

¹⁵⁸ Rev. James Pycroft, *Cricketana*, Facsimile edition, Clacton on Sea, 1987, originally published 1865

Chapter 2 - Early cricket in Halifax up to 1850

This chapter will examine in detail the way in which the game of cricket developed in the Halifax area with its unique geography and social and economic make up and how this compared to the rest of Yorkshire and elsewhere. It will look at the emergence of a more formalised game from the roots of the folk game, the time available for the playing of the game and where it was played as well as the beginnings of identified clubs and the problems they faced and the transitory nature of even the formal game at this stage.

Folk games

The first primary reference to folk games in the Halifax area appears in the diary of the Rev. Oliver Heywood. His rather disparaging entry for 15 April 1681 reads

in Halifax on Easter-day multitudes were playing at Stool-ball etc in the streets. Of wt will be the end of these things, no restraint, no magistrate to put them to shame, a dreadful omen.¹⁵⁹

Another note in the same year also makes reference to stool ball. Clearly there was great interest in folk games by the common man from an early date particularly at holiday times whilst attracting opprobrium from the likes of Heywood for playing on sacred days. Joseph Strutt also makes reference to the playing of stool-ball in 1801

I have been informed that a pastime called stool-ball is practised to this day in the northern parts of England, which consists simply in setting a stool upon the ground, and one of the players takes his place before it, while his antagonist, standing at a distance, tosses a ball with the intention of striking the stool . . .¹⁶⁰

I have already made reference in Chapter One to the diary of Joseph Lawson who recorded similar folk and informal games of cricket taking place in the 1830s amongst ordinary working people and youngsters in the Pudsey area which is only twelve miles from Halifax.

Early primary references to sport and leisure in the Halifax area and indeed the wider West Yorkshire area are few. Regional newspapers were established in most provincial towns of significance by 1760 and Leeds had two, the *Mercury* and the *Intelligencer*, but they were weekly with very restricted space. Cricket was one of the first sports to gain a mention and this not until 1808 with a brief report of a match between Wetherby and Linton.¹⁶¹ Regular newspapers were later to arrive in the Halifax area which in the eighteenth century was still a small urban settlement. The *Union Journal* had a brief existence between 1759 and 1760 but its local news content was small. There are brief references to cock fighting and horse races but these are the only references to any form of leisure activity. The *Halifax Journal*

¹⁵⁹ The Rev. Oliver Heywood, *Autobiography, Diaries, Anecdotes & Event Books*, published 1881.

¹⁶⁰ Joseph Strutt, *Sports and Pastimes of the People of England*, 1801

¹⁶¹ *Leeds Mercury* 30 July 1808

was in existence between 1801 and 1811 but again it had little space for local news and there is no evidence of reportage on leisure activities. It was not until the arrival of the *Halifax Guardian* in 1832 that the area had its first regular weekly newspaper. At first consisting of only four sheets costing 7d, by 1847 it had more than doubled in size and almost halved in price to 4.5d.

The formal game

The earliest evidence of a formal cricket match taking place in Halifax is in 1826. The match is referred to by Rev. Holmes without mentioning the source and but the full quote in the *Leeds Mercury* is of more interest

CRICKET. – A match was played on Wednesday in a field at Skircoat Moor, near Halifax betwixt the Halifax and Huddersfield New Clubs, which was won by the Halifax Club by 30 runs:-

HALIFAX	HUDDERSFIELD
1 st innings.....24	1 st innings.....28
2 nd ditto.....57 - 81	2nd.....23 - 51

Three pounds obtained in the way of admission fee to Mr. Robt Wainhouse’s field, where the game was played, was given to the fund for the relief of the unemployed poor.¹⁶²

This reference tells us much about the early game in Halifax. The match was played on a Wednesday and in a private field which would indicate middle class participation and a degree of patronage though on a much lesser scale than that provided by Lord Harewood and other members of the upper classes elsewhere in Yorkshire. The amount of collection provides evidence of considerable interest. The donation is indicative of both the altruistic nature of many of the middle class and the difficult economic times being experienced by many of the lower classes as they continued to be affected by the changes wrought by the industrial revolution. The *Leeds Mercury* reported just one Halifax match in 1827 and that against the Leeds club.¹⁶³ Reporting of cricket remained spasmodic in the *Mercury* in part because

We really cannot find room for any long details on the subject of Cricket Matches, which however interesting to the parties engaged are not of any very high importance to the public.¹⁶⁴

Perhaps the main problem was lack of space rather than a lack of interest in the game.

¹⁶² *Leeds Mercury* 30 September 1826

¹⁶³ *Leeds Mercury* 13 October 1827 – a match between the Leeds and Halifax Old Clubs

¹⁶⁴ *Leeds Mercury* 19 August 1826

The emergence of the *Halifax Guardian*, in December 1832, began to alter the situation. The first reference to cricket appeared in June of the following year with a long report of the grand cricket match between Sheffield and Nottingham for £100.¹⁶⁵ This was the start of fairly regular cricket reports and the autumn of that year saw the newspaper's first reference to cricket taking place in Halifax. Clearly cricket matches were causing considerable interest among the local population and this no doubt encouraged the newspaper to give the game more coverage:-

CRICKET – On Monday last, a match was played on Skircoat Moor, near the town, between the “Labour and Health” and “Alliance” cricket clubs which terminated in favour of the former by 88 runs.¹⁶⁶

And again the following month

CRICKET – A match of the good old English game of Cricket, which has caused considerable excitement in this town, came off on Skircoat Moor, on Monday last, between 11 youths chosen from the “Alliance” and “Labour and Health” Cricket Clubs and 11 of all Halifax. . . . The following is a statement of the game. All Halifax 1st innings 54 2nd Innings 33 Total 87 United Clubs 1st innings 236 the latter consequently winning by 149 runs. The day was exceedingly favourable, and at one time there could not have been less than 1000 spectators on the Moor.¹⁶⁷

Saint Monday tradition

These early cricket matches took place on a Monday which raises the question as to whether the participants were from the middle and upper classes with more leisure time or whether there were elements of the working class ‘Saint Monday’ tradition of using Monday as part of an extended weekend for which there was evidence elsewhere but little for this locality. Read concluded that the tradition only faded with the increasing degree of mechanisation of the local industry and the introduction of a Saturday half-holiday, both of which were years away in this locality.¹⁶⁸ E.P. Thompson though was of the view that the employer's frequent complaint of weavers keeping ‘Saint Monday’ was a practice of the ‘golden age’, that is the last few years of the eighteenth century and that by 1830 “the ‘average’ English working man became more disciplined, more subject to the productive tempo of ‘the clock’ . . .”¹⁶⁹ The other possibility is that the reported matches were part of the strong tradition of entertainment and celebrations surrounding the few public holiday and festival days such as Shrove Tuesday, Easter Monday, Whit Monday and Midsummer day as well as a few days and half days for village fairs and feasts.¹⁷⁰ Many of the local

¹⁶⁵ *Halifax Guardian* 22 June 1833

¹⁶⁶ *Halifax Guardian* 14 September 1833

¹⁶⁷ *Halifax Guardian* 12 October 1833

¹⁶⁸ Douglas A. Reid, *The Decline of Saint Monday, Past and Present*, No 71 (May, 1976), pp76-101

¹⁶⁹ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* p451

¹⁷⁰ E. Webster, *Leisure and Pleasure in 19th Century Halifax*

celebrations took place in August and September and the most likely explanation of these early games is that they were part of local holiday celebrations. There is more evidence for this latter explanation the following year with the first record of a match between artisans, the shoemakers of Halifax against the tailors again in September. This was a one-off challenge match again taking place on a Monday on Skircoat Moor which from the newspaper report had excited much local interest and generated “a great crowd of spectators.” At the end of “several hours” of play both teams sat down to a good supper at the “Labour and Health” at the expense of the Shoemakers who had been defeated.¹⁷¹

The emergence of identified clubs

The Halifax Clarence Cricket Club which was to become the senior club in the area for much of the remainder of the decade and into the early 1840s emerged in 1834. Brighouse, situated in the parish of Halifax and some five miles to the south east, also had a Clarence club both presumably taking their name from William, the Duke of Clarence who as the third son of George the Third had come to the throne as William IV in 1830. These early references point to identified clubs with a structure playing a limited number of organised games rather than just scratch matches. The prevalence of disputes was an important feature of the early game and often the dispute centred on decisions made by match umpires who were members of their respective clubs. Thus in 1834 the *Halifax Guardian* reported that

CRICKET – On Tuesday last, the first game of a match was to have come off on Skircoat-moor between the Halifax Clarence and the Bradford Fair-weather-green Clubs.

