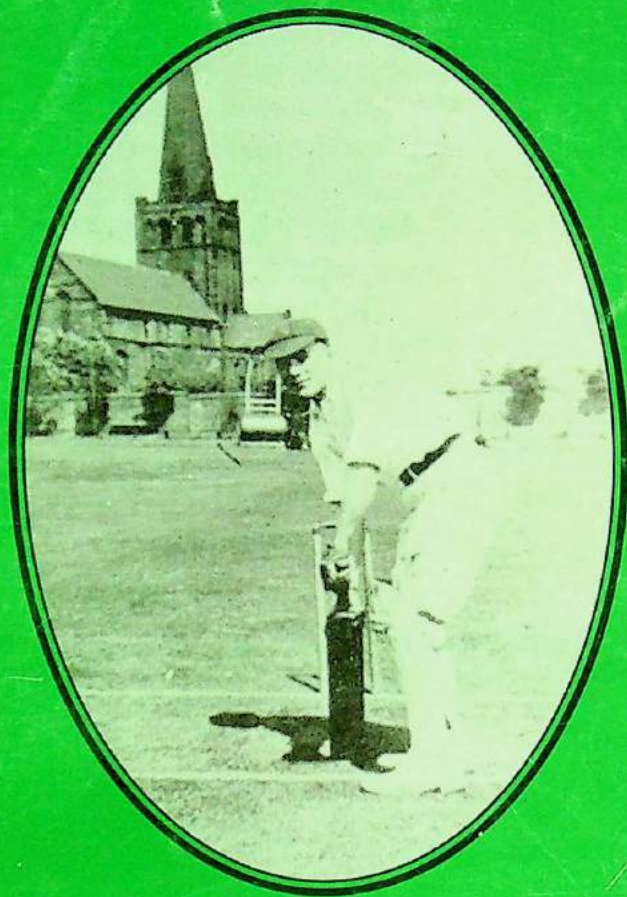


# HIGHFIELD CRICKET CLUB

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1924 - 1999



75 Glorious Years

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Highfield Cricket Club  
1924 - 1999



75 YEARS



## Chairman's message



Harold Gaskell  
Chairman

Dear Friends,

Seventy-five years of cricket at Billinge Road, Highfield. The celebration dinner on the evening of March 5th 1999, which our Committee is organising vigorously, should be a memorable occasion. The meeting of old players and members who have played their part in the history of the Club will be marvellous as will the reminiscing about members past who were stalwarts on the field and in the running of the Club. Only yesterday I went to the funeral of Jim Hesketh, forty years a member, thirty of those actively as Treasurer, a truly great man. Actually, I find it a little frightening that my own involvement with the Club stretches over 55 of the 75 years but it is the future that is now the important thing.

As you may be aware, cricket is slowly to be re-organised throughout the Counties and the smaller leagues are to be arranged into a pyramid system. We must ensure that we are involved in this scheme as this is the future of cricket in this country. In the past few years the Committee and members, in conjunction with a very helpful Vicar and Church Council, have reached the standards of Clubhouse facilities required for this scheme. The next stage has unfortunately hit bad weather, as can be seen as we all look out across our beloved cricket ground at this time. This will be overcome although it will make things a little difficult at the start of the season. Once the ground levelling and drainage has been completed, we shall have one of the finest grounds in the County. It is essential that this happens and we must give it all our enthusiasm and energies so that we can have all of the facilities required to go forward in this new set up for cricket.

At the moment our junior set up is healthier than it has been in all my years at the Club. This is due to the excellent work done by our junior organisers and coaches. Our 1st, 2nd and 3rd teams are working very hard and blending this young talent into the senior game. This must continue and go from strength to strength in our final year before the new Millennium. With these facilities and further improvements, more members will be forthcoming and even more enthusiasm generated throughout the Club.

My vision for the Club in the next decade is to become a stronger member of the County pyramid system, progressing up the structure so that our members do not have to leave the Club in order to develop their game. We certainly can't blame players wanting to improve in this way if we merely stand still. I know that they would prefer to stay with *their* Club, with its family theme, social life and enthusiasm and I look forward to the day that one or more of our youngsters make County or even higher. This is not fantasy; when Brian Statham came to open our new Club house, he was very impressed and told us how he started at a very small Club whilst at the moment Neil Fairbrother is playing for England having started at two Clubs no greater than our own. This can happen and we all have a part to play, from the youngest junior to the oldest member.

Good luck and every success to us all; we deserve it.

Harold Gaskell

## HIGHFIELD CRICKET CLUB OFFICIALS 1924 - 1999

PRESIDENT	
Mr J Hitchen	1945 - 1954
Mr W Alker	1955 - 1963
Mr E Topping	1964 - 1969
Mr F Prescott	1970 - 1977
Mr J Lythgoe	1978
Mr D Ascroft	1979 - 1983
Rev W Harrington	1984 to date

TREASURER	
Mr W Winstanley	1944
Mr TR Holt	1945 - 1947
Mr J Lythgoe	1948 - 1949
Mr J Hesketh	1950 - 1980
Mr A Whitham	1981 - 1983
Mr W Hooke *	1984 - 1988
Mr D Welsby	1989 - 1990
Mr J McCann	1991 to date
* Jointly with Mr N Gregory In 1984/85	

CHAIRMAN	
Mr WH Speakman	???? - 1935
Mr AV Shepherd	1936 - 1946
Mr J Lythgoe	1947
Mr J Berry	1948 - 1956
Mr EG Elliot	1957 - 1961
Mr J Lythgoe	1962 - 1971
Mr D Ascroft	1972 - 1983
Mr HF Gaskell	1984 to date

SECRETARY	
Mr T Topping	???? - 1937
Mr D Ascroft	1938 - 1940
Mr T Topping	1944 - 1952
Mr D Ascroft	1953 - 1961
Mr RR Lang	1962 - 1963
Mr A Ashurst	1964 - 1988
Mr D Eaves	1988 - 1990
Mr J Benn	1991 to date



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## Foreword

I started typing this brochure on Sunday evening, 19th July 1998. I had actually initiated the research some months earlier and quickly became engrossed with the history and people of Highfield Cricket Club. The book has become a 'labour of love' such is the fascination of re-creating seventy-five years. Indeed who of my generation could resist the opportunity to step back to the 1920's and the post war years, the journey made possible by marvellously detailed and informative early records. With advertising covering the printing costs and the production and design costs funded by myself, it means that every penny generated by sales of this brochure goes directly to the Club for its future development. One of the benefits of the decision to part fund the brochure myself is that I feel able to dedicate it to my children, who I hope will continue to enjoy the many facets of the Club over the coming years, and to my late Dad, Les Speakman, a keen but limited sportsman (a bit like his son !) who thoroughly enjoyed watching the Club's various teams. In time I am sure that he would also have become much more involved within the Highfield community, he was never one for taking a back seat for too long.

I have had so much support in chronicling the history that I could never list everyone, however I would like to thank a few people. It was a delight to meet our ex-Secretary of some thirty years, Mr Jimmy Hesketh again. He celebrated his 90th birthday just before our first meeting and he was very helpful in piecing together some of the key events and clearly enjoyed recounting his own favourite moments. Unfortunately Jimmy died in early January 1999, although it is somewhat poignant that he did witness the 75th year of the club to which he made such an important contribution. Harold and Eileen Gaskell and their family have made major contributions to the Club over the years and they provided many insights into the running of the Club and specific events. They also held the key to Mr David Ascroft's invaluable records, particularly those covering the very early years. Peter Jackson of Wordwise, the library archives of the Wigan Observer and Wigan Examiner, Alan Ashurst, Trevor Darbyshire and Fred Holcroft have all been very helpful whilst Tina, my wife, has once again encouraged me to find the time to complete the task.

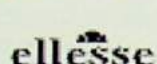
So please read on and get to know the characters, milestones and stories that make up the last seventy- five years. And remember, please don't just pass this brochure on to a friend, buy another, we need the money for our ongoing developments !

**Gary Speakman**



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## 1924 and all that

Whilst this Brochure focuses on the history of the Highfield Cricket Club established in 1924 on the Billinge Road ground, a Highfield Cricket Club was actually playing as far back as 1889. Indeed a season card from those early years carried the famous names of VIP MP's Colonel Blundell and Sir Frances Sharp Powell. In 1889 games would have been played against the likes of Poolstock, Norley Hall, Lathom and Earlestown Viaduct Institute (!). The origin, constitution and the eventual demise of this Highfield Cricket club is not clear although we know that they played at a ground in Enfield Street, Pemberton (behind the old CO-OP facing the railway station) for some years. It is likely that this Club played no cricket of note during the Great War (1915-1919) and there is no evidence that it participated in the full West Lancashire League (formerly Wigan & District) programme which returned in 1920.

In 1922 a new Club was formed, Wigan Highfield, but this team played Rugby League and enjoyed its first official fixture against their neighbours Wigan RLFC at Tunstall Lane, a mere half a mile from the site of the cricket clubs existing home. The game incidentally was won by the longer established club, 25-10, but over 21,000 turned up to see it. There would be rather fewer spectators at the newly constituted Highfield Cricket Club's first game at the Billinge Road ground in 1924.

In 1924 the Cricket Club was 're-born' and founded by the Blundell Colliery as part of the Highfield Club, which comprised a cricket and tennis section. At first the Billinge Road ground was nothing more than a field and it was Pemberton Colliery workers who first laid out the square during a period off work due to injury. Initial subscriptions depended on whether club members also worked for the colliery. Employees of the colliery used to have two pennies a week deducted from their wage packets whilst anyone not working for the pit were expected to pay ten shillings (50 pence) annual subscriptions. The Cricket Club played its first game on the newly developed Billinge Road ground on 3rd May 1924.

Platt Bridge Cricket Club, (now defunct), were the visitors for an early round of the Salter Cup with the officiating umpires Messrs Millar and Brown. Major Blundell, in the presence of the Mayor of Wigan, officially opened the recreation ground and new cricket pavilion on Monday 21st July 1924.





This very old photograph shows the President of Highfield Club, Mr Douglas, making a speech on the occasion of the opening of the ground in 1924. From left to right the names are Rev. J Woods, Major Blundell, Mayor of Wigan (Councillor J Cavey) and Mr E Douglas.