Halifax First Innings 48 byes 8 56

Bradford 15 byes 1 16

The third man being caught out, a dispute arose, the umpire of the Halifax Club affirming that the ball was struck clean from the bat and the umpire of the Bradford side calling it a bomb ball.¹⁷²

On Good Friday in 1836 another dispute arose, this time the Halifax Alliance was involved in their match against Huddersfield Britannia. One of the Halifax players was given out by the Huddersfield umpire, the Halifax umpire stating the reverse and the dispute terminated the game.¹⁷³

Sociability was also an important factor in the early game. The only other report of local cricket the same year is the closing match of the Halifax Clarence Club season between

¹⁷¹ *Halifax Guardian* 27 September 1834

¹⁷² *Halifax Guardian* 28 June 1834

¹⁷³ *Halifax Guardian* 9 April 1836

married and unmarried members. The match took place on a Thursday with two innings being played and the players retiring to “an excellent supper” at the Crown and Anchor Inn, all of which seem to indicate a relatively affluent membership with leisure time available. The Halifax Clarence Club also broke new ground in 1837 with a Cricketer’s Ball to open the season in April

Upwards of fifty people sat down to take refreshments and great praise was given to the host for his exertions in promoting the enjoyment of his guests. We understand the club is open to playing any of the neighbouring towns a friendly home and home game.¹⁷⁴

The Halifax Clarence season ended as it had begun with another Cricketer’s Ball

On Thursday evening, the members of the Halifax Clarence Cricket Club concluded a victorious season, with a “Ball” at the Crown and Anchor Inn, which was kept up with much spirit to a late hour. A musical band was in attendance. The room was tastefully and elegantly decorated with flowers and evergreens, having at one end the letter “V” composed of dahlias.¹⁷⁵

Reports of local matches in the mid-1830s are few with just the occasional report of social activities and matches involving the Independent, Halifax Alliance, Halifax Shakespeare, Royal Clarence and the Halifax Clarence Clubs. The Halifax Clarence Club is reported as playing in three matches in 1836, one in August against the Shakespeare Club which also ended in dispute¹⁷⁶ and also playing home and away fixtures against Bradford both on Mondays in September and it is likely that these were all part of local Feast Day celebrations.

There are signs too of the emergence and importance of competition but with no mention of a challenge stake as had been the custom elsewhere in Yorkshire with wealthy patrons. In 1838 the Halifax Clarence played Baildon home and away, with each side winning on its opponent’s ground, the challenge went to a third match on a neutral ground at Wibsey Slack.¹⁷⁷ The *Leeds Mercury* report on the decider noted “hundreds of spectators assembled to see the game,”¹⁷⁸ and they saw the Halifax side triumphant.

Growing pains

The growth of the early game was restricted by many factors including the lack of financial support and the lack of suitable grounds on which to play. Halifax lacked the upper class connections of many of the established cricket clubs in other parts of Yorkshire and still

¹⁷⁴ *Halifax Guardian* 29 April 1837

¹⁷⁵ *Halifax Guardian* 17 October 1837

¹⁷⁶ *Halifax Guardian* 20 August 1836

¹⁷⁷ *Halifax Guardian* 5 September 1837

¹⁷⁸ *Leeds Mercury* 2 September 1837

struggled to get patronage from the middle classes of what was becoming a rapidly industrialised locality. Halifax Clarence played Rochdale in the July Feast holiday of 1838. The need for financial support and an attempt to utilise inter town rivalry is evident in the match report which amongst extensive match details pleads “We understand that all the clubs in the neighbouring towns are patronised by honorary members; we hope this hint will not be lost upon Halifax.”¹⁷⁹ They were of course referring to urban patronage of honorary members rather than patronage by land owners. The difficulty in getting somewhere of suitable quality to play was similarly becoming a regular theme of this early period. Quality was needed to ensure victory and success would breed success. Yet these problems would not be solved until there was adequate capitalisation of the game to allow the leasing or purchase of suitable facilities.

Skircoat Moor

Most if not all the early cricket in Halifax was played on Skircoat Moor. It was one of the few areas freely available for leisure activity and as such played an important role in the development of early cricket in the area. The Moor on the outskirts of Halifax had been a place of public meeting and protest since 1819 when a large public demonstration had been held in protest against the “Peterloo Massacre” and as an opportunity for the many local radicals to press their petition for parliamentary reform.¹⁸⁰ The Moor was an important venue for a number of reasons. There was plenty of space which was freely accessible to the ordinary man and it was sufficiently close to the town without incurring the government restrictions on political activity which could occur in urban spaces. As with other areas, common land was threatened with enclosure and the enclosure of Skircoat Moor started in 1838 but this was contested by the freeholders in 1842. By order of the Lord of the Manor and main land owner, Sir George Savile, much of the moor was kept as commons and set out in promenades and roads which became Savile Park and it remained as an open space available to everyone for demonstrations, meetings and leisure purposes.¹⁸¹ It was used for grazing animals as well as by walkers and horse riders. Foot and horse races all took place there along with many early cricket matches. The ground was rough and undulating and was not conducive to the exercise of any cricketing skills. As the game developed it became obvious that Skircoat Moor was not a suitable venue for matches at an elite level and compared very unfavourably to the grounds of opponents.

Thus when the Clarence Club arranged return matches against Baildon in September and October of 1838 the match reports referred to these deeper issues

¹⁷⁹ *Halifax Guardian* 28 July 1838

¹⁸⁰ Katrina Navickas, *Moors, Fields and Popular Protest in South Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire, 1800-1848*, *Northern History* XLVI: 1, March 2009 p93-111

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*

we hope and earnestly beg that another season will not be allowed to pass over without a better ground being provided for the exhibition of this healthy and amusing pastime; and we understand that the principal cause of the Baildon Club scoring so many runs in the last innings was to be attributed to the unevenness of the ground, it being almost impossible, however good the bowling, to send the ball true. This will be the case at Baildon (where the return match will come off on Monday next,) as their ground is perfectly level and covered with a good turf.¹⁸²

The wish to play on a better ground came to fruition in 1839 when an increase in patronage and membership of the Halifax Clarence Club financed a move to a new rented field in Hopwood Lane

CLARENCE CRICKET CLUB – We are happy to learn that this club promises to be in a greater efficiency the ensuing season than it has ever attained. The leading gentry of the town and neighbourhood have given to it the sanction of their names and subscriptions as honorary members; and have thus qualified the club to rent a field in Hopwood Lane for the purposes of the healthy and manly game of cricket.¹⁸³

The club had managed to secure the support of a number of the gentry of the town and celebrated the opening of the new ground on the last Monday of April with cricket amongst the members followed by a dinner and speeches at the Crown and Anchor Inn. Numerous loyal toasts were given and the health of their main supporters C. Rawson Esq, J. Waterhouse Esq, G. Pollard Esq, E. Protheroe Esq MP, M. Stocks Esq and the other honorary members were drunk.¹⁸⁴ Christopher Rawson, John Waterhouse, George Pollard and Michael Stocks were all important members of substantial local land owning families with wide financial interests. Edward Protheroe, a Radical and the son of a prominent Bristol merchant, had recently been elected as one of the two MPs for Halifax and was presumably keen to associate his name with this growing club.¹⁸⁵ This upsurge in support off the field coincided with more cricket being played by the Clarence Club although the matches were still spasmodic. Keighley were visited on a Tuesday at the end of May and arrangements made to play the return in the Halifax Fair Week about the 24th June.¹⁸⁶ The Keighley Club were unable to play the fixture having three players unavailable and the Bradford Club stepped into the breach to be the first opponents at the new ground.

The issue of where to play soon rebounded on the club when they hit upon more difficult financial times in the early 1840s. Clearly many of the club membership were trying to

¹⁸² *Halifax Guardian* 6 October 1838

¹⁸³ *Halifax Guardian* 20 April 1839

¹⁸⁴ *Halifax Guardian* 4 May 1839

¹⁸⁵ Calderdale Archives, Halifax – C. Rawson FW: 64,133 & 222, BRA:419,422 & 436, WYC 1089/162; J. Waterhouse TS/HP:Q/30; G. Pollard MISC 691/1, RU 49; M. Stocks MISC 321/6 & 7, FW 217, MISC 1029; E. Protheroe – William White, *History, Gazeteer & Directory of the West Riding of Yorkshire, Vol 1(1837)* and Walker's *Directory of the Parish Of Halifax (1845)*

¹⁸⁶ *Halifax Guardian* 1 June 1839

improve facilities but this was at a cost and there were dissenting views. At the end of the 1842 season the match reporter lamented on a return to Skircoat Moor

We cannot help remarking that it is a pity the club should be borne down by a great rent when there is the Moor so near at hand, which, with a little labour, and no great outlay, might be made into the best cricket ground in Yorkshire;¹⁸⁷

This was one view of the suitability of Skircoat Moor for cricket but a description of a walk on the Moor in the same year painted a bleaker picture "Come reader, let us leave the dust and noise of the town, and have a stroll over the moor . . . Some people love to walk amongst fertile fields; I prefer the bleak barren moor before the most cultivated and richest spot of earth . . . Let us have the open moor, where we can run, jump, or roll as we list. . . On the moor we have no styles, no hedges, or ditches - no narrow footpaths . . . All is perfect and unrestrained freedom. Call the moor black, bleak and barren if you will . . . It is just what a moor ought to be".¹⁸⁸ This was of course the time that Chartism was at its height and Skircoat Moor was often used as a meeting place for large gatherings of protagonists for the Chartist movement.¹⁸⁹

The role of Skircoat Moor and its availability for recreation continued to be a point of contention in local circles. Another scheme to enclose the Moor in 1849 drew criticism but a letter to the editor of the *Halifax Guardian* by Mr J.E. Norris put the opposite view. The proposed objective was

to inclose the stragglng wastes of Skircoat and to keep open and enclosed for ever, Skircoat Moor . . . The centre portion of this uncultivated but healthy place wherein the public play at cricket and upon which the yeomen parade, contains about 25 acres within the roads. This space is to remain untouched save by being encircled with a good carriage drive of 11 yards wide.¹⁹⁰

The struggle to provide cricket grounds with adequate provision for the game in the Halifax area was to remain as a consistent theme for many years to come.

Disputes

Disputes still plagued the early form of the game in all sorts of ways. The Halifax Junior Club played Wibsey in early October 1838¹⁹¹ and the perceived partiality of umpires was again the cause of complaint

In the last innings of our town's youths, it will be seen that four wickets went down, by being stumped; whereas in the previous innings of both sides not one had been so

¹⁸⁷ *Halifax Guardian* 15 October 1842

¹⁸⁸ *Halifax Guardian* 25 June 1842

¹⁸⁹ *Halifax Guardian* 20 August 1842 reported a meeting of 15,000 people.

¹⁹⁰ *Halifax Guardian* 14 and 24 July 1849

¹⁹¹ *Halifax Guardian* 13 October 1838

put out. This is always a very questionable way of putting a man out, for it is a very difficult thing to decide whether the man is on his ground or not at the time, and frequently rests on the decision of the umpires opposed to the party batting.

The Halifax Clarence return game against Baildon in the same month “was not played out” when one of the Baildon players refused to leave the wicket after being given out leg before wicket by the Halifax umpire and the Halifax newspaper was at great pains to uphold the “judgement and uprightness of the Halifax umpire”.¹⁹² And then a call for fair play

We should advise all amateurs in this manly and inspiring game to use fair play and uprightness, if they wish to uphold the interests of this innocent recreation.¹⁹³

Controversy was even a feature of the opening game at the new Clarence ground at Hopwood Lane in 1839 when some of the Halifax players objected to one of the Bradford bowlers for unfair bowling, not having one foot behind the bowling crease. There were though signs of the emergence of an idea of tolerance and the acceptance of decisions when the report criticised both clubs, Bradford for unfair bowling and some of the Halifax players for not abiding by the umpire’s decision.¹⁹⁴ Perhaps too the newspaper was reflecting on the call for fair play issued the year before.¹⁹⁵

Increasing crowds who expected a game and fair play also put pressure on the participants to over-ride local suspicions and solve disputes. The return match at Bradford in July in front of a large crowd estimated at 2-4,000 was similarly mired in controversy when again the Halifax players objected to decisions by the Bradford umpire but the game continued when an agreement was reached to change both umpires.¹⁹⁶

Formal cricket matches were still few in number in the Halifax area but the level of enthusiasm was high. For example a single wicket game took place between six unmarried and six married members of the Clarence Club on Skircoat Moor towards the end of November in 1838.¹⁹⁷ Moreover, new teams were beginning to appear with matches involving the Royal Victoria, Royal Oak and the Halifax Junior Clubs where most of these players were youthful members,¹⁹⁸ while Halifax Clarence began fielding a second eleven with a match played in August 1839 at Todmorden on a “wet and very slippery” ground.¹⁹⁹ There was clearly a desire and enthusiasm to play more cricket because in September the *Guardian* reported on a week which was termed “the cricketer’s holiday” where no less

¹⁹² *Halifax Guardian* 20 October 1838

¹⁹³ *Halifax Guardian* 20 October 1838

¹⁹⁴ *Halifax Guardian* 29 June 1839

¹⁹⁵ *Halifax Guardian* 13 October 1838

¹⁹⁶ *Bradford Observer* 25 July 1839 and *Halifax Guardian* 27 July 1839

¹⁹⁷ *Halifax Guardian* 24 November 1838

¹⁹⁸ *Halifax Guardian* 14 & 21 September 1839

¹⁹⁹ *Halifax Guardian* 31 August 1839

than four matches were arranged including a return match for the Clarence second eleven.²⁰⁰

The beginning of the 1840s appeared to lead to a lull in local activity or there was just more limited reporting. All the indications were of a middle class activity. A report of the Halifax Club, presumably Clarence against Heckmondwike at the end of July 1841 at Hopwood Lane highlighted this. Sociability was clearly an important feature. The game was played on a Wednesday “before a numerous and respectable concourse of spectators, amongst whom were a many of the fairer part of creation . . . The players afterwards partook of a sumptuous dinner at Mr Cadney’s, provided in the worthy host’s usual liberal manner.”²⁰¹ There is also some tenuous evidence of the upper echelon of society being involved too. At the end of August the second eleven of the Clarence Club played a return fixture against Heckmondwike, again on a Wednesday and in front of several hundred spectators with the unusual result of a tie. The lack of an overall winner pleased neither club and a third game was proposed in the grounds of Sir George Armytage, “if the worthy Baronet will permit them.”²⁰² Armytage owned Kirklees Hall on the outskirts of Brighouse which was halfway between the clubs concerned and perhaps was sympathetic to the game. Unfortunately there is no evidence of the match actually taking place so we do not know whether Sir George Armytage ever was a patron of the game. However the end of the 1841 season also provided the first evidence of a slightly lower social class being involved in the game and a different form of sociability. The Albion and Temperance Clubs played a match on the Hopwood Lane ground, with the players and friends retiring to Wadsworth’s Temperance Hotel after the game for a substantial dinner provided by the Temperance Club as losers.²⁰³

The contrast for cricketers of a different class was stark. Punishment for playing sport on the Sabbath even as late as 1841 was still quite severe. As the *Halifax Guardian* reported “Four humble disciples of the Morpethian plan of spending the Sabbath Day, were each fined 8s1d for indulging in a game of cricket on Skircoat Moor on Sunday last.”²⁰⁴ Lord Morpeth was one of the supporters of reform to Sabbath legislation in the 1830s. In one debate in the House of Commons he was quoted as saying he was “favourable to harmless exercise and recreation, such as a game of cricket.”²⁰⁵ The traditional stake matches were becoming fewer although Halifax Clarence played Rastrick Albion for £10 a-side in 1843,²⁰⁶ but the tradition of the losers paying for a post-match dinner continued. By this stage the club were also attracting larger number of spectators and a degree of commercialism entered for the first time with an admittance charge of 3d reflecting the nature of urban cricket at this

²⁰⁰ *Halifax Guardian* 14 September 1839

²⁰¹ *Halifax Guardian* 31 July 1841

²⁰² *Halifax Guardian* 28 August 1841

²⁰³ *Halifax Guardian* 11 September 1841

²⁰⁴ *Halifax Guardian* 20 November 1841

²⁰⁵ *Bradford Observer* 24 July 1834

²⁰⁶ *Halifax Guardian* 29 July 1843

time.²⁰⁷ Yet the transitory nature of the game was also very much apparent in Halifax as it was in Leeds and Sheffield as discussed in Chapter One. In 1843 Halifax Clarence moved to another new field in King Cross Lane but they were back at Hopwood Lane for 1844, staying there until they folded at the end of the 1840s.