The formal proceedings were covered fully at the time by the Wigan Observer and Wigan Examiner, extracts from which included:

*'The Highfield Club is to be congratulated on their very pretty and spacious enclosure which constitutes their recreation ground. There are very few clubs in the district which can boast such a well-equipped and modern ground and pavilion, and the various committees and workers have every reason to feel proud that their efforts have met with success. The idea of the Club, of course, was to provide recreation other than bowls, for the workers and officials of the Pemberton Colliery Company Ltd but the scope of its operation has been so widened as to be open to the public in this district. The opening ceremony, in order to meet the wishes of Major Blundell, was fixed for a Monday evening, and it is a thousand pities that rain should have fallen so persistently as to practically spoil what would have been a most admirable programme. Highfield and Norley were to have played a game of cricket and there was also to have been a game of tennis. In his speech Mr Douglas, President of the Club, reflected on the time that he had first mentioned to Major Blundell that the Committee of the Highfield Club were anxious, if possible, to have a recreation ground. Major Blundell, at once, provided the Club with the necessary land and with further financial help from Major Blundell, the Committee set about laying out the ground and three tennis courts, two of grass and one hard-court. The next question, which exercised the minds of the Committee, was the provision of a pavilion. Major Blundell, with great generosity again came to the rescue and provided them with a beautiful pavilion and fitted it out in every detail for the convenience of the players and members. Mr Douglas then asked Major Blundell to accept a beautifully engraved gold key with which to unlock the door of the pavilion.'*

*Mr G Ashurst, in proposing a vote of thanks to Major Blundell, said that cricket was a national game; it was the foundation of good conduct; it made honest citizens and it inculcated principals, which were very useful in every walk of life. The fact that so many former members of the cricket club had come long distances that day, showed that they had not forgotten the lessons learned from the good old game. Mr Ashurst offered a motto based on the initials 'H.C.' from the Highfield Club flag: 'Hearty Co-operation and Honest Conduct in Hard Conquests gives Happy Consolation to the Honourable Cricketer'. Major Blundell, in reply, noted that a few years ago the field they were standing on was a stubble field of dubious character and now it was a beautiful recreation ground. Major Blundell then went out with a bat and played an over to the bowling of Mr G Ashurst, the fielders being former players of Highfield Club. This was necessarily brief due to the rain, but the Major, much to the delight of the crowd, succeeded in hitting a boundary. Refreshments were afterwards served in the School and pavilion'.*

**So, the Club was founded and the rest, as they say, is history.**



**A Group of Ex Highfield Cricketers at the Formal Opening of the New Ground - 1924**  
 Back row : A.E.House, W.Clark, J.Gaskell, J.Walsh, T.O'Brien, W.Parkinson, T.Gaskell  
 Middle row : D.Houghton, R.Stephens, R.Winstanley, A.E.Benson, The Mayor, Hy.Heaton, Thos. Taberner,  
 Jas.Lowe, Chas.Howarth, P.Parkinson, Ed.Cunliffe, J.Woodend, J.Taberner  
 Front row (all seated) : J.Hudson, F.Hurst, P.Heaton, G.Ashurst, H.Leech, R.Pennington, E.Beasmore



## They made it happen

The research for this commemorative brochure has confirmed something that I had suspected for some years. Highfield Cricket Club is a special Club, one that has benefited from excellent organisation and exceptional commitment during every single year of the last seventy-five. Whilst it is clear that every man, woman and child who have ever touched the Club will, in some way, have helped influence its path, there is also no doubt that a huge debt of gratitude is owed to a handful of people. The Club has, not surprisingly, had troubled times and the contribution of certain gentlemen and ladies has been immense. Whether it was their love of the game or a sense of community that drove them on, it is difficult to say, but their legacy is the Club and facilities that we enjoy today. It is not possible to mention them all but it is right to highlight the influence and contribution of a few and the significant milestones in the development of the club as we know it today.

The Club was managed from its inception by a separate Cricket Committee that reported to the General Committee of Highfield Club. The Highfield Club was responsible for the Recreation Ground that housed the cricket and tennis sections. The original Highfield Club still stands today behind Enfield Street in an area better known as Highfield Gardens. The Billiard Room of the Highfield Club was the venue for many of the early AGM's as well as the annual Prize Giving and Dances.

The first Chairman of the Cricket Committee was, ironically, a Mr WH Speakman (no relation) followed by Mr AV Shepherd from 1935 up until just after the war and Mr Jack Berry through until 1956. George Elliot, headmaster of Highfield Junior School, was Chairman for five years until Jim Lythgoe was appointed in 1962. Jim had been Vice-Chairman and a club stalwart for many years. The position of President was not established until after the 2nd World War when Mr John Hitchen, an owner of a local Colliery, accepted the role. This was a figurehead position only, however, and it was the various Chairman and Committee members who continued to manage the Club. The Cricket Committee met regularly but then again they had to because until the early 1970's, this fine body of around twelve gentlemen actually selected the teams each week !

There was a real commitment to success on the field and the General Committee of the Highfield Club funded the appointment of a succession of professional player/coaches from the first, Jack Battersby, through to

Jim Eatock, Jimmy Hatchman, Arthur Davies, Len Horridge, Jack Prescott and finally Ralph Southworth in the early 1950's. There is a delightful minute within the AGM records of 1934 which states that :-

***'....the General Committee proved their willingness to do all they can for playing members by engaging the services of [another] qualified full time Coach-Professional. The Committee hope that members will avail themselves of this special kindness by regular and assiduous practice.'***

Despite this generosity, finances within the Cricket Club were very tight in those early years and the Club was initially very dependent on donations, gate receipts, a variety of draws and benefactors such as Mr Arnold Isherwood, a 1st XI player but also owner of Isherwoods Carpets. In addition to the normal operating expenses there was a 'travelling fund' and 'talent money' to cover. It is clear from minutes of meetings throughout the last 75 years that the members of the Cricket Committee have been determined to generate funds by whatever means possible.

A key member of the Cricket Committee and an early Secretary of the Club was Mr Tommy Topping. Tommy played throughout the 1920's and 1930's, captaining the championship winning 1st XI in 1932. However it was as Secretary, a role he carried out magnificently for over 20 years that he arguably made his most significant contribution to the Club. Tommy was also a member of the West Lancs Committee for much of that time. Tommy remained on the Highfield Committee until his death in August 1971.

When Major Blundell died his Will stipulated that the cricket ground should pass out of the direct control of the Highfield Club and be given to the Liverpool Ecclesiastical Commissioners for the benefit of St Matthew's Parish. This happened on 30th June 1946 and the Cricket Club became a separate entity and established a separate set of rules. A Recreation Committee, comprising the Vicar Rev H Bullough, the School Headmaster and others was established to manage the new relationship and a ground rent of £25 was introduced. In the early 1950's this new relationship was put to the test as the church was faced with a death duties bill arising from the passing of Colonel Blundell. The expected sum of £750 was not inconsiderable and the cricket club was expected to share the burden. The Club, with Tommy Topping as Secretary, established a ground development fund and financial contributions were secured from other cricket clubs and people of the community. It transpired that the duties were not payable and the donations were offered back, however few took up the offer of repayment and the club's coffers were temporarily swelled.

Perhaps the most influential member in the first fifty years of the Club's history was David Ascroft. David was a member of the Club for over 50 years having occupied almost every role within the Club and appeared to carry out whatever job needed doing at the time. David was a good player and combined this with a role as Tommy Topping's assistant secretary. David then succeeded him as Secretary until 1962. He became Chairman in 1972 and then, subsequently, in 1979 he became President, succeeding Jim Lythgoe and Frank Prescott who had both died within the previous two years. David himself died in 1983, but a trophy bearing his name is awarded annually to the young player of the year.

A number of individuals have held the same office for long periods of time but none for as long as Jimmy Hesketh and Alan Ashurst. Rather surpris-



ingly the role of Treasurer was not established until after the 2nd World War. It appears that prior to this the duties had been carried out by the Secretary and his Assistant, yet another admirable effort by Messrs Topping and Ascroft respectively. Jimmy Hesketh was invited by David Ascroft to become only Highfield's third ever Treasurer in 1950 and he carried on in this role for thirty unbroken years until poor health forced his retirement before the 1981 season commenced. Jimmy never played for the Club but his meticulous and careful stewardship of the Club during some difficult periods was as valuable as any match-winning hundreds.

As an indication of the growth of the Club, when Jimmy Hesketh became Treasurer expenditure was around £350 a year. By his retirement, thirty years later, expenditure had increased to £2,000 and by 1998 to around £8,000 excluding exceptional ground development costs. Alan Ashurst replaced David Ascroft as Secretary in 1964, a role he was to fulfil for the following 25 years. Alan, an ex player, was very instrumental in the building of the Pavilion in the 1960's, indeed it was through his work contacts that he located the pre-fabricated sections in Manchester. Alan continues to enjoy his retirement and his bowls.

It was entirely fitting that Jimmy Hesketh, Alan Ashurst and David Ascroft became the Club's first Honorary Life Members in 1981.

The ladies have, of course, been very important contributors over the last 75 years. From the outset the playing members have been so very fortunate to have wives, girlfriends and other willing females supplying cricket teas and providing general support. In addition, the Refreshment Hut, which provided essential income, was manned by 'Auntie' Gladys Prescott and Josie Ashurst for many years, whilst female scorers have also been evident with Eileen Gaskell and her late daughter Jane and Ruth Elliot. In 1993 Eileen was made the first honorary lady life member in recognition of her overall contribution to the Club.



**Mrs Eileen Gaskell**  
Highfields first Lady Honorary Life Member

On the field we have been fortunate to witness and enjoy the cricketing abilities of a large number of very good players. The professionals clearly made their mark but it is a testimony to the community of Highfield that arguably three of the Clubs greatest sons were both amateur and local. John Heaton, Trevor Darbyshire and Harold Gaskell deserve a special mention because of their immense contribution on the field. In addition all three gentlemen have held the all so important position of groundsmen whilst Harold, our current Chairman, has contributed in so many other ways.

**John Heaton** began and ended his cricketing career with Highfield, a period spanning 38 years, from the age of 14 in 1939. He became one of the outstanding batsmen of the local leagues, frequently heading the league batting averages and monopolising the Highfield 1st XI batting awards. To put his performances into some sort of context, he scored over 9,000 runs for Highfield, won the Club averages 21 times and the League averages nine times out of a possible ten in the 1940's and 1950's. When he scored a marvellous 111 not out against Winstanley Park in 1950 the Committee actually sent him a copy of the minutes recording their



**JOHN HEATON**

congratulations. John was the captain of Highfield 1st XI for 11 seasons, including the teams which won the championship in the three successive years to 1952. His talents were not reserved exclusively for Highfield, during a brief two year period with Norley Hall in the mid 1950's they never lost a match whilst he also played for Westhoughton. A talented goalkeeper, he played for Clitheroe and Rossendale in the Lancashire combination before the second world war and then played wartime soccer with Ayr Ltd.

John died tragically in March 1967 at the age of 52. Troubled by chest pains all day, he was driving to see his doctor when he suffered a fatal heart attack, his blue mini-van veering across the road and smashing through the garden wall of 'Iona', the old Highfield Vicarage on Billinge Road. Somewhat ironically he was merely 350 yards from his home and just 100 yards from the ground where he had spent so many happy and fruitful years at the crease.

The old Pavilion, completed in 1967, was named after John, however this was pulled down when the current Pavilion was built. The John Heaton Trophy was also established in his memory but with the demise of the SouthWest Lancashire League it too began to gather dust. The Club, however, is determined to reinstate appropriate memorials to John and it is intended that the John Heaton Trophy will again be played for during our 75th anniversary year.

**Trevor Darbyshire** is widely regarded as the best 'all-rounder' and arguably the best batsman ever to play for Highfield. What is irrefutable



TREVOR DARBYSHIRE

is that Trevor is the Club's all-time record run scorer with over 10,000 runs in the 1st XI over a twenty-year period.

Trevor made his debut in the 1st XI in 1962 having 'graduated' through Highfield school and the junior team and he very quickly established himself in the firsts as an accomplished right handed batsman and left arm seam bowler. When I met up with him again recently for a thoroughly enjoyable discussion about his time with Highfield, I was reminded of his thoughtful approach to the game and his detailed memory; as a matter of interest he

claims to have a book in which he has recorded every innings he has played ! Trevor was therefore aware of his batting aggregate but was genuinely surprised and delighted to learn that he had taken around 400 wickets as well. Despite such success at the wicket, most people will be surprised to know that, much to his disappointment, Trevor never won the league averages and scored just one century in competitive cricket.

Trevor was also a successful captain; clearly the treble winning side of 1974 stands out when he scored over 900 runs himself, but there were other championships under Trevor's leadership in 1976 and 1980.

Most people regarded Trevor's retirement at just 39 years old as very premature but Trevor believed that he had lost the 'buzz' for the game. He signed off in real style with 94 not out against Bickershaw to win the game, in the final match of the 1983 season. He did make a very brief appearance a couple of years later when the Club was short of players but he has never played competitive cricket since, despite numerous offers to play elsewhere. As Trevor made it clear; 'Highfield is my Club'. He is keen, however, to make one more appearance and lead his 1974 charges once again in a special game during the 75th anniversary season. Many current and ex-members are looking forward to seeing him back at the wicket.

**Harold Gaskell** started playing for Highfield immediately after the second world war at the age of 14. Apart from a short period in the late fifties/early sixties when he played at Wigan Cricket Club (and even then he looked after the Highfield juniors), Harold has served the Club for 55



years of its 75 year life to date. An excellent all-round sportsman, Harold played left back for Bolton Wanderers B team and had a spell at Wigan Athletic. He also demonstrated his cricketing versatility by firstly keeping wicket in the late 1950's and then turning to bowling off-spin in the late 1970's. But it was as a batsman that he made his mark on his beloved Billinge Road ground with an overall aggregate of around 8500 runs over a forty-year period. He established a South West Lancashire league record on two occasions; the first in the 1967 season (523 aggregate runs) and then again in 1977, at the age of 47,



when he totted up 682 runs for the season. His bowling also claimed 250 victims, most of them in the last seven years before his retirement at the age of 53. Harold retired from full time competitive cricket in 1985 although he has turned out for the 2nd XI during the last decade and still plays the odd friendly match, usually dropping his opening off-spinner on the proverbial sixpence !

Harold was appointed captain of the 1st XI in 1954 and enjoyed three championship successes during his two stints of captaincy as well as winning the Heaton trophy for the first time and the Salter Cup. He also joined the Committee for the first time in 1954, a body he has served so actively for most of the following 45 years. During the research for this brochure, Harold's name cropped up time and time again in the Club records, whether it was organising a race-draw for the Derby or tending to the ground. Harold was appointed Chairman in 1984, succeeding his close friend David Ascroft, and made an Honorary Life Member in 1989. The lounge within the new Pavilion was named the HF Gaskell Lounge, a fitting tribute to a gentleman who would never claim to be, but is certainly regarded as, 'Mr Highfield'.

In terms of the present day organisation, the current Cricket Committee is arguably as stable and progressive as any in amateur cricket. Our President, Rev. Bill Harrington is a sports enthusiast and has been very supportive since his appointment in 1984 whilst John Benn, ex Sports Editor of the Lancashire Post & Chronicle and the Wigan Observer, has been Secretary and 1st XI scorer for nearly ten years. Similarly Jeff McCann has carried out the very demanding role of Treasurer since 1991. All three gentlemen would accept, however, that they are unable to compete with the activity levels of our Chairman. Harold still tends to the square and outfield, he still organises Club events and he still finds time for golf and magistrate duties. I suppose his wife, Eileen, has got used to it by now! It is, after all, a very special Club.

#### **DID YOU KNOW ?**

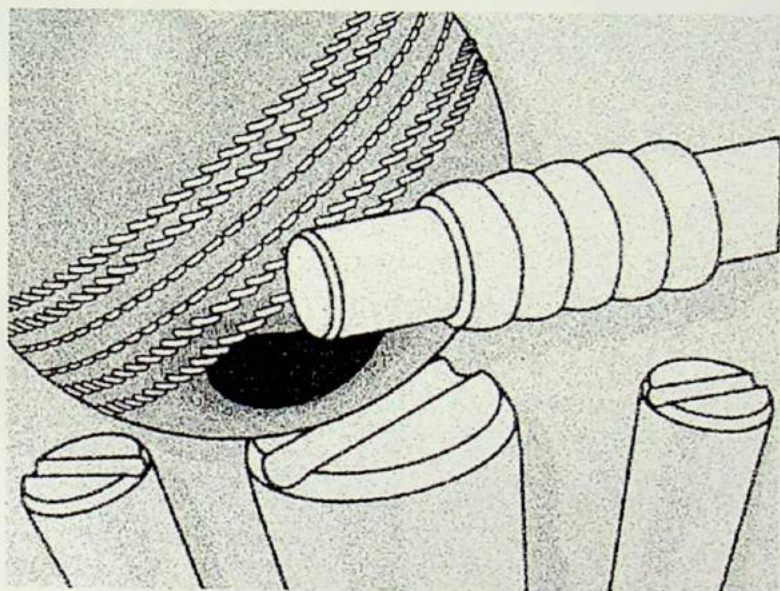
*The squirrel is the Club's official emblem. The association with the squirrel goes back to early Highfield schooldays and was officially recognised by the Cricket Club in 1958 on the occasion of winning the Salter Cup. Each player was awarded a royal blue cap and tie bearing the gold squirrel emblem. The Blundell family kindly granted permission to use the emblem.*

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## The Ground & Club facilities

Right from the outset in 1924, our cricket ground established a reputation as one of the finest in the area, with excellent cricket wickets, outfield and general facilities. The key milestones that have shaped the development of the ground and facilities are set out below.

In 1924 the Cricket Club was established within a building which comprised a pavilion, toilet and dressing rooms. The photograph taken on the official opening of the ground in 1924 shows the pavilion in all its splendour with a very distinctive veranda as its frontage. You are still able to determine the original pavilion today as it is clearly set back from the main part of the current building whilst there is also a clear difference in the roofline. The original pavilion now comprises the main kitchens and toilets of the Parish Hall. A refreshment hut was located to its right hand side facing towards what is now the Bowling Green. A mini-pavilion was sited at the bottom end of the ground (May Mill boundary) and this was where mid innings teas were served. The ground was originally prepared by Colliery workers who were off work due to injury. The distinctive slopes, however, were caused by the Colliers' early return to work before the work was completed.

In 1934 new practice wickets became available (note record of report to AGM) :-

*'....they are expected to be almost equal to the match wickets, another very thoughtful effort by the General Committee'.*

In 1956 the building of the new Parochial Hall was completed and the dressing rooms relocated within the new building.

In 1967 a new pavilion was built along what is now the graveyard boundary. It effectively replaced the tennis courts that had been sited there some years earlier. The new pavilion enabled dressing rooms and a kitchen to be co-located. Total cost was only £500 due to the fact that the prefabricated slabs had been purchased at just £100 from Jack Case Ltd whilst the concrete base cost under £100. The secretary of Lancashire County Cricket Club, Mr Jack Wood, opened the new pavilion on July 24th 1967. It was fitting that it was named after the late John Heaton and a commemorative plaque and photograph of John adorned the wall.

In 1981 the brick equipment store was built between the Vicarage wall and the John Heaton Pavilion. The John Heaton Pavilion was upgraded in 1985 with the installation of showers whilst two practice wickets were put in place at the bottom end of the ground. An artificial wicket was also installed on the bottom end of the cricket square. Total cost was around £6000.

In late 1991 the building of a brand new pavilion was completed as an extension to the Parochial Hall. The new facility comprised a lounge, a kitchen, separate dressing rooms for two teams and umpires and a bar area for the lounge. The building work was almost entirely completed by Club members at a cost of just over £50,000. Grants totalling around £20,000 were secured from the Sports Council but this was the most ambitious project yet for the Club. It was entirely fitting that the lounge should be named the HF Gaskell lounge after Harold Gaskell. Mr Brian Statham CBE, the ex Lancashire and England opening bowler, opened the new pavilion on 30th August 1992.



OPENING OF THE NEW PAVILION IN 1992

L to R : Rev. Bill Harrington (President), John Benn (Hon. Sec.) Brian Statham  
Harold Gaskell (Chairman) Jeff McCann (Treasurer)

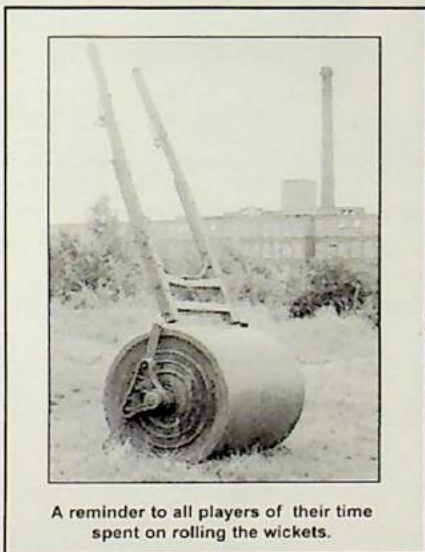
The ground had been used exclusively for cricket since the 1920's. In 1997 a bowling green was established on land to the right of the new pavilion alongside Billinge Road. In the same year, land at the bottom end of the field (the old May Mill end) was used to site a new practice nets facility. The £15,000 facility, part funded by the Foundation for Sports and the Arts, comprised two lanes with 'stow away' nets for security purposes.

During the same year 'bucket' type seats were purchased from the now empty Bolton Wanderers football ground and located around the boundary thereby increasing spectator seating by 150.

In early September 1998 the earthmoving equipment moved on to the ground as the transformation of the outfield began. This part of an overall development project aims to level the outfield and improve, significantly, the drainage of the ground. At the time of writing the groundwork has been partly completed including 5000 tonnes of landfill, and the distinctive slopes have gone forever. Such has been the dreadfully wet weather in October 1998, it remains to be seen whether the ground will be available for cricket in April 1999. This work, along with new sight-screens, a further practice lane, a new artificial wicket and wicket covers will cost around £40,000, £19,000 of which will be funded by the Sports Council. The overall development project should be completed by mid 1999 and will result in a transformation of the ground and significant further improvements to our facilities.

It is clear from the above that the Club has been particularly progressive in the last thirty years, continuously upgrading and improving its facilities. In the last ten years the actions have been accelerated, directed by long serving stalwarts but driven, increasingly, by younger members. Projects such as the self-build of the new Pavilion have required considerable physical efforts and skilled contributions from a number of members. Grants have been secured to part fund the development work in more recent years, however the grant application processes demand a

great deal of time and effort on the part of Club members whilst fund raising has developed into a very significant stream of the Clubs activities. Fund raising is increasingly centred on social events with Tony and Jacky Clark usually at the heart of the organising and delivery. The annual Pantomime and Bonfire Nights are now firmly established alongside the more traditional money raising activities. The encouraging sign is that the appetite for this time and effort remains unabated with increasingly significant contributions from the newer, younger members. With this energy and enthusiasm in place, Highfield will enter the Millennium with every chance of achieving its centenary year in 2024.



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## From the Boundary

### A review of on-field performances (1924-1998)

The playing fortunes of the various Highfield teams over the last seventy-five years make for interesting reading. There have been "golden periods" throughout the Club's history, however, it is difficult to determine whether any team could justify the accolade of "the best Highfield team ever". The following chapters highlight "on-field" team performances for each year of the Clubs history, whilst there is a more detailed section at the back of the Brochure setting out individual Club prize winners. Unfortunately, despite considerable research, there are some gaps in the records and the Club would be delighted to hear from any reader who can furnish any of the missing information.