The Halifax Clarence was the dominant force amongst local clubs for almost twenty years from the mid-1830s apart from a difficult period at the end of the 1840s and early 1850s. Most of its early competitors fell by the wayside with clubs often having only a brief existence. Sowerby Bridge Victoria, Brighthouse Clarence and Rastrick all played matches in 1843 and by the end of the 1840s occasional matches were being played by the Halifax Young England, Young Rockingham, Heath Grammar School, and Queen's Head clubs.²⁰⁸

The growth of professionalism

Whether reflecting increased activity or better reporting Halifax Clarence played seven matches in 1842, their highest number of fixtures in a season so far. All were with clubs nearby and one with the strong Dalton club although even this did not warrant a newspaper report other than a very brief summary in the end of season report.²⁰⁹ The preview of the game against the Huddersfield Union in August of that year gave the first hint of professionalism entering the game. "We understand a match will 'come off' on Wednesday next, on the ground, Hopwood Lane, Halifax, between the Halifax Clarence and Huddersfield Union Clubs. Mr Nobles, the Huddersfield 'crack', and Mr Roper, the Halifax 'pe', are to display their respective abilities. A treat is expected."²¹⁰ The derivation of pe is not understood although the term crack clearly refers to someone of renowned ability and it is likely that it is making reference to the professional player of each team. The long newspaper report of the same match gives some insight into the detail of the game at this time:

Wednesday last was quite a gala at Halifax, on the occasion of the return match being played between the Halifax Clarence and Huddersfield Union Clubs . . . We should think there was not less than 2000 persons assembled . . . A band of music was also in attendance, which at intervals struck up several lively and fashionable airs . . . A party of soldiers, by the kind permission of Major Burnsides, was in attendance to preserve order . . . The tents of each club were pitched, and the 'flag that braved a thousand years' was hoisted and proudly spread its noble front, as if conscious that this manly game was one of the nurseries of England's hardy sons.²¹¹

²⁰⁷ *Halifax Guardian* 1 July 1843

²⁰⁸ *Halifax Guardian* 29 July, 23 & 30 September 1843, 7 October 1848, 4 & 18 August & 15 September 1849

²⁰⁹ *Halifax Guardian* 15 October 1842

²¹⁰ *Halifax Guardian* 30 July 1842

²¹¹ *Halifax Guardian* 6 August 1842

Clearly the game was a grand social occasion of significant local importance whilst the game itself, with nationalistic overtones, was perceived to be one of the suitable training grounds for the nation's young men.

As has been seen one of the most significant features in the growth of cricket in the 1840s was the formation of the itinerant professional All-England Eleven by William Clarke towards the end of the 1846 season. I have already discussed in Chapter One how one of the very first All-England Eleven matches was played against 18 of 'Leeds and District within twenty-five miles' on Woodhouse Moor on 7, 8 and 9 September 1846 creating great enthusiasm and support.²¹² The *Halifax Guardian* commented that the match "drew together a large assemblage of people from all parts of the surrounding district."²¹³ The match became a regular fixture in the Leeds cricketing calendar although the following year it was billed as 'Eleven of All England v Sixteen of Yorkshire'.²¹⁴ The elite game came even nearer in 1848 when the Bradford club set up a challenge against 'Eighteen of Bradford and District', the eighteen to be "selected from the best in the neighbourhood, including the Towns of Leeds, Halifax, Dalton, York, Knaresborough, Otley and Bradford."²¹⁵ The report of the match gives no indication of the players' club but the Bradford and District eighteen included a Walsh and Foster and the Halifax club had players of the same name in its previous fixture.²¹⁶ Again the match created great enthusiasm for the game and "the attendance of spectators was large, numbering amongst them the most influential of the district for thirty miles round."²¹⁷

More and more of the growing industrial towns particularly in the north of England wanted to be part of this new phenomenon and were keen to arrange fixtures with the All-England Eleven and its many imitators. Cricket had become a spectacle. The big match organised by ambitious clubs and communities against professional touring teams in parts of the country which had not previously seen such major occasions was, temporarily at least, pushing to one side the traditional elite games at the major centres of cricket. Locally it was a sign that the previous dominance of Sheffield over Yorkshire cricket was on the wane and that many other towns were keen to take over. It also foretold the arrival of professionalism in the locality as clubs tried every means available to develop their game and be successful in their competition with their local rivals.

By 1850 it was apparent that cricket was emerging as a sport with considerable support but clubs in the Halifax district were still struggling to get sufficient patronage to enable them to develop the infrastructure they needed to become more permanent organisations and consequently the game continued to be emergent and transitory.

²¹² *Leeds Times* 12 September 1846

²¹³ *Halifax Guardian* 12 September 1846

²¹⁴ *Halifax Guardian* 18 September 1847

²¹⁵ *Halifax Guardian* 2 September 1848

²¹⁶ *Halifax Guardian* 9 September 1848

²¹⁷ *Ibid*

Chapter 3 - Cricket in Halifax from 1850 to c.1870

The final chapter looks at the further development of professionalism and commercialisation within the local game which with increased support and spectatorship and the generation of more money and more time for many in which to play saw the number of clubs and matches grow to a new level.

The mid-point in the nineteenth century is a key transition date as it marked further growth in club cricket in the Halifax area, one of the first matches between artisan teams and the first match to be identified as taking place on a Saturday.

Most of the new clubs were still only playing a few matches in the season each of which was very much an occasion and often part of local festivities. Surrounding villages began to form teams. First was Queenshead, now Queensbury who appeared in 1850. The *Halifax Guardian* report of an away match against Halifax Commercial played as part of the Halifax Mid-Summer Fair showed many of the symbols of the older game of mixed sociability.²¹⁸ Later that summer they played the return game at Queenshead at which time they 'raised a tent' and the local brass band 'gratuitously contributed'.²¹⁹ At Todmorden, a few miles down the Calder Valley, a gentlemen's cricket club was formed in 1838 but this folded in 1841. A more socially inclusive body was formed in 1850 and a home fixture against Ovenden, then a small village two miles north of Halifax is recorded in September.²²⁰ Further expansion took place in the early 1850s with other villages and areas surrounding Halifax intent on adding to the rivalry with other teams being formed at Mixenden, Hebden Bridge, Sowerby Bridge in addition to the grammar school, Halifax Young England and Halifax Clarence but still matches were occasional affairs. The *Halifax Guardian* carried reports of only six local cricket matches throughout the 1851 season. By the following year this had increased to twenty nine, helped by the appearance of second elevens at Ovenden and Halifax Clarence. The changes to the economics of newspaper production may have also facilitated the growth of reporting as might the return of social peace.

The sense of social peace may have helped to promote a significant game at the Halifax Clarence ground between the Halifax and Huddersfield Letter-press printers. This was one of the earliest formal games with an artisan element and it is the first record of a match in this area taking place on a Saturday - "The wickets were pitched about two o' clock . . . The match finished about six . . . and both parties had a substantial supper at the Black Lion."²²¹ The return game at Huddersfield in September showed evidence of the early game's adaptability and improvisation. The game was played on a very narrow ground 'not adapted

²¹⁸ *Halifax Guardian* 29 June 1850

²¹⁹ *Halifax Guardian* 17 August 1850

²²⁰ *Halifax Guardian* 21 September 1850

²²¹ *Halifax Guardian* 31 August 1850

for the sport' with wickets pitched in a sloping direction and a low wall and hedge bounding each side and it was agreed that 'three notches be awarded for sending over' the boundary.²²²

The cabinet makers of Halifax and Huddersfield also arranged fixtures home and away, the first match in Huddersfield taking place on a Monday and this gave evidence of a lingering Saint Monday tradition amongst these trades as the report acknowledged the day as "a leisure day among most trades".²²³ The return match at the Clarence ground in Halifax followed the pattern of their middle class counterparts, taking place on a Wednesday with a dinner at 'the Globe' afterwards.²²⁴

These emerging artisan games were coupled with the continuing growth of matches arranged with the touring professional elevens in the areas surrounding Halifax. In May 1850, Huddersfield and Dalton played a three day game against the All-England eleven and the latter immediately moved on to play against Manchester.²²⁵ Bradford and District again took on the England side in September and this was to become an annual event for the next few years and although there is no evidence that any players from Halifax took part, the fixtures continued to create interest across the district.²²⁶ Cricket was becoming embedded in local culture through the spectacular and intermittent touring eleven fixtures.