### The Pre-War Years 1924-1939

Year	Captain 1st	Hons 1st	Captain 2nd	Hons 2nd
1924	F Atherton	<b>Champions Div B</b>		
1925	J Miller	3rd Div A		2nd Div D
1926		6th Div A		2nd Div C <b>Farnworth Trophy</b>
1927		2nd Div A		<b>Champions Div C</b>
1928		4th Div A		2nd Div C
1929		4th Div A		5th Div C
1930		5th Div A		3rd Div C
1931		2nd Div A	H Ashurst	<b>Champions Div C</b>
1932	T Topping	<b>Champions Div A</b>	H Ashurst	6th Div C
1933	T Topping	2nd Div A	H Ashurst	4th Div C
1934	J Ramsdale	7th Div A	H Ashurst	2nd Div C
1935	J Ramsdale	5th Div A	D Ascroft	<b>Champions Div C</b>
1936	H Berry	2nd Div A	D Ascroft	<b>Champions Div C</b>
1937	H Stretton	<b>Champions Div A</b> <b>Salter Cup</b>	D Ascroft	<b>Champions Div C</b>
1938	H Stretton	<b>Champions Div A</b>	T Simm	<b>Champions Div C</b>
1939	H Stretton	3rd Div A	T Simm	2nd Div C

The newly formed Highfield Club, strengthened by recruits from Norley Hall, were invited to join the West Lancashire League for the 1924 season. The first ever games for the Highfield Club saw the 1st XI away at Roby Mill (West Lancashire League "B" Division).



The other teams in the B Division were Rainford, Hindley St Peters, Golborne, Platt Bridge IM., Platt Bridge Wesleyans, Clock Face, Abram Colliery and St Helens Recs.

The 1st XI, captained by F. Atherton, were involved in a two horse race with Rainford for most of the historic 1924 season. By mid July Rainford were heading the table although Highfield had played one game less. Highfield's challenge for the title was not helped by the dreadful weather of 1924 and a couple of occasions when games were called off by opponents. Highfield were awarded the points when Abram Colliery were unable to raise a team but had to settle for just a share of the points when Golborne claimed, somewhat controversially, that their ground was unfit, despite having called the game off earlier in the week by "telephonic transfers" because they couldn't raise a team ! This dropped point threatened to deprive Highfield of the championship and they entered the critical game with Rainford on Saturday 6th September knowing that they had to win.

According to the Wigan Observer report of the time, "*Rainford couldn't cope with the splendid bowling of H Holcroft*" and Highfield won easily thereby securing the championship and promotion. Holcroft's bowling was a feature of the 1924 season and his 51 wickets at 3.6 won both the club and league bowling awards (N.B. his performances during the season included 7 wickets for 6 runs, 8 for 17 and 7 for 21). So in their first ever season Highfield had won their first piece of silverware and could look forward to the "A" division in 1925. The 2nd XI finished mid table in their first season with the feature being an excellent bowling performance from S Morton who won the league award (48 wickets at 5).

After promotion in 1924, Highfield were in the top flight alongside Norley Hall, Plank Lane, Standish, Standish Works, Blackrod, Coppull, Poolstock, Leigh, Wesley Guild and Winstanley Park. The season started very well for Joe Millers 1st XI with a winning visit to Poolstock who could only muster 44 in response to Highfields 96. Vice captain Holcroft (another 60 wickets in the season) and the Club's first ever professional, an all-rounder called Jack Battersby, claimed four wickets each. However, the 1st XI's celebrations were short lived as they suffered the ignominy of being skittled for just 24 the following week against Standish Works ! Nevertheless it was a good season and the 1st XI finished 3rd in the league behind Plank Lane and Norley whilst the 2nd XI secured runners up spot in D division and were promoted.

One of the features of the 1925 season was a 3rd round Salter Cup tie

between Highfield's and Norley Hall's 1st XI's which attracted a crowd of over 2,000 to the Norley Hall ground. Norley were the easy winners of a game carried over to a second night and moved on to the final which was held on Highfield's Billinge Road ground for the first time. Such was the interest in the match between Poolstock and the "team of the twenties", Norley Hall, that it attracted a record crowd of over 3,000 who paid a total of £30 for the privilege. Poolstock pulled off a memorable victory, scoring 89 and then restricting the much-fancied Norley to only 60, bowling them out in exactly an hour.

The 1st XI finished the following season in 6th place winning 11 games but it was to be the 2nd XI's year with the runners up spot in C division and triumph in the cup. A knockout cup competition was established for 2nd XI's for the very first time in 1926. Highfield 2nd XI played Hindley Green in the semi-final and restricted them to 164 in response to their own considerable total of 175 for 7 (J Porter 60, H Gaskell 42). The impact of the Great Strike made it difficult to schedule the final but it was finally held at Norley Hall on a Monday evening, August 7th, in front of another big crowd of around 2,000. Platt Bridge were the opponents and they batted second in very poor light, scoring just 65 in response to Highfields 105. So the first ever Farnworth Trophy was won by Highfield although it would be another 25 years before it was won by the Club again.

The 2nd XI followed up their cup success with the C division championship in 1927, losing only two league games and pipping Norley Hall to the title by just a single point. The 1st XI also achieved their highest position in division A, finishing runners up to Standish Works.

There was to be no further team honours over the following three seasons; the 1st XI consolidated their position in the league, never finishing outside of the top five, whilst the 2nd XI were league runners up in 1928 and reached the Farnworth final in 1930. The final was against Coppull 2nd XI. and was played on a "sticky wicket" at Poostock. The Highfield batsmen occupied the crease for just forty minutes and totalled just 32 with J Simm the only player to reach double figures. E.Worswick of Coppull took full advantage of the conditions and had the enviable match winning bowling analysis of 8 for 9.

There was a notable individual achievement in 1928 when Prescott and T Simm won the league batting averages for the 1st and 2nd XI respectively.

Highfield 1st XI lost only four games during the 1931 season, the same as the eventual championship winners Poolstock, but had to settle for the runners up spot with four fewer points. Jimmy Hatchman was the professional and had a splendid season with 89 wickets and an undefeated century. Roles were reversed in the C Division where Highfield 2nd XI won the championship with seven points more than Poolstock.



**'C' DIVISION CHAMPIONS - WEST LANCs LEAGUE 1931**

Back Row : J Lea, F Benfold, T Simm, J Simm, W Ashurst, T Rimmer, J Heaton.

Front Row : T Speakman (Scorer) D Ascroft, J Speakman, D Tither, H Ashurst ( Captain) G Wilcock, T Atherton.

Tommy Topping's team went one better in 1932 and won the Club's first ever A division championship, but it was anything but easy. After twelve games of the season, Highfield were just 3pts behind Standish, however



**'A' DIVISION CHAMPIONS - WEST LANCs LEAGUE 1932**

Photograph shows the Mayor of Wigan and on his left Highfield Captain Tommy Topping on the occasion of winning the Championship play-off

a disputed game between the league leaders and Norley resulted in a tie being awarded and the lead was reduced to just a single point. Highfield then took over the top position in August after beating Standish. Highfield had been restricted to 87 but Albert Simm took 7 for 4 and Standish were all out for just 41. So the title had to be Highfield's or so everyone thought. Hindley Green had been unbeaten since June and their determined challenge was truly confirmed when they beat Highfield at the end of August. Highfield were all out for 72 which Hindley knocked off for just 3 wickets down, Highfield's formidable bowling attack of Hatchman, Simm, Ramsdale and Speakman failing for once. With the final league table showing Highfield and Hindley Green all square with 44 pts each, a play-off was required at Norley Hall's ground. The game was dominated by the professional, Jimmy Hatchman, who took 8 for 21 and Hindley were skittled for 55. Highfield still did their best to hand the victory to Hindley but a determined 31 not out from Peter Preston saw them home with 5 wickets to spare and the championship trophy was Highfields for the very first time.

The following few years were relatively disappointing for the 1st XI. In 1933 they finished runners up and were knocked out of the Salter Cup at the semi final stage by Hindley, although Jimmy Hatchman established a new Club record with 113 wickets in all competitions at just under 7 per wicket. In 1934 they won only 5 league games and finished 7th but with Mr Arthur Davies recruited as the professional there was some evidence of improvement and the 1st XI finished a little higher in 5th place in 1935. The 2nd XI had progressed well during the previous few years and carried off the C Division Championship quite easily in 1935, losing only the one game in the final match of the season. The 3rd XI, comprising junior players, entered the D Division of the West Lancs League in 1935 and ended a worthy 8th having won 7 games against much senior opponents.

The 1st XI returned to something like form in 1936 with a joint runners up spot to the champions Bickershaw whilst the 2nd XI again won the C Division. Indeed the 2nd XI were expected to win the Farnworth Cup but were surprisingly beaten at the semi final stage by Poolstock who then went on to win the final, at Highfield, against Platt Bridge. Albert Simm, now in the 2nd XI, won the league award taking 58 wickets at 5.

The 1937 season was very successful with both senior teams very nearly achieving a clean sweep of all trophies. The 1st XI, with Harry Stretton as captain, Len Horridge as professional and Arthur Davies now playing as an amateur, pulled off the double, and in so doing won the Salter Cup for the first time in the history of the Club. The title was secured for the first time in five years in the very last game of the season and Highfield

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**'A' DIVISION CHAMPIONS & SALTER CUP WINNERS 1937**

Back Row : G Wilcock, H Henstead, S Heaton, R Hurst, B Titter Snr, W Fairhurst

Standing : T Topping(Sec), JS Britnell, J Ramsdale, W Ashurst, LHorridge, W Hodgson, D Ascroft, AV Shepherd (Chairman).

Seated : D Heaton, J Anglesea, H Stretton (Captain), A Davies, C Preston, J Lythgoe.

Front : H Pigot, D Titter Jun, W Speakman (Scorer).

finished just 1 point ahead of Bickershaw and 2 points ahead of Chorley. Bickershaw had also contested the Salter Cup final but Highfield's formidable total of 189 and Horridges 5-34 had ensured a relatively easy win. The batting award went to Arthur Davies who compiled two centuries on his way to an aggregate of 681 runs, namely 133 not out against Leigh Wesley Guild and 102 not out against Harben Recs. Len Horridge took 101 wickets at just 6.01 each.

It was also a hat-trick of championships in succession for the 2nd XI who also went all the way to the final of the Farnworth Cup, losing to Bickershaw. This marvellous season for the Club was also marked by the first ever visit of a touring team, the "Welsh Dragons" from Neath.

A feature of the 1938 season was the inclement weather and the introduction of eight ball overs. Neither seemed to affect the senior teams too much and the respective championships were again won.

The decade came to a close with another summer of poor weather but most minds were on other things as the outbreak of War brought a quick finish to the cricket season. The 1st XI had a relatively poor season finishing in 3rd place, whilst the 2nd XI could not achieve 5 championships

in a row and finished second to Leigh Wesley Guild. Billinge Road was again the venue for the Salter Cup Final between Bickershaw and Poolstock. Despite the match being held in July, several days of rain had left the wicket damp (as I sit here in July 1998 little appears to have changed !) and Poolstock, batting first were dismissed for just 11. The bowlers with the enviable figures were Danny Taylor (5 for 1) and Pilkington (5-9) whilst their opening batsmen made light of the "challenge", knocking off the score for the loss of no wickets. The whole match was meant to last over two evenings but actually lasted just one hour and late arrivals to the Billinge Road ground were completely bemused when told that the match was over. Later, in August, the "Welsh Dragons" returned for their now annual visit. It was reported at the time thus:

*"The Welsh men opened their tour on our ground, coming straight from South Wales by Saloon and after lunch at the Railway Hotel proceeded to the Cricket field. We were handicapped by most of our players being away on holidays and the Welsh ran out easy winners (again). After (another) very enjoyable evening at the Club the Welsh Dragons proceeded by Saloon to Liverpool to catch the midnight boat to Northern Ireland."*

**What a great tour !**

So the 1930's ended. A period of success for the Club was to be interrupted by war and nothing would ever quite be the same again.

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## 1940 -1949

Year	Captain 1st	Hons 1st	Captain 2nd	Hons 2nd
1940	H Stretton	4th A		Friendlies
1945	H Stretton	7th A		Friendlies
1946	H Stretton	3rd A		5th B
1947	J Heaton	2nd A		9th B
1948	J Heaton		D Ascroft	
1949	J Heaton	4th A Salter Cup	N Aspey	Champions B (JT) Lost play-off

The first season under wartime conditions was very different. The West Lancs League members agreed to run 1st XI teams in either the A or B Division with friendly games arranged wherever possible for 2nd XI teams. All cup and midweek fixtures were cancelled. Highfield did not win any honours but they won five of the fourteen matches played in the A Division and finished fourth.

On 30th October 1944, a Special General Meeting was held with a view to restarting activities in the 1945 season. Whilst the ground had been maintained during the war years by the Colliery, a great deal of effort was required by the Committee in order to recommence cricket. Cricket resumed at Highfield on 28th April 1945, albeit on a reduced scale with only the 1st XI playing competitive cricket in the A Division of the West Lancs League. The 2nd XI again had to be content with friendlies. The team, led once again by Harry Stretton, finished 7th with the captain winning the club batting and bowling averages, a rare feat for a fine player.

In 1946 the A Division comprised 9 clubs and a B Division was reactivated comprising just 6 clubs. Highfield had teams in both. The Salter Cup was reinstated on a knockout basis for A Division Clubs whilst the Farnworth Cup was played for on a league basis as an extension of the league season. There was only moderate success over the next few years, indeed the 2nd XI found the opposition too strong in the B Division and finished with the wooden spoon in 1947.

The forties had, understandably, been a difficult period and success on the field had been rare, however the last season of the decade did bring notable achievements with the Salter Cup won for just the second time in the Club's history as the 1st XI beat Billinge. The prizes for the year, and caps for the Salter Cup winners, were presented at a memorable Gala Concert held in the Billiard Room of the Highfield Club. John

Heaton again won the league averages whilst "Windy" Bill Ashurst (nickname taken from his father who was a Colliery Winder) established a Club record for an amateur by taking 95 wickets at just under 7 runs each, having taken 87 wickets the previous season. The 2nd XI with N Aspey as captain, finished joint champions of B Division with Eccleston, but were then easily defeated by them in the play off at Highfield. So with silverware secured for the first time in over ten years, the Pavilion freshly repainted and the memories of the war years slowly fading, there was a mood of optimism as the Club entered the fifties.

## 1950 - 1959

Year	Captain 1st	Hons 1st	Captain 2nd	Hons 2nd
1950	J Heaton	<b>Champions A</b>	N Aspey	<b>Champions C (JT)</b> Won play-off
1951	J Heaton	<b>Champions A</b>	S Povey	<b>Champions C</b> <b>Farnworth Trophy</b>
1952	J Heaton	<b>Champions A</b>	S Povey	
1953	H Worthington	5th A West	E G Elliot	3rd C West
1954	H Gaskell	3rd A West	D Talbot	3rd C West
1955	H Gaskell	<b>Champions A</b>	A Hulme	7th C West
1956	H Gaskell	<b>Champions A</b>	P Cottom	<b>Champions C West</b>
1957	H Gaskell	2nd A West	P Cottom	7th C West
1958	H Gaskell	<b>Salter Cup</b>		
1959	J Heaton	2nd-Div 1	A Fishwick	8th - Div 4

The Club decided to build upon the optimism by securing the services of a professional for the 1950 season. Mr Ralph Southworth from Leyland, a left-arm slow bowler who batted right-handed, joined the Club. There was immediate success as the 1st XI were crowned as league champions for the first time in twelve years and only lost the final of the Salter Cup by two runs, whilst the 2nd XI again tied the championship with Eccleston. There was another record for the Club with the respective league batting averages won by Highfield players, whilst A Hurst received the award for C Division and Kenny Parkes the youth award.

1951 was probably the most successful season in the Club's history with the 1st, 2nd and 3rd XI's winning their respective championships. Indeed the Club won four trophies out of a possible five. In addition to the league, the 2nd XI, under S Povey, won the Farnworth Trophy for the first time in twenty-five years and only the second time in its history.

The Farnworth final against Eccleston also decided the outright winners of the previous year's championship as no play off had been possible. For good measure the 3rd XI also won the Junior section. There was also a testimonial for "Windy" Bill Ashurst who had enjoyed 21 years with the Club and this was marked by the presentation of an Oak Westminster Clock. The prizes were awarded at a 'Smoking Concert' in December 1951.

Success was just a little more limited in 1952 but the 1st XI did win the championship for the third time running, and came runners-up in the Salter Cup. John Heaton was elected as captain for the 1953 season but moved across to Norley Hall right before the opening match and Harry Worthington stood in for a solitary season before Harold Gaskell was appointed in 1954. The special photograph on page 35 was taken to mark the occasion and shows all players from the three teams together with Club Officials. The following two years brought no further silverware for the senior teams, the 1st XI finishing no higher than 5th and 3rd respectively in A Division and the 2nd XI twice finishing 3rd in C Division West. There was consolation from the 3rd XI with the juniors crowned as champions in both years.

#### **DID YOU KNOW ?**

*Ralph Southworth was the Club's last paid professional. Ralph finished his final two seasons with the Club in fine style. On 20th June 1953 he took 5 wickets in successive balls against Standish and in 1954 he bagged 109 wickets at 5.5.*

The splendid summer weather of 1955 appeared to rejuvenate playing fortunes. The 1st XI, without a professional for the first time in 5 years, were again champions and reached the final of the Salter Cup where they were defeated by Winstanley Park. John Heaton had returned as a player and groundsman and won the league batting averages (659 runs at 50) whilst Harold Gaskell was voted as the West Lancashire League Cricketer of the Year.

The new dressing room facilities within the newly built Parochial Hall provided a spur to all players in 1956 and there were championships for both senior teams, the 1st XI having to beat Norley Hall in a play off to claim the outright title for the second year in succession. During the season there was a notable individual performance from Freddie Rowe who achieved the remarkable bowling figures of 9 wickets for 21 runs in a 1st XI game against Winstanley Park, including a hat-trick. Mr Rowe went on to win the bowling award for the year with 49 wickets at 8.27.

There was to be no silverware in 1957 as Harold Gaskell's 1st XI finished runners up, just failing to pull off their third championship in a row.

The West Lancs League was further restructured in 1958 with the senior teams placed in Divisions 1 and 4 respectively. The Salter Cup was won for the third time in 1958 when Harold Gaskell's 1st XI beat Norley Hall in the final at Poolstock. Freddie Rowe claimed 6 for 33 with John Heaton and Frank Topping amongst the runs in Highfield's 130 for 7.



**SALTER CUP WINNERS 1958**

Bk. Row - A Topping, G Southworth, F Rowe, WJ Boston, B Hitchen H Hurst  
Fr. Row - J Carruthers, J Heaton, HF Gaskell, G Elliot, F Topping

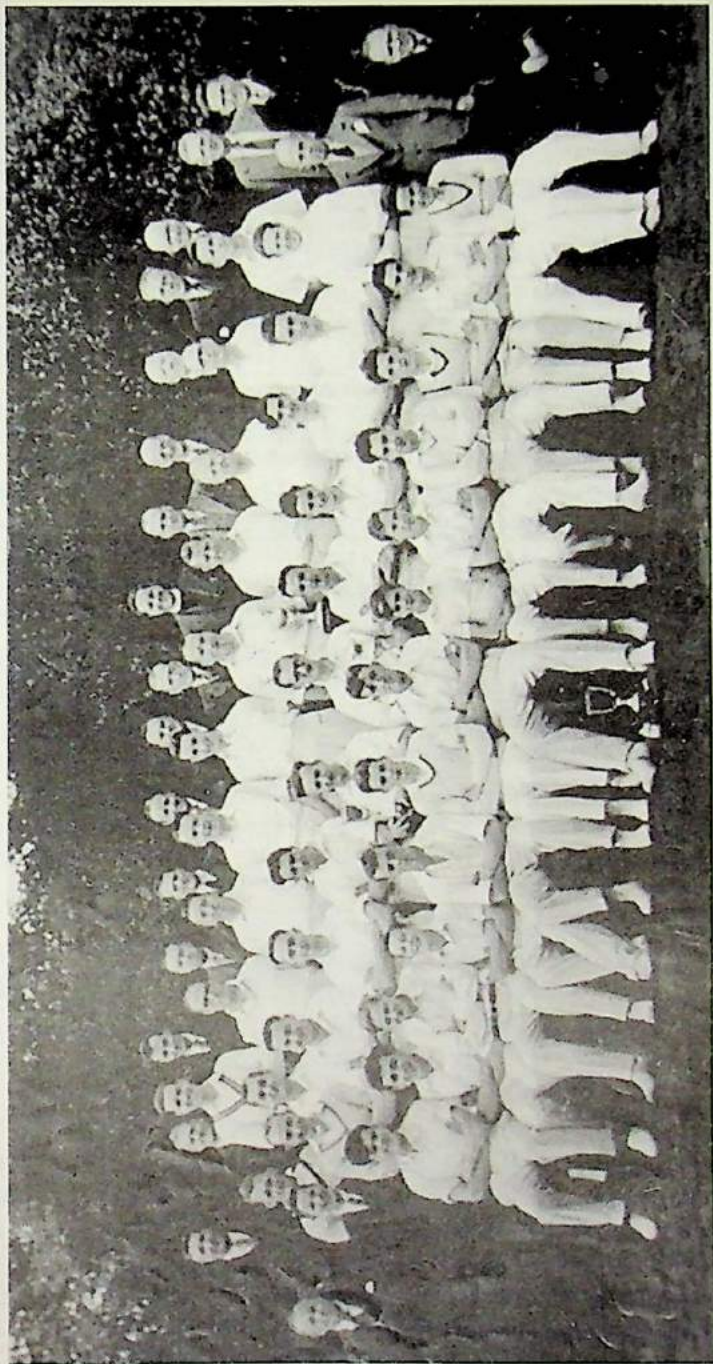
John Heaton was re-appointed captain in 1959 as Harold Gaskell moved to Wigan in that year. Freddie Rowe achieved the unthinkable, he wrestled the Club batting award from John Heaton. With 382 runs at an average of 25 (highest score 83 not out), and another 72 wickets he became a rare winner of both the 1st XI batting and bowling awards. Indeed

Freddie Rowe's domination with the ball from the mid fifties was arguably as great as John Heaton's with the bat.

The 1950's was certainly a golden era for the Club with the 1st XI winning five championships out of a possible ten.