There is also evidence of the commercial development of urban sporting infrastructure in which entrepreneurs became involved in the provision of new leisure activities. Publicans were particularly significant as they were under increasing pressure to stop sponsoring the more unsavoury activities such as cock fighting. A new club called Halifax Albion appeared in 1853 playing its matches at West Hill Park, an enclosed ground off Gibbet Street which was set up as a commercial venture by Mr William Crowther the licensee of the Globe Inn where the Clarence Club had also come to be based. West Hill Park was set to have a short but eventful life as the scene of varied recreational activities. As well as being used for cricket matches Mr Crowther organised pedestrian and horse races many of them on a handicap basis, with prize money and entry charges for spectators. A crowd of 2,000 turned out for a mile race for a prize of £40 in April of 1853²²⁷ and for another mile race at the end of May with a prize of £100 there was reported to be about 3,000 present with "some spirited betting."²²⁸ The initial enthusiasm seems to have disappeared quite quickly with the proprietor complaining to the editor of the *Halifax Guardian* that he had been accused of allowing dog fighting to take place which he strenuously denied.²²⁹ This was at the same time as the formation of the local police force in Halifax one of whose functions was to be,

²²² *Halifax Guardian* 14 September 1850

²²³ *Halifax Guardian* 25 May 1850

²²⁴ *Halifax Guardian* 29 June 1850

²²⁵ *Halifax Guardian* 18 May 1850

²²⁶ *Halifax Guardian* 14 September 1850, 13 September 1851 & 11 September 1852

²²⁷ *Halifax Guardian* 30 April 1853

²²⁸ *Halifax Guardian* 4 June 1853

²²⁹ *Halifax Guardian* 2 September 1854

in Storch's terms, "domestic missionaries", to restrain and control working-class recreational pursuits.²³⁰ Reports of pedestrian and horse races at West Hill Park do not appear after 1854. From 1857 parts of the Park were sold off for building purposes as the urban area of Halifax continued to expand and although cricket continued to be played on part of West Hill until at least 1864 it faded from the scene as a premier location. The transitory nature of the local game has many links with that elsewhere particularly Leeds where evidence has already been quoted in Chapter One of grounds being lost to the encroaching urban development.

The Halifax Clarence Club too hit difficult times in the 1850s. The foremost club in the town since the 1830s, it played little cricket in the first two years of the new decade and was not mentioned in 1852 until June when the *Halifax Guardian* announced the club was defunct but following a meeting at the Globe Inn a number of members had revived it with forthcoming matches planned at the new West Hill Park ground.²³¹ The 1853 season started with great optimism and the Annual General Meeting held in March was given a glowing report of the club's prospects with great expense having been incurred in laying out the new ground as well as engaging a professional player.²³² There was no report of a game until June when the club played an away fixture against the Leeds club.²³³ Lack of money and support from sufficient members seems to be likely factors in the club's demise. The club had already taken the unusual step of announcing that it had received a donation of £5 from Mr Henry Edwards Esq to help defray the expenses of the work carried out at West Hill Park. The *Guardian* added that the Bradford club could boast at least one hundred honorary subscribers and hoped that the people of the neighbourhood would follow Mr Edward's example.²³⁴ It is also possible that additional competition was beginning to have an effect. Halifax Albion was also based at West Hill Park having been formed the previous year and Halifax Wellington, the Prince of Wales and a number of works teams were also playing occasional matches. Halifax Clarence continued to advertise its fixtures in the *Guardian* with admittance at 3d with ladies free and in all played twelve matches during the season including return matches against Leeds, Otley and Sowerby Bridge.²³⁵ Clarence played fourteen games in the following year and judging by the last game of the season when the first eleven played the next twenty two seemed to have plenty of players. The following year, 1855 told a different story. Only thirteen cricket matches were reported in the *Halifax Guardian*. Halifax Clarence did not play their first match until July citing the difficulty of finding a suitable ground at which time they established themselves on a new ground in Hanson Lane.²³⁶ Clarence played an inter club match at the end of September²³⁷ and this is

²³⁰ Storch, 'The Policeman as Domestic Missionary'

²³¹ *Halifax Guardian* 17 July 1852

²³² *Halifax Guardian* 26 March 1853

²³³ *Halifax Guardian* 18 June 1853

²³⁴ *Halifax Guardian* 11 June 1853

²³⁵ *Halifax Guardian* 25 June, 9, 23 & 30 July, 27 August & 3 September 1853

²³⁶ *Halifax Guardian* 14 & 28 July 1855

²³⁷ *Halifax Guardian* 29 September 1855

the last reference to the club. At this distance with little direct evidence the reasons for the demise are difficult to identify with any precision. Evidence from other clubs underlines the inherent fragility of associations at this time. Suitable grounds were difficult to obtain and without the necessary sponsorship or patronage it was almost impossible to obtain one with any security of tenure. The Halifax geography with its lack of level spaces made things even more difficult and a wet climate situated as it is in the Pennine hills did not help continuity. Halifax United was formed in 1856 with its early matches being played on Skircoat Moor²³⁸ before they moved to a new ground in Pellon Lane the following year.²³⁹

It is possible too that the elite sociable cricket played by Halifax Clarence was being squeezed out as the pace of urban and industrial life speeded up. It could also have been a bit of a challenge to exclusivity in the 'age of equipoise' which pointed to a more democratic approach to urban living. The Clarence had continued to play their cricket matches mid-week, usually on a Monday but their demise coincides with a major change in match day with the majority of games now taking place on a Saturday. Of the nineteen local matches in 1856 reported in the *Halifax Guardian* sixteen took place on a Saturday, one on mid-week evenings and two on a Monday.²⁴⁰ This fits in with Reid's original timing for the end of Saint Monday.²⁴¹ Moreover Halifax United was not the only new club to come into existence. Alma, Haley Hill Recreation Society, Coley, Shelf Victoria, Copley, Walsden and Sowerby Britannia all appeared in the press for the first time along with Halifax Trinity who would develop into the most significant club yet.

The Saturday Half Day Holiday Movement

The emergence of the Saturday game also coincided with increasing efforts by some sections of workers to achieve a holiday on Saturday afternoon. There were a number of reports in the local newspapers during 1857 of efforts to achieve such a holiday

SATURDAY HALF HOLIDAY - We understand that there is at present agitation going on in this town in favour of a holiday on Saturday afternoon for the bookkeepers and warehousemen employed by the merchants and manufacturers. Several influential firms have already expressed their willingness to close at two, provided all can be prevailed upon to do so and we trust that the present opportunity of giving the various employees the time for recreation and improvement which this will afford will not pass by without being thoroughly accomplished.²⁴²

And a few weeks later

²³⁸ *Halifax Guardian* 27 September 1856

²³⁹ *Halifax Guardian* 11 April 1857

²⁴⁰ *Halifax Guardian* various dates in 1856

²⁴¹ Douglas A. Reid, 'The Decline of Saint Monday 1766-1876' (Oxford University Press on behalf of the Past and Present Society, Past and Present Society, Past and Present, No 71, May, 1976).

²⁴² *Halifax Guardian* 9 May 1857

HALF DAY HOLIDAY MOVEMENT - Warehousemen have been trying to achieve Saturday closure at 2.0pm in line with other towns, Bradford and Manchester and people who cease labour at 2.00pm. Many employers are favourably disposed and last Saturday many warehouses closed at 2.00pm – we hope the experiment which is to be repeated today will become permanent.²⁴³

At this stage the movement centred upon the lower middle classes and highest status working class employees and not the operatives. But the availability of more time for some workers at least does seem to have led to more cricket taking place. Thirty three local games were reported in the *Guardian* during 1857 and new clubs included King Cross Britannia, Easily Beaten, Perseverance, West End, Halifax Cabinet Makers, Park, Belle Vue, Unity, Horton, Skircoat United, King Cross Union, Halifax Albert and Illingworth, the latter not featuring in any of the match reports but were reported to have ‘closed the campaign’ with an end of season supper.²⁴⁴

There was, too, an increase in the number of works’ teams taking part in cricket matches and again mostly taking place on a Saturday which would suggest that more working class people were gaining access to a Saturday half day holiday. John Holdsworth of Shaw Lodge Mills, S.C. Lister and Co, the Machine Makers and Halifax Cabinet makers all took part in cricket matches as did the Perseverance Cricket club which was connected to Dean Clough Mills the home of John Crossley and Co, carpet manufacturers. The support of some of the employers towards cricket is also an interesting feature and points to the existence of the early shoots of a broader rational recreation movement with time being given off but the situation managed to some extent by the employer.²⁴⁵