#### **DID YOU KNOW ?**

**Highfield have had strong connections with Wigan Rugby League Club over the years and actually had two legends within their midst in the late 50's and early 60's. Billy Boston was a very quick opening bowler and a consistent performer who took around 160 wickets for the 1st XI between 1956 and 1961. Mick Sullivan, Joe Miller and Alf Carletti also played for the Club.**



**TRIPLE CHAMPIONS & CUPWINNERS - 1st, 2nd and 3rd XI's 1951 Championship & Cup Winning Sides with Club Officials**

**Back Row :** W Orme, J Ramsdale, T Prescott, J Hesketh, W Fairclough, J Hitchen, J Berry, A Henstead, Rev WH Burough, J Lythgoe, E Strelton, AV Shepherd, W Peel, F Winstanley, J Briscoe, F Prescott  
**2nd Row :** HF Gaskell, H Lowe, J Anglesea, D Ashall, J Bradshaw, J Heaton, R Southworth (Professional), A Fisherwood, G Elliot, A Topping  
**3rd Row :** T Topping, P Liprot (Scorer), J Dearden, W Winstanley, W Ashurst, A Hulme, H Worthington, D Rimmer, J Lowe, S Povey, A Hurst, H Hurst, P Winstanley, D Highton, J Wilson, W Alker.  
**Front Row :** G Nuttall, R Prior, HL Stockley, R Anglesea, RR Lang, G Hickman, K Parkes, D Walsby, K Berry, R Dean, G Southworth, C Cazyer, F Topping, D Ascrott

## 1960 - 1969

Year	Captain 1st	Hons 1st	Captain 2nd	Hons 2nd
1960	J Heaton	6th Div 1	A Fishwick	2nd Div 4
1961	J Heaton	3rd Div 1	A Fishwick	8th Div 4 <b>Farnworth Trophy</b>
1962	J Heaton	10th Div 1	A Fishwick	<b>Champions Div 4</b> <b>Farnworth Trophy</b>
1963	J Heaton	8th Div 1	K Hampson	3rd Div 2
1964	J Heaton	5th Div 1	K Hampson	2nd Div 2
1965	H Gaskell	6th Div 1	K Hampson	<b>Champions Div 2</b> <b>Baxter Trophy</b>
1966	H Gaskell	8th Div 1	A Moorhouse	3rd Div 2
1967	H Gaskell	5th Div 1	A Moorhouse	6th Div 2
1968	H Gaskell	2nd Div 1 <b>Heaton Trophy</b>	A Fishwick	2nd Div 2
1969	H Gaskell	<b>Champions</b>	A Fishwick	2nd Div 2

In contrast to the fifties the sixties were a period of relative instability for the Club and poor performances, particularly for the 1st XI, although 1968 and 1969 under the captaincy of Harold Gaskell, were to become a launch pad for further successes in the seventies. In 1962 the 1st XI suffered the ignominy of finishing bottom of the league having failed to win a single game during the season. Arnold Fishwicks 2nd XI however won the 'double' thereby winning the Farnworth Trophy for the second year in succession. The Juniors also won their League defeating Platt Bridge in a play-off with Trevor Darbyshire getting 33 runs out of a team total of 44 and taking 5 wickets for just 16 runs.

Highfield severed its 38 years association with the West Lancs League in 1963, believing its 40 strong membership to be too unwieldy. Along with other local sides, Winstanley Park, Norley Hall and Golborne, the South West Lancs Cricket Association was formed.

Harold Gaskell returned to the Club in 1964 and formed a very strong batting triumvirate along with Darbyshire and Heaton but there were no honours for the 1st XI. The 2nd XI won the League and Baxter Trophy, with Carruthers, Hampson, Wooley and Moorhouse all topping 250 runs whilst E Draper and Jack Carruthers shared 100 wickets, the former with 56 at just 7.6. Jimmy Muldoon took 73 wickets in the season, 32 in the 1st XI and 41 in the 2nd XI. The 3rd XI also won their League – the Hailwood Cup, the first of three junior championships in successive years.

Highfield had a disappointing season in 1966 with the 1st XI finishing 4th from bottom with just 5 wins and the 2nd XI finishing 3rd, some way behind the champions Norley Hall. There was some consolation in the juniors winning their League with Derek Shaw in fine form with the bat (winner of Club and League averages) and David Cunliffe taking the bowling award.

The South West Lancs League now comprised Highfield, Southport Trinity, Hawker Siddeley, Norley Hall, Standish, Orrell, Golborne, Poolstock, Winstanley Park, Heinz 57 Club and Bickershaw.

Following the untimely death of John Heaton and the departure of Freddie Rowe, the 1967 1st XI had a distinctly different look about it. Harold Gaskell and Trevor Darbyshire responded to the absence of John in the batting line up by sharing 1000 runs for the season with Harold winning the Club and League awards and establishing a record aggregate for the South West Lancs League. There was steady progress in the League over the following couple of seasons and success for the 1st XI with victory in the 1968 final of the John Heaton Memorial Trophy, the second season that it had been played for.

Highfield finished the swinging sixties by winning the championship (the Jackson Cup) for the very first time in 1969, with Hawker Siddeley runners up. Trevor Darbyshire topped 500 runs for the season whilst there was another strong contribution with the bat from Barry Hitchen, who had won the League batting award the previous season, and Alan Wilcock with the ball (50 wickets).



1968 John Heaton Trophy Winners

Standing : Ms J Gaskell (Scorer) A Cale, A Wilcock, D Cunliffe, J Carruthers, D Shaw  
Seated : B Liptrot, E Draper, HF Gaskell, T Darbyshire, A Crompton



## 1970 - 1979

Year	Captain 1st	Hons 1st	Captain 2nd	Hons 2nd
1970	H Gaskell	5th Div 1	A Crompton	9th Div 2
1971	B Hitchen	5th Div 1	A Crompton	4th Div 2
1972	B Hitchen	2nd Div 1	A Cale	2nd Div 2
1973	T Darbyshire	2nd Div 1	J Clarke	4th Div 2
1974	T Darbyshire	<b>Champions div 1 Rathbone Trophy Heaton Trophy</b>	J Clarke	2nd Div 2
1975	T Darbyshire	4th Div 1	B Hitchen	<b>Champions Div 2 Baxter Trophy</b>
1976	T Darbyshire	<b>Champions div 1</b>	B Hitchen	4th Div 2
1977	D Cunliffe	5th Div 1	M Perrin	4th Div 2
1978	D Cunliffe	5th Div 1	M Perrin	4th Div 2
1979	T Darbyshire	3rd Div 1 <b>Heaton Trophy</b>	D Boardman	2nd Div 2

The seventies started with quite a bang. June 20th 1970 will live long in the memory as David Cunliffe hit an undefeated 154 against Southport Trinity in a 1st XI fixture thereby establishing a Club and League record. The Club record stood for 25 years whilst the League record was never beaten and will remain so as the League has folded. Over the following twelve seasons, before he moved to Wigan in 1983, David Cunliffe established himself as an excellent all-rounder scoring nearly 5,000 runs and taking over 700 wickets. It was not until 1972 that the Club's steady progress in the League began to come to fruition. Trevor Darbyshire had actually taken over the captaincy of the 1st XI half way through the 1972 season, following an injury to Barry Hitchen, and runners up spot in both 1972 and 1973 (by just one point) in the league put a marker in the ground. The 2nd XI also finished 2nd in 1972 with Brian Lancaster winning the League batting award and also third position in the bowling with 6-19 against Poolstock his best. But trophies were long overdue and the Club entered its jubilee year in 1974 searching for its first silverware for five years.

What a season it turned out to be. Two new Clubs, Spring View and Westleigh joined the Association enabling the competition to be played over 24 games for the first time. Highfield 1st XI became the first (and only) team to perform the treble of Jackson (League), Rathbone and Heaton trophies, thereby winning every trophy available to them. Whilst the Championship had been won in 1969 and the John Heaton Trophy in 1968, this was the very first time (and last time) that the Rathbone cup

had been won by the Billinge Roaders. One of the features of the season was the bowling of Kenny Roper and David Cunliffe who took 78 and 70 League wickets respectively, but 100 wickets each in all matches. Kenny took the Club bowling prize with 104 wickets at just under 8 with David's 100 wickets achieved at an average of 9.4. This was a very fine side comprising the captain, Trevor Darbyshire (900 runs), Keith Ashcroft (450 runs), Brian Dawber (400 runs), Alan Crompton (400 runs), David Cunliffe, the wicketkeeper Harold Gaskell (300 runs), Geoff Gregory, Kenny Roper, Jimmy Muldoon (29 wickets), Donald Boardman and Eddie Duggan. John Clarke's 2nd XI were unable to add any further trophies but it was a memorable season and a fitting celebration of 50 years of cricket at Billinge Road.

A Jubilee Year photograph of members and officials is shown overleaf.

After the treble season of 1974, 4th place in 1975 was an extreme disappointment for Trevor Darbyshire's team. A forewarning was given in the very first match when the team were clearly reflecting on the achievements of the previous season and were unceremoniously dismissed by Bickershaw for just 48. The 2nd XI compensated by winning the double with a 10 point margin in the League and a victory over Norley Hall in the Baxter final. Barry Hitchen led his side very capably with two centuries but still came second to Mick Perrin in the Club and League averages. Peter Higgins, Mike Wardman and Brian Lancaster all scored consistently and the latter formed with John Clarke (59 wickets) an effective bowling partnership. One performance to note was in the 30 over semi-final of the Baxter Cup, where the 2nd XI defeated Poolstock by a mammoth 260 runs (Highfield 298-5, Poolstock 38).



# **TERMTEX**

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**Highfield CC Senior Players and Officials - Jubilee Year 1974**

Back Row : A Crompton, G Darbyshire, P Cook, M Perrin, D Boardman, B Dawber, P Higgins, P Fowler  
 Middle Row : W Peel, HF Gaskell, W Hooke, K Ashcroft, S Wood, J Muldoon, J Carruthers, C Gaskell, G Gregory, B Lancaster, R Farrell, P Gummerson, P Lees,  
 A Witham, R Thomas, J Hesketh, D Rimmer  
 Front Row : M Gaskell, K Roper, D Ascroft, F Prescott, T Darbyshire, J Clarke, J Lythgoe, A Ashurst, D Cunliffe, J Gummerson.

The weather had been glorious in 1975 but the summer of 1976 was even better with many wickets breaking up in the constant sunshine. The 1st XI didn't appear to mind the heat and normal service was resumed with the Championship secured for the third time since its inception thirteen years earlier. The Championship was a two - horse race with Highfield just outstaying Bickershaw. With one fixture remaining Highfield were guaranteed a share of the title but when the elusive rain washed out their final fixture, the margin of just one point was enough for an outright win. With Barry Hitchen promoted to the 1st XI, Mike Perrin captained the 2nd XI. Whilst the team only came 4th in the League, Mike won the League batting award for the second successive season with 500 runs including two centuries. In four of their five defeats the 2nd XI batting flopped badly and none more so than during a match in late July against Norley Hall when Bob Fairhurst took all 10 wickets for just 36 with none bowled out !

1976 effectively marked the end of Kenny Roper's Highfield career although he did play a little in the following season. From breaking into the 1st XI in 1969 Kenny had taken over 500 wickets and won the Club bowling averages seven years running.

There were to be no further League successes for either senior side in the late seventies although they enjoyed better fortune in the cups. The highlight of the 1977 season was an exciting last ball victory against Winstanley Park to reach the Rathbone semi-final but there they were undone, as in the Heaton Trophy, by Ralph Livesey and the eventual League Champions, Bickershaw. The 1st XI also reached the final of the 1978 John Heaton trophy but were beaten by Spring View. In contrast the 2nd XI progressed just one round in the Baxter Cup before they were effectively knocked out by Andrews of West Leigh who hit 11 sixes on his way to 101.

The 1st XI ended the seventies with Trevor Darbyshire back at the helm and they won the John Heaton Trophy and achieved their highest League position for three years.

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## 1980 - 1989

Year	Captain 1st	Hons 1st	Captain 2nd	Hons 2nd
1980	T Darbyshire	Champions Div 1	D Boardman	Champions Div 2 Baxter Trophy Watts Trophy
1981	T Darbyshire	2nd Div 1	D Boardman	3rd Div 2
1982	DC Gaskell	2nd Div 1	J Muldoon	5th Div 2 Baxter Trophy
1983	D C Gaskell	2nd Div 1	J Muldoon	3rd Div 2 Watts Trophy
1984	D C Gaskell	3rd Div 1	J Muldoon	4th Div 2
1985	B Liptrot	4th Div 1	J Muldoon	3rd Div 2
1986	B Liptrot	Champions (JT)	J Muldoon	Champions (JT) Baxter Trophy
1987	B Liptrot	Champions Div 1	J Muldoon	Champions Div 2
1988	M Pimblett	4th Div 1	R Farrell	Champions Div 2 Baxter Trophy
1989	M Pimblett	Champions Div 1	R Farrell	Baxter Trophy

1980 was the most successful season for many years. There were early exits in the cup competitions for the 1st XI, but they did go on to win the Championship, losing just one game in the process. The 2nd XI made a clean sweep; winning the League for the second successive year, adding the Baxter trophy (the first time it had been won for five years) and the new Watts Knockout Cup. Donald Boardman's 2nd XI was a fine mixture of youth and experience, but Donald's near 700 runs, wicket keeper Gordon McDonald's 21 victims and 370 runs, Jim Muldoon's 52



1980 2nd XI Champions & Double Trophy Winners  
 Bk Row : M Gregory, G Ashurst, P Lees, M Moran, E Duggan, A Rhoades, J Muldoon  
 Fr. Row : G McDonald, D Boardman,(Captain), R Farrell T Bibby

wickets and Mike Moran's 76 wickets were the key contributions during that year.

#### **DID YOU KNOW ?**

***Mike Moran is the only bowler in Highfield's history to take all 10 wickets in a game. His feat was achieved on July 12th 1980 against Standish in a 2nd XI game. Mike, just 20 years of age at the time, went on to take a remarkable 83 wickets in that treble winning season from 200 overs at an average of just 7. His 61 wickets in the league (at 6.8 each) also secured him the League bowling award.***

It was a case of "what might have been" for the 1st XI in 1981. Early season victories against Westhoughton and Wigan in the Lancashire Cup generated real optimism. The win against Wigan at Billinge Road was an exciting affair, Highfield sending their local rivals out of the cup with 5 wickets and just 6 balls to spare. Wigan had been reduced to just 103 for 8 with Mike Moran capturing 4 for 17 and skipper Trevor Darbyshire sending down 7 maiden overs out of 8 bowled. 51 year old Harold Gaskell provided a steadying influence with the bat with an invaluable 46 to lead Highfield home. But defeat against Earby in the next round of the Lancashire competition was followed by losses in the Rathbone final and the Heaton semi final. A runners-up spot in the League seemed to sum up the whole season.

It was bridesmaid again for the 1st XI in 1982 as they finished runners up to Standish despite winning the same number of games. Mark Ramsdale had a good season, making 500 League runs for the first time. Jimmy Muldoon began his six year reign as 2nd XI captain by winning the Baxter trophy in his first season (1982) and the Watts trophy in 1983 with his sparring partner, Brian Lancaster, picking up the 1983 League batting award.

Cameron Gaskell, captaining the 1st XI in 1983 for the second year running, won the Long award for the most dismissals for a wicketkeeper (24) in the 1st Division. Trevor Darbyshire scored 649 League runs in his final season but still couldn't win the League award – he was in second place to Howard Gill who had half Trevor's runs. Trevor did win the League award for the highest aggregate (Gunn & Moore Bat) and the Ronson award for the highest number of 50's in the season (6).

1984 and 1985 were relatively fallow years as the senior teams began to rebuild following the early retirement of Trevor Darbyshire and the departures of Dave Cunliffe to Wigan and Mark Ramsdale to Standish. There had also been problems with the League, so a radical restructuring saw

the nine Wigan based Clubs merged with seven from the Merseyside Cricket Association to form a two division Lancashire and Merseyside League, the Championships played over 17 fixtures. Brian Liptrot's 1st XI failed to beat Spring View at the death and had to settle for a share of the 1986 Championship with Orrell. Mike Pimblett (600 runs) had a fine season whilst Ronnie Melling had his first 50 wicket haul at just over 12 each. The 2nd XI were undoubtedly the team of the year, securing their own share of the Championship, winners of the Baxter Cup and runners up in the George Watts Trophy, losing to Parkfield in the final. Jimmy Muldoon's side won 15 out of the last 18 matches and suffered just one early League defeat against Poolstock in May. Unbeaten 100's for Gordon McDonald, Keith Ashcroft and Craig Heaton were the highlights with Keith (586 runs) taking the 2nd XI batting award. Martin Gaskell, Sean Rotherham and Brian Lancaster shared the 2nd XI wickets. The under 18's also had an excellent season, winning both the Hailwood Trophy and the H F Bullough Trophy.

1987 was a wet and miserable summer but both senior teams responded by winning their respective Championships, although it was disappointing to lose the Rathbone and Watts's finals. Brian Dawber led the way for the 1st XI with nearly 700 runs. Once he had been promoted to the 1st XI, Sean Rotherham added a further 23 wickets to his 33 in the 2nd XI, thereby pipping Brian Liptrot (62 wkts) to win the Club bowling award. Brian did have the consolation of skippering the Champions in successive years and taking his 550th wicket for the 1st XI. The 2nd XI won the League by a country mile (50 pts), not losing a single match in the process. Craig Heaton's 120 not out secured him the League awards for highest individual score and highest average in the 2nd Division whilst Ian Gaskell's 110 not out was another highlight of the 2nd XI's season.

To cap it all the under 18's won the HF Bullough Cup and shared the league title with Orrell, with John Davies winning the League Junior batting award.

Whilst the 1st XI were unable to sustain their form of 1987, the seconds continued on their inimitable way claiming the League in 1988 with weeks to spare (an incredible 100 points ahead of 2nd place) and beating the "Park" to win the Baxter cup. Ronnie Farrell led the double winners and his near 500 runs just failed to win the League averages. The "battle hardened" Tony Jones and Keith Ashcroft were formidable openers whilst the controlled out-swing of Brian Lancaster brought 62 wickets and a richly deserved League bowling award. Brian Dawber had scored 5,500 runs over the previous ten seasons and his departure to Wigan mid way

through the 1988 season was a major blow. The new 1st XI skipper Mike Pimblett however maintained his high standards with 609 runs, justifying the view that he was one of the foremost batsmen in the Division.

1989 was the Club's final year in the Lancashire and Merseyside League and Mike Pimblett's side signed off with a League Championship although there was a gripping and glorious climax to the season. A few weeks earlier Highfield had only been in mid table and Mike had declared "If we manage to win the Championship it's going to need a miracle equivalent to the parting of the Red Sea!". Hindley St. Peter's went into the final game against Highfield just a single point ahead of them. In an epic finish, Hindley were beaten as Chris Drought scampered a leg bye with just two balls left of the last over of the season's last game.

Ronnie Melling was the star performer with the ball, taking 50 wickets or more for the fourth year in succession. The 2nd XI again won the Baxter Cup in a memorable final against Deane & Derby at Winstanley Park. Set a target of over 200 runs, Keith Ashcroft and Tony Jones led Highfield to victory with the loss of just one wicket. Keith scored a career best of 107 not out.

The end of the 1980's brought two illustrious Highfield playing careers to a close. 1989 was to be Jimmy Muldoon's last season. Over a near 30 year period of senior cricket, Jimmy had taken 850 wickets, 350 of them in the 1st XI. As well as being a successful captain in the 1980's, Jimmy had also made major contributions off the field and in helping to maintain the ground. Jimmy was made a Honorary Life Member in 1989. Brian Lancaster was a late starter, making his 2nd XI debut in 1968 at the age of 28. Over the following 22 years Brian was a very influential player with around 750 2nd XI wickets and over 3000 runs as well as making useful contributions in the 1st XI. Unfortunately business commitments made it very difficult for Brian to accommodate the extra travel brought about by the move to the Southport League in 1990 and he retired. Brian was made an Honorary Life Member in 1995 and is still an active member of the Senior Team Selection Committee.

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## 1990 -1998

Year	Captain 1st	Hons 1st	Captain 2nd	Hons 2nd
1990	M Gaskell	Champions 2nd Div Sandhurst Shield	R Farrell	Champions 5th Div
1991	M Gaskell	8th 1st Div	G Speakman	4th 4th Div
1992	M Jenks	4th 1st Div	G Speakman	Champions 4th Div Leyland Trophy
1993	M Jenks	6th 1st Div	G Speakman	2nd 3rd Div
1994	E Woods	2nd 1st Div	G Speakman	3rd 2nd Div
1995	E Woods	3rd 1st Div	M Gaskell	4th 2nd Div
1996	E Woods	8th 1st Div	M Gaskell	3rd 2nd Div
1997	C Heaton	3rd 1st Div	M Gaskell	7th 2nd Div
1998	S Atkinson	5th Premier Div A	M Gaskell	Champions Reserve Div A

The final decade of the century brought a change of League with the two senior teams joining the Southport & District Cricket Association. The 1st XI were placed in the 2nd Division and were quickly challenging for promotion and other honours. Led by Martin Gaskell, promotion was secured quite easily with the 2nd Division Championship won by a 36 point's margin. The knockout cup – the Sandhurst Shield – was also won, the first time a second Division Club had achieved the honour.



1st XI - 1990 Champions Division 2 and Sandhurst Shield Winners  
 Standing : M Pimblett, P Collier, S Rotherham, T Clark, MGaskell (Captain), C Heaton, S Peet, A Jones  
 Seated : N Melling (Scorer), M Jenks, E Woods, R Melling.

Highfield reached the final by disposing of New Victoria, Maghull, Skelmersdale and Hesketh Bank before facing Mawdesley in the final at Croston. Batting first, Highfield amassed 135 with important contributions from Mike Pimblett, Craig Heaton and Steve Peet. Mawdesley struggled against tight bowling and could only muster 85. This was Eric Wood's first season with Highfield, having had a long career in the Bolton League, and his 69 wickets earned him the Club bowling award. The 2nd XI were faced with a long haul if they wished to play at a higher standard as they were inexplicably placed in the 5th Division. However, under the captaincy of Ronnie Farrell, there was just the one defeat in the whole season and, disappointingly, this came in the final of the Leyland Trophy against Winstanley Park 2nd XI, despite a solid opening from Keith Ashcroft and Stuart Kohler. The title however was theirs by some 38 points and a higher division beckoned.

After the successes of the previous season, 1991 was very disappointing. The 1st XI could only manage 8th in the 1st Division whilst the 2nd XI missed back to back promotions by failing to win at Holy Family in the very last game of the season and finished 4th. Brian Liptrot finished the season in the 1st XI having had a marvellous season with the bat, achieving an average of 103. The following year, however, the 2nd XI dominated the 4th division for most of the 1992 season and won the championship by nearly thirty points, but the final of the Bill Leyland Trophy, held at Halsall, was a tighter affair.



**2nd XI - 1992 Champions Div.4 and Bill Leyland Trophy Winners**  
 Back Row : M Moran, C Drought, R Farrell, C Gaskell, M Gaskell, L Martinus.  
 Fr. Row : C Tollit, K Ashcroft, G Speakman (Captain), D Liptrot (Scorer), A Davies, S Kohler

After a delayed start for rain , Leylands' 3rd XI were dismissed for 134. This total was passed for the fall of six wickets and the trophy was Highfield's for the very first time. The players on the photograph of the Leyland Cup winning team, were those mainly responsible for winning most of their games over the five year period to 1994. The 1st XI mounted a late challenge for the 1st Division title with an unbeaten run starting in May, however they had to be content with 4th place.