The problems of insufficient resources and little security of tenure did not go away and spells of bad weather added to the instability of the formal game. Cricket in the local area went through another sparse patch in the late 1850s with relatively few reported matches, seventeen in 1858 and eighteen the following year. Halifax United who had come into existence on the demise of Halifax Clarence moved to a new ground at West Hill Park but this was to be a temporary move and King Cross Britannia also opened a new ground adjacent to their annual dinner venue the Old King Cross Inn.²⁴⁶ Halifax United played against the old Halifax Clarence and the match report underlined the problems

If there were fewer clubs in the town, and more unity, it might be possible to obtain the support of gentlemen in the district, and thus enable one good club to lease or buy a ground for permanent use, and one that could be made fit to play upon. The present one at West Hill Park is not fit; and without some security of possession,

²⁴³ *Halifax Guardian* 30 May 1857

²⁴⁴ *Halifax Guardian* 10 October 1857

²⁴⁵ The concept of ‘rational recreation’ which thought of leisure as a vehicle for character building and self-improvement as discussed by Bailey, *Leisure and Class*, pp.65-72 and Peter Borsay, *A History of Leisure* p90

²⁴⁶ *Halifax Guardian* 23 & 30 April 1859

never will be. We are not surpassed by other towns in many things; but in this matter of a cricket ground we are completely 'distanced'. The game is 'moral', 'English', 'manly'. Every town, of any importance in the West Riding, has a good ground except Halifax. Without a good ground no really good club can exist. We really think the matter only wants mooting in the proper manner to be successful.²⁴⁷

A few more fixtures were played in 1860²⁴⁸ and for the first time the *Halifax Guardian* utilised a cricket column for match reports and scores although by the following year it had gone back to its old practice of including cricket reports in the news sections of the various localities involved.

Clearly many saw cricket as a morally uplifting and 'manly' game but what effect did this have on its development? The positive promotion should have helped with attracting players, supporters and financial backers to the game. We have seen examples of how the bigger clubs in the urban setting of the town of Halifax had continued to struggle to attract sufficient sponsorship and patronage. The situation in rural Triangle, a small village a few miles outside Halifax was quite different, presenting perhaps a classic example of rational recreation but in essentially a closed village location rather than a town. Originally called the Triangle Reading Room Cricket Club its players had to be members of the village reading room. The Sowerby Magazine in reference to developments at Triangle reported

cricket is almost a new game here: but seeing its characteristics are a fine healthy and athletic exercise in the open air, we feel certain that it only needs to be known in order that it may be duly appreciated by the youth of this neighbourhood. There is most undoubtedly a vast moral good to be achieved by the more general introduction of this game. . .²⁴⁹

The Triangle Reading Room was set up in the rooms of the White Bear public house owned by the Morris family, owners of the near-by textile mill. Mr William Morris decided to abandon the licence in an effort to reduce the consumption of alcohol in the village which was already served by two other public houses. The Reading Room a club for smoking, reading, recreation and educational classes was sponsored by a number of gentlemen in the village including the Morris family and the Vicar of Sowerby who was also a resident. The Morris family were great financial benefactors of the club and Mr T.H. Morris, a pupil at Rugby School where cricket was deemed to be of great importance in the training of young men, continued the tradition ultimately buying the ground and presenting it to trustees to ensure its continuance.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁷ *Halifax Courier* 18 September 1858

²⁴⁸ 23 local matches were reported in the *Halifax Guardian*

²⁴⁹ Sowerby Church Magazine August 1862

²⁵⁰ *Halifax Guardian* 9 August 1862 and Triangle Cricket Club 150 year Anniversary, 2012

The 1860s saw an ever increasing number of new clubs largely playing only a few matches at times of holidays and local feasts and often only short lived. Queenshead Unity became defunct at the end of the 1860 season and was replaced the following year by Queenshead United.²⁵¹ It seems that every small locality wanted to form its own club or team. A long list of other new clubs all came into existence in the early 1860s²⁵² and cricket had made a mark in some of the local schools too with Making Place College at Soyland, Heath and Hipperholme Grammar schools all having matches reported. In all 92 reports of local matches appeared in the *Halifax Guardian* in 1862, by far the highest in any year up to that time.

Despite this growing popularity there was no longer a dominant club in the town. The Halifax Trinity Club had first appeared in 1856 just at the time when the Halifax Clarence ran into difficulties. Halifax Trinity started very quietly playing just a few matches on the open Skircoat Moor before they moved to a new ground in Pellon Lane in 1861 and again in 1862 to King Cross Lane where the facilities were considered to be as good as any and the club was keen to display its local pride:

The managers of this club seem determined to test the capabilities of the young men of this town as to whether the manly and healthful game of cricket is to attain that position which its importance demands, not simply on account of the exercise, but that Halifax may successfully contend with other towns. For many years cricket has been on the decline in Halifax there being no thorough town club . . . an attempt is now being made . . . to alter this state of things . . . One of the best fields in the town has been taken, situate in King-cross lane; a considerable portion of which has been levelled and re-laid with good turf. A suitable pavilion and covered shed has been erected for the use of members . . . the services of a professional player has been secured for the ensuing season, who will be on the ground every week-day. . .²⁵³

It was clear that the Trinity club saw professionalism and capitalisation as the keys to success, along with the channelling of local pride and rational recreation. Soon Trinity were advertising every home fixture in the press, playing mainly on Saturdays but with matches in the Halifax Fair week and on Whit Monday thus fitting in with the free time of the general population as opposed to that of the elite. Admission was 3d for gentlemen with ladies free and members being admitted by their card. The facilities were also used for other matches. The Lawyers and Architects played two games and in August a Grand Cricket Match was held between the Trinity club and twenty-two of the Rifle Volunteers for the benefit of the distressed Lancashire operatives.²⁵⁴ The match report gave the basic details of a large win

²⁵¹ *Halifax Guardian* 29 June 1861

²⁵² Clubs formed in 1862 alone included Halifax Teachers, Moorfield United, Sowerby Bridge Calder United, Rastrick United, Stainland Victoria, West Vale United, Wellington, New Delight, Luddenden, Lindwell Albion, Bradshaw and Ripponden Victoria.

²⁵³ *Halifax Guardian* 12 April 1862

²⁵⁴ *Halifax Guardian* 16 & 23 August, 6 September 1862

for the Trinity club but in October a subscription list for Distress in the Cotton Manufacturers Districts was printed in the *Halifax Guardian* which showed the Halifax Trinity Cricket Club contributed £2-18s-6d to the fund. There may have been donations and expenses but at an average 3d per head this would have equated to a paying crowd of over two hundred people boosted by ladies, children and other dignitaries who would not have paid. W. Swain was the professional bowler although at least one opponent objected to his presence in the team.²⁵⁵ Swain also showed a new entrepreneurial spirit and an example of increasing commercialisation with a Public Notice in the *Halifax Guardian*:

CRICKET – IMPORTANT TO BOWLERS

Leather and Composition Balls of proper weight and size (famed for scattering the timbers) can be obtained at the Pavilion, King Cross Street; where every other requisite for the game may be had cheap.