1993 was a disappointing season for the 1st XI, finishing sixth behind the champions Orrell and bowing out at the semi final stage of the Sandhurst Shield. Steve Atkinson had an excellent season with the bat, however, falling just short of 1,000 runs for the season but still establishing a Club record. Steve scored ten fifties from twenty-three innings and went on to make hundreds on two occasions including a career best 139 not out against Dalton. The 2nd XI achieved their target of 2nd Division cricket with their third promotion in four years, having "tied" the Championship with St Philips. Highfield had actually won the same number of matches and lost only one game whilst St Philips had lost three, however the title was awarded to the Southport side on the basis of more away wins!

<b>Year</b>	<b>Captain 3rd</b>	<b>Hons 3rd</b>
1993	N Thomas	
1994	A Rhoades	4th
1995	A Rhoades	5th
1996	D Winstanley	3rd
1997	D Winstanley	3rd
1998	D Winstanley	2nd <b>Cup Winners</b>

The 3rd XI, established in the previous season and captained by Nigel Thomas, played competitive cricket for the first time in 1993, competing in the newly formed West Lancs Sunday League. They finished in the top half of the table whilst Nick Simm won the League batting award.

The 1st XI was strengthened considerably in 1994 by the arrival of Steve Bakes, the Club's first overseas amateur. Steve, a quick left arm bowler from Victoria Australia, made a major contribution particularly in the later stages of the season, as he became more accustomed to the English conditions. Indeed the 1st XI lost only two matches during the whole season, finishing second in the League and losing off the very last ball in the Sandhurst semi-final. As a matter of interest the two senior teams had actually played each other in an earlier round of the Sandhurst Shield, this relatively meaningless game easily won by the 1st XI. The 2nd XI consolidated their position in the 2nd Division, finishing

third having led the league for almost half the season. Nick Simm again won the West Lancs Sunday League batting averages as the 3rd XI finished 4th.

The beginning of the 1995 season started really well for the 1st XI with cup victories over Eagley and Upper Mill from higher rated Leagues and a record breaking 303 for 4 against Billinge in the Lancashire Cup. By mid July the team was top of the League but third position was the eventual placing. Grant Martyn, an Australian all-rounder, scored 1098 runs in all competitions at an average of 46 and made a Club record score of 160 not out against Mawdesley, thereby breaking David Cunliffe's 25 year record.

The 2nd XI were weakened by retirements and the unavailability of certain players but the new captain, Martin Gaskell, gave a number of younger players their opportunity and fourth position in the League was highly satisfactory.

In early 1995 Keith Ashcroft and Brian Liptrot were made Honorary Life Members. Both had made major contributions over the previous thirty-five years and the honours were very well deserved. Keith, born in Highfield, was initially a very promising bowler, winning the 2nd XI bowling award in 1967 and making the 1st XI as a seamer, but an injury forced him to turn to the bat. Between 1960 and 1994 Keith scored over 8000 runs for the Club, around 3600 for the 1st XI with most of his later contributions coming from the opening position. Keith retired at the end of the 1994 season, having played through his 50th birthday, but is still a regular spectator at Billinge Road. Brian Liptrot began his Highfield days around 1957 and made his 1st XI debut at the age of 16 in 1962, however an eight year break from the game meant that it was 1978 before he began to take wickets regularly again for the 1st XI. Brian's all-time wicket haul is in excess of 750 victims, most of those in the 1st XI. Even when a back injury later in his career forced him to switch from seam bowling to a combination of leg and off-spin, he continued to be very successful. As he played on through the nineties he had the pleasure of playing in the same team as his two sons, and making some very useful contributions with the bat. Brian retired in 1995 but is still very active with the Clubs youngsters and takes a special interest in watching his own 'junior', Chris, develop his highly promising cricketing career.

There was no overseas amateur in 1996 as Eric Woods led the 1st XI for the third successive season. Whilst 8th position in the League was again very disappointing, there were good performances in the cup competi-

tions. Blackpool, the eventual winners of the competition, were given a real fright in the Lancashire Cup and an excellent win over Orrell took Highfield to their first Sandhurst final for six years. The final at Southport was played on a very poor wicket and Highfield's defeat was decided more by the toss of a coin than on playing ability. The 2nd XI improved on their League position of the previous year, finishing third, whilst the 3rd XI also achieved third place, their highest ever position and reached the semi final of the cup.

#### **DID YOU KNOW ?**

*A Highfield player has gone one better than the great Gary Sobers. Gary Wilkinson hit one six off the last ball of one over and another six sixes in the next over he faced. Gary was playing for the 2nd XI in the opening fixture of the 1996 season against Norley Hall at Billinge Road. Gary smashed two sixes into the car park, two into the grounds of St. Matthews's Church and the others into rear gardens of nearby houses. He scored 104 in all, his second 50 off just 13 balls!*

Grant Martyn returned in 1997 but he was unable to quite match his feats of two years earlier. Nevertheless Craig Heaton's 1st XI did recover some of their lost form and finished third behind the champions Mawdesley. Conversely the 2nd XI lost some ground on previous seasons, finishing a disappointing seventh whilst the 3rd XI consolidated their position again finishing third.

The 74th season in the Club's history has been a mixed one. The Southport League was restructured with the aim of improving the standard of cricket and facilities, the 1st XI holding their position in the highest Division - Premier Division A - with the 2nd XI placed in Reserve Division A. For the 2nd XI this promised honours as they had proved over recent years that they were more than a match for other second teams. Steve Atkinsons' first season as captain was not helped by a number of significant departures from the 1st XI, including Chris Liptrot to Northern League Club Leyland Daf, Craig Heaton to Saudi Arabia, the early retirement of Mike Jenks and no overseas amateur. The 1st XI started the summer poorly, somewhat in line with the dreadful weather, and there were early exits from the Sandhurst Shield, the Lancashire Cup against Askam and, not surprisingly, the National Knockout against Chorley. Although the second half of the season was markedly better, the final position in the League was still disappointing. The 2nd XI dominated their League throughout the season and secured the Club's first silverware for six years, whilst the highly entertaining 3rd XI under the

captaincy of Dominic (Fred) Winstanley won the West Lancs League Sunday Cup competition.

The performance and general strength of the junior set up has improved significantly over the last ten years. Brian Liptrot, Tony Clark, Ronnie Farrell, Martin Gaskell and Ronnie Melling have played a major part in this rejuvenation of the juniors which now boasts four teams from under 11's to under 18's. There has been a steady stream of talented youngsters coming through in recent years with Chris Liptrot, now playing at County 2nd XI standard, the pick of a very fine bunch. The future looks very bright with the latest crop of under 13's winning their "double" in 1998.

Two other records were established in 1998 and it is encouraging that they were secured by two young men. Nick Simm hit a remarkable 200 in a tour match against a Herefordshire team, the first time a Highfield player has reached that total, whilst Simon Mollitt achieved over 400 runs for the under 18's, easily beating all previous junior batting records. Nevertheless it is now 10 seasons since a Championship or trophy of any sort was won by the 1st XI. It is hoped that the 75th anniversary season will rejuvenate playing fortunes and years of under achievement for the 1st XI. With that challenge in mind, it would be nice to be reporting on the "double" when the 1999 season is reviewed on the occasion of the Clubs' centenary.



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## Highfield CC : Winners of Club Prizes - 1933 to date

Year	1st XI Batting	1st XI Bowling	2nd XI Batting	2nd XI Bowling
1933	P Preston	E Jackson	T Simm	C Preston
1934	J Heaton	C Preston	T Simm	R Purdy
1935	J Heaton	C Preston	R Purdy	W Ashurst
1936	J Heaton	W Hodgson	W Darbyshire	A Simm
1937	A Davies	W Hodgson	D Ascroft	E Jackson
1938	A Davies	W Hodgson	J Huxley	E Jackson
1939	J Heaton	W Ashurst	T Simm	C Henstead
1940	J Heaton	R Neild		
1945	H Stretton	H Stretton		
1946	J Heaton	W Ashurst	H Gaskell	H Hurst
1947	J Heaton	W Ashurst	N Aspey	W Winstanley
1948	J Heaton	W Ashurst	W Winstanley	J Middlehurst
1949	J Heaton	W Ashurst	EG Elliot	S Ackers
1950	J Heaton	W Ashurst	A Hurst	J Wilson
1951	J Heaton	J Dearden	W Winstanley	J Wilson
1952	J Heaton	J Dearden	A Fishwick	S Povey
1953	H Lowe	A Topping	EG Elliot	G Southworth
1954	H Worthington	A Topping	A Fishwick	D Talbot
1955	J Heaton	K Parkes	A Ashurst	D Taylor
1956	J Heaton	F Rowe	A Fishwick	D Taylor
1957	J Heaton	F Rowe	A Fishwick	D Taylor
1958	J Heaton	F Rowe	A Fishwick	B Ashcroft
1959	F Rowe	F Rowe	A Fishwick	B Ashcroft
1960	J Heaton	F Rowe	J Sudworth	D Hill
1961	J Heaton	R Anglesea	A Fishwick	D Hill
1962	J Heaton	F Rowe	A Fishwick	J Camruthers
1963	J Heaton	F Rowe	R Robinson	J Muldoon
1964	T Darbyshire	V Charles	DA Rigby	J Camruthers
1965	HF Gaskell	J Muldoon	J Camruthers	E Draper
1966	F Rowe	B Liptrot	A Wilcock	A Wilcock
1967	HF Gaskell	DA Wilcock	A Fishwick	K Ashcroft
1968	JB Hitchen	DA Wilcock	K Ashcroft	A Fishwick
1969	JB Hitchen	DA Wilcock	A Crompton	A Hackett
1970	HF Gaskell	K Roper	J Clark	J Gaskell
1971	K Roper	K Roper	A Fishwick	J Clark
1972	A Crompton	K Roper	B Lancaster	B Lancaster
1973	D Cunliffe	K Roper	M Perrin	B Lancaster
1974	T Darbyshire	K Roper	P Higgins	P Fowler
1975	K Ashcroft	K Roper	M Perrin	JB Hitchen
1976	T Darbyshire	K Roper	M Perrin	J Clark
1977	HF Gaskell	D Cunliffe	M Perrin	P Kernig
1978	B Dawber	B Liptrot	D Boardman	P Kernig
1979	T Darbyshire	D Cunliffe	D Boardman	A Davies
1980	B Dawber	D Cunliffe	D Boardman	M Moran
1981	HF Gaskell	M Moran	D Boardman	A Rhoades
1982	D Cunliffe	B Liptrot	P Kernig	A Rhoades
1983	T Darbyshire	B Liptrot	R Melling	B Lancaster
1984	B Dawber	P Kernig	D Welsby	J Knight
1985	M Pimblett	B Liptrot	G McDonald	J Muldoon
1986	M Pimblett	R Melling	K Ashcroft	B Lancaster
1987	B Dawber	S Rotherham	C Heaton	M Gaskell
1988	M Pimblett	R Melling	R Farrell	B Lancaster
1989	A Jones	R Melling	A Jones	A Coleman
1990	M Pimblett	E Woods	K Ashcroft	A Coleman
1991	P Kernig	S Peet	B Liptrot	A Davies
1992	P Kernig	S Peet	M Moran	M Gaskell
1993	S Atkinson	S Peet	I Gaskell	M Gaskell
1994	M Pimblett	S Bakes	I Gaskell	L Martinus
1995	G Martyn	M Moran	N Simm	C Liptrot
1996	S Atkinson	E Woods	G Wilkinson	S Brown
1997	S Atkinson	S Peet	A Rhoades	G Speakman
1998	M Gregory	S Peet	S Kohler	G Speakman



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