Proprietor William Swain P.C.²⁵⁶

Swain was the retained professional player for the season but he was not the only professional player used. A young Tom Emmett who started his career with the Illingworth Club and was still playing for them, and who went onto to play for Yorkshire and England, played for Trinity on at least three occasions and once against them for the Illingworth Club. In a much later interview Emmett told 'Old Ebor' that he was paid either 2s 6d or 5s a game by the Halifax Club.²⁵⁷ A further measure in the improvement of the quality of cricket in Halifax at this time was the appearance in late September of four Halifax representatives in the twenty-two of Leeds and District who played the All-England Eleven at Leeds Royal Park.²⁵⁸

Alongside the evidence of the formal game there is evidence of extensive informal folk cricket taking place well into the second half of the nineteenth century in the Halifax area. Again in his reminiscences with 'Old Ebor' Tom Emmett was quoted as saying

I lived close to my uncle, John Dilworth, of Illingworth, near Ovenden, who was fond of cricket. One of the great traders of the place was Mr. Henry Ambler, who had a nice carriage drive leading up to his residence. At the entrance to the drive were two stone posts, and it was one of these that we used for our wickets. That was where I was initiated into cricket. . .²⁵⁹

One of the entrance posts still survives today at Mason Green and would have necessitated the game taking place across the turnpike road. In the same village of Ovenden just outside Halifax as late as 1868 four such similar games of informal cricket in the distance of about

²⁵⁵ *Halifax Guardian* 10 May 1862

²⁵⁶ *Halifax Guardian* 5 April 1862

²⁵⁷ Old Ebor (A.W. Pullin), Talks with Old Yorkshire Cricketers, Leeds, 1898 p55

²⁵⁸ *Halifax Guardian* 4 October 1862

²⁵⁹ Old Ebor (A.W. Pullin), Talks with Old Yorkshire Cricketers p53

one mile on the same road were described in a letter to the Editor of the *Halifax Guardian* from a correspondent who wrote

Sir – Whilst I would be the last to attempt to control the innocent amusements of the youth of this neighbourhood, I must protest against the intolerable nuisance of having our turnpike roads made into cricket fields, to the great danger of passers-by, who are frequently hit by cricket balls. In a walk the other evening from Ovenden Cross to Mason Green, I came across four of these cricket parties, each with two great stones in place of wickets, and perfectly careless in their play as to which way balls were sent. On the same evening after dark I found one of these great stones still standing in the middle of the road, presenting a nice little object over which a horse or man might stumble. Perhaps something might be done to find these youthful cricketers a more suitable place in which to exercise themselves. Meanwhile the authorities ought to at least to keep the turnpike road for its legitimate object – A PEDESTRIAN ²⁶⁰

This evidence of the existence of a vibrant informal game, restricted by the confines of the turnpike road as it was, underlines the popular interest in cricket at this time but also emphasises the problem of the lack of suitable places in which to play which was just as much a problem for the formal game.

Commercialisation and professionalism

The 1860s saw a new level of development in cricket in the Halifax area. Individual local players had been involved in matches against the touring professional elevens and fixtures had taken place against them in the surrounding towns of Bradford, Leeds, Huddersfield, Rochdale and Manchester. The 1863 season though, saw the Halifax Trinity club's ambition to match these other areas with its own three day challenge match in June against the All-England Eleven for the first time. The *Halifax Guardian* gave the match prominent attention both before and afterwards which was clearly of much significance to the local population

We have this week to record the first visit to our town of those celebrated players, many of whom have visited Australia and America as the English champions of cricket. ²⁶¹

The match was a huge occasion with £204 being taken in gate money and an estimated eight to ten thousand people watching the second days play. The twenty-two players who represented Halifax and District were assembled from across the West Riding of Yorkshire and seven of them were professional cricketers. The lack of Halifax Trinity players was the only criticism offered by the newspaper which summed up the occasion

²⁶⁰ *Halifax Guardian* 4 July 1868

²⁶¹ *Halifax Guardian* 8 June 1863

It is a new era, both in the history of the club and town, which will give them a status in the cricketing world and materially enhance their reputation in the opinion of neighbouring clubs.²⁶²

There was, too, local rivalry in the attempt to engage with popular support. The Halifax Alliance club arranged a two day novelty game in July of the same year between eleven one-legged Military Pensioners from Chelsea and eleven one-armed Naval Pensioners from Greenwich but this match seems to have been completely over shadowed by the visit to the town of the Prince and Princess of Wales to open the new Town Hall at the same time.²⁶³

The following year, 1864 saw more competition still. The Halifax Trinity club achieved something of a coup by arranging a match in early July with the All England Eleven who were travelling back from their tour of Australia and it was to be the touring side's first appearance in Yorkshire. The match was late starting due to the weather and whilst still creating great interest did not have the impact of the previous fixture.²⁶⁴ The Todmorden club too decided that 'hosting a prestigious England match was a viable commercial and cricketing proposition'²⁶⁵ After setting up a special committee in April they arranged a match with the United England Eleven for the end of July. A substantial subscription fund of £130 prior to the event, of which the Fielden brothers, Cotton manufacturers and club patrons, contributed £30, led to the club making a profit of over £48 despite one of the three days being badly hit by rain.²⁶⁶ The Heywoods in their history of the club commented 'the venture had proved worthwhile, raising the profile of cricket in Todmorden and of the cricket club both in Todmorden and the surrounding districts. The membership of the club rose from 157 in 1863 to 284 by the end of 1864.'²⁶⁷ The Halifax Trinity club arranged a further big match for the end of the season, this time for the benefit of their professional Mr W. Swain, also against the United England Eleven, and whilst a "moderately large"²⁶⁸ attendance was reported presumably any financial benefit went to the professional. Indeed at their Annual General Meeting in October quite contrary to the Todmorden experience the Halifax Trinity club reported a decrease in membership from 240 in 1863 to 192 in 1864 despite their staging of the All England and United England games.²⁶⁹ Todmorden buoyed with their success felt able to employ a full time professional for the first time²⁷⁰ and Halifax Trinity continued with the services of William Swain who maintained a 'remarkable length' with the ball.²⁷¹ Swain had previously been professional bowler to the Prince of Wales (later

²⁶² *Halifax Guardian* 8 June 1863

²⁶³ *Halifax Guardian* 25 July, 1 and 8 August 1863

²⁶⁴ *Halifax Guardian* 11 & 18 June and 9 & 16 July 1864

²⁶⁵ Freda, Malcolm and Brian Heywood, *Cloth Caps and Cricket Crazy* p33

²⁶⁶ *Ibid* p43

²⁶⁷ *Ibid*

²⁶⁸ *Halifax Guardian* 24 September 1864

²⁶⁹ *Halifax Guardian* 29 October 1864

²⁷⁰ Ben Jackson of Nottingham – *Cloth Caps and Cricket Crazy* p45

²⁷¹ Heywood, *Cloth Caps and Cricket Crazy* p46

Edward VII) and at Christ Church College, Oxford ²⁷² and he used these connections to further his commercial activities

CRICKET! CRICKET!! CRICKET!!!

Under the most distinguished patronage of HRH The Prince of Wales Wm Swain has in stock every requisite for the game; very cheap cricketing suits, from cloth made specially for the purpose.

Send for a price list to 55 King Cross Street, Halifax.²⁷³

Despite an increasingly professional approach to the game which included charging gate money and widely advertising their fixture list the two premier clubs of the district at that time, Todmorden and Halifax Trinity did not organise any more matches with the touring professional elevens for over two years. Halifax were the first to resume with a fixture against the All England Eleven in June 1867 but again it did not bring in the crowds – “The attendance on the three days was not equal to previous years - there being only about 1,700 present on the second day, and not more than half that number on the first and third days.”²⁷⁴ The unpredictable and speculative nature of such a fixture was illustrated in this game which finished in two days and the club had to incur extra expense by engaging the players to play a second match on the last day to keep faith with the public. Making matters even worse the local hero Tom Emmett, now playing at Keighley decided not to play just a few days beforehand despite being booked as early as February.²⁷⁵ Both clubs repeated their efforts in the following year. Halifax organised a two-day match against the Aboriginals Touring side in June that was followed by a gala with the visitors displaying their native skills with boomerangs and spears and the novelty aspect seems to have paid off with a much better attendance – “the attendance was very much larger (on the Saturday), reminding one of the crowds who attended the same field when the All England Eleven appeared some years ago”.²⁷⁶ Todmorden stuck to their previous approach and organised a match against the All-England Eleven but it was “less an attraction than it would have been at a former time”.²⁷⁷ The match was still a major occasion, the gate receipts at £94 18s 11d exceeded those of 1864 but the costs were such that the Todmorden club still made a loss.²⁷⁸

The appeal of games against visiting professional touring sides was on the wane both locally and nationally after many successful years. Eleven gentlemen of Walsden and Todmorden organised a novelty match against Dan Rice’s “14 Clown Cricketers” in 1871 which despite

²⁷² Heywood, *Cloth Caps and Cricket Crazy* p46

²⁷³ Halifax Guardian 21 April 1866

²⁷⁴ Halifax Guardian 6 July 1867

²⁷⁵ Ibid

²⁷⁶ Halifax Guardian 4 July 1868

²⁷⁷ *Todmorden Advertiser* 31 July 1868 as quoted in *Cloth Caps and Cricket Crazy*

²⁷⁸ Heywood, *Cloth Caps and Cricket Crazy* p53

rain attracted a crowd of 2,464 paying receipts of £66 14s 2d. One final height was reached in 1874 when the Todmorden club arranged a match between the United North of England Eleven and the United South of England side which contained W.G.Grace. The cost of staging the match, £257 was considerable but with an organising committee which had started in January and 57 guarantors who collectively promised £267 in the event of loss, three fine days brought total receipts of over £314 and a profit to the club of £57 1s 2d. Despite its success it was the last great representative game to be played at Todmorden. The success of this particular match stood in stark comparison with the financial health of the club for much of the 1870s. Extensive flood damage in 1870 caused the club's debt to rise to over £117²⁷⁹ and continuing difficult financial times saw the club dispense with professional players for the next seven years.

The attraction of major games in the district was not quite extinguished. Elland played the United North of England side twice in 1873²⁸⁰ and in a major coup the Elland club hosted the mighty 1878 Australian tourists. Played over three days the Australian Eleven played eighteen from Elland and District and the local press gave it huge coverage

The public spirit of the Ellanders has once again come to the front and, by the engagement of the Australian cricketers, thousands of people round and square, have been offered an opportunity of witnessing one of the finest treats that could have been provided. The treat was all the more exceptional because the match . . . was only the fifth which the Australians have played upon this side of the water, three out of the five, moreover, having been at Nottingham, at Lords and at Kennington Oval, whilst only one, that against Yorkshire, has approached this division of the country.²⁸¹

By the time of the game against the Australians Elland had become the foremost club in the district and it continued its policy of arranging big matches for a few more years. The United South of England Eleven were opponents in 1879 and the following year a game was played against the travelling Casey's Clowns before their final game against a touring team came in 1886 against the Indian Parsees.

Clearly making money had been an important factor to the clubs in the initial phase of the development of professional touring teams. Making money though was by no means certain. With the vagaries and uncertainties of the touring sides themselves, added to the uncertainties of the weather and the game of cricket, there was always a high degree of risk which could only be partially nullified by good organisation, enthusiasm and patronage. The fact that these games continued well into the 1880s suggests that factors other than finance such as prestige, competition between clubs and local rivalry were equally important at a time when the grass roots game in this area was enjoying considerable growth.

²⁷⁹ Heywood, *Cloth Caps and Cricket Crazy* p54

²⁸⁰ Cricketarchive.com/scorecard – accessed 17 August 2010

²⁸¹ *Halifax Guardian* 8 June 1878

The impetus which these major fixtures gave to the elite clubs of Halifax Trinity, Todmorden and Elland seems to have spread to all levels of the game. By 1870 even small localities had several teams. The small mill village of Greetland alone had four teams.²⁸² Churches and Sunday schools were beginning to form teams for their members and this accelerated through the 1870s and 1880s.²⁸³ Increasingly the villages surrounding the town and a number of works also formed teams although with irregular fixtures and continuing difficulties over grounds most were short lived. Shorter working hours for the working man achieved in the early 1870s seems to have been the most significant factor in the popularisation of the game. The Early Closing Association in Halifax had success in 1870 when the drapers, tailors, pawnbrokers, jewellers, clothiers and booksellers all agreed to close their respective shops for the first time on a Thursday afternoon and the event was immediately celebrated with a cricket match between the Pawn brokers and the Tailors and Drapers.²⁸⁴ The Early Closing movement had further success the following year when many of the local industrial concerns started to close their works at 1.00pm on a Saturday rather than 2.00pm and thus making it easier for the ordinary working man to take up the game. By the middle of the summer in 1871 the *Halifax Guardian* reported between fifteen and twenty formal cricket matches every week in the Halifax area and the number continued to grow as the Saturday half-holiday became more widespread. As Reid comments the 1867 Factory Act had started the process by instituting a mandatory Saturday half-holiday for all women and this was extended by a “great wave of reductions in working hours achieved by the ‘Nine Hours Movement’ of the prosperous years 1871-2”²⁸⁵

Professionalism too continued to develop. At an elite club level Elland and sometimes Halifax Trinity, Halifax Stafford, Todmorden and Rastrick were all using the services of professional players. Clubs had also to look for every source of income with ever increasing expenditure. Elland resorted to letting out grazing rights both to maximise income and facilitate ground maintenance without detracting from the quality of the playing surface

To let the Pasturage of a Cricket Field about 6 acres. For sheep only. Apply to the Secretary of the Elland Cricket Club, Elland.²⁸⁶

Many clubs were keen to maximise income from increasing crowds particularly in urban locations and Halifax Trinity was one example of a club trying to let out catering rights

Tenders. Halifax Trinity Cricket Club – TO BE LET supplying the above ground with REFRESHMENTS for the Season – Applications to be addressed to the Hon. Sec Brown Cow Hotel.²⁸⁷

²⁸² Andrew Hardcastle, *Lost The Former Cricket Grounds of Halifax and Calderdale* - Greetland Royal Albert, West Vale United, Greetland Victoria and Greetland New Delights

²⁸³ Dennis O’Keefe, ‘The Lord’s opening partnership: church and cricket in Calderdale, 1860 to c.1920’, *Sport in Society: Cultures, Commerce, Media, Politics*, 15:2, 246-264

²⁸⁴ *Halifax Guardian* 16 & 23 July 1870

²⁸⁵ Reid, ‘The Decline of Saint Monday’

²⁸⁶ *Halifax Guardian* 1 May 1869

Moreover other commercial ventures began to surround the game. William Swain who had been a professional cricketer in the Halifax area for a number of years broke completely new ground when he announced what sounds like the nineteenth century version of the indoor net and bowling machine in the Public Notices of the *Halifax Guardian*

CRICKET ALL THE YEAR ROUND

SWAIN'S PATENT (indestructible) CRICKET BATTERY for Cricket Drill. The most inexperienced can, by a few easy lessons, learn the science of batting in a room. No College, School, Club or Gymnasium ought to be without one.

Club's and Schools taught; Private instructions to gentlemen daily – from 10.00am to 10.00pm. For terms, illustrations etc apply to W. Swain 23 Westgate, Halifax.²⁸⁸

There is some evidence too that the professionals were prepared to put something back into the game. Tom Emmett who had started as a youngster playing for the Illingworth club and then went on to play as a professional for Halifax and Keighley and taking part in the big matches involving the professional touring elevens before having a long career with Yorkshire and ultimately winning seven caps with England, returned to his junior club in a friendly match to celebrate the Illingworth Rush-bearing

A friendly game at cricket was played on the Illingworth ground on Tuesday, Mr Tom Emmett, the great Yorkshire bowler, being present and introducing break-backs and swift bowling.²⁸⁹

No doubt his appearance would be a great boost to the Illingworth club and village.

Certainly by this date the formal game of cricket was widely established across the district with four or five elite clubs and a wide ranging smattering of smaller clubs and teams playing fairly regularly although most with little in the way of facilities and many leading a precarious and often short existence as they struggled to provide the infrastructure the game required.

²⁸⁷ *Halifax Guardian* 14 May 1870

²⁸⁸ *Halifax Guardian* 9 April 1870

²⁸⁹ *Halifax Guardian* 11 September 1869

Conclusion

Much can be drawn from the case study undertaken. One remarkable feature is the amount of cricket reported in the local press and which accounts for the vast majority of articles relating to leisure. The likelihood too is that a good deal more cricket took place but was never reported upon for a whole variety of reasons.

The increasing publicity for the game and the arrival of the itinerant professional teams created an interest in the game which clearly acted as a catalyst for others to try their hand at playing. Most of the early clubs and teams played relatively few matches but the results clearly mattered. Disputes were common and even though challenge stake money soon died out to be replaced in many cases by the cost of a supper, the matches were fiercely competitive driven by loyalty to village and locality.

The game continued to be transitory throughout the period. Clubs came and went. Grounds were lost often at short notice as the ever increasing requirement for building land in the process of urbanisation took hold. The urban clubs were gradually pushed further away from the town centre and all clubs struggled with the capitalisation required for the cricket infrastructure in an area where the topography and climate was also against them. The game was helped to some degree by it being accepted by much of the establishment as a civilising influence although elements of the game's development in the West Riding must have strained this view at times. Professionalism and commercialisation were often the approach in this locality and both were contrary to the view of many influential voices in other parts of the country particularly the south.

In the early period of the game's development few people outside the affluent middle and upper classes had the leisure time required to take part in the formal game. Holidays were few and working hours for the vast majority long. Gradually with improved economic times the struggle for shorter hours was successful and with the spread of the Saturday half-day holiday from the late 1850s to its general adoption in the 1870s the way was opened up for a much wider participation in the game by the working classes and a more secure future for the game in the Halifax district.

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