

## Crabtree Lane Cricket Ground

Liverpool Cricket Club traces its origins to 1807 and the 30 gentlemen of ‘The Original And Unrivalled Mosslake Field Cricket Society’. The original rules of the society show that membership cost 7/-, and members would assemble at the field at 6 a.m. every Monday, Wednesday and Friday in the season, or pay a fine of up to 2/- for each non-attendance.

In its 1822 list of rules, Liverpool Cricket Club – generally taken to be the same group with a name-change – is limiting its membership to 50, to be chosen by committee. The evidence that the earlier Society became the later Club is circumstantial, but a key piece of dating evidence is provided by a booklet of the laws of cricket printed for the use of ‘L.C.C. established May, 1811.’ Also, on 18 October 1811, the *Liverpool Mercury* published a piece of light-hearted ‘Original Poetry dedicated to the L.C.C.’ in which –

These heroes join, and instant dub  
Themselves a mighty cricket club.

Though the poem jocularly alludes to some of the players, these references are mostly cryptic, and Walker (1988) has managed to tally only two of them with the Mosslake Field Cricket Society’s 1807 list of its 30 members.

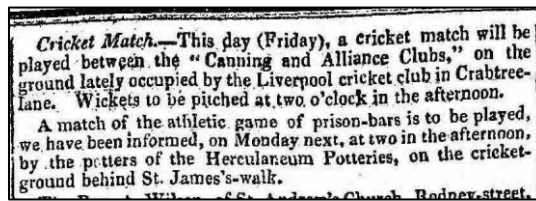
The other reason for believing the MFCS to have become the LCC is simply their locality; though even here, there are doubts. Onslow and Sturgeon (2007) quote a *Liverpool Courier* article of 1881 stating that the club in 1810 were using a ground on the site now occupied by the workhouse (and later the Catholic Cathedral; but the article also says this ground was in north-east Mosslake Fields, despite this site actually being in their north-west); would shortly move to a new ground on the south side of Crabtree Lane (now Falkner Street); and as early as 1820 would move again, this time to a field just east of the later Abercromby Square. However, this seems to be contradicted by some contemporary reports, and Walker (1988) places the ground on the Abercromby site 1807–1819, then at Crabtree Lane till, losing their ground to the development of the Mosslake area, they moved in 1829 to Wavertree Road; and it’s known that the club then remained in the Edge Hill area till 1877, shortly before their move to Aigburth.

As for the exact location of the Crabtree Lane cricket ground, Walker (1988) places it just east of the present Grove Street, and anywhere between Myrtle Street to the north and Upper Canning Street to the south. The *Liverpool Courier*’s 1881 article specifies ‘the South side of Crabtree Lane’ but with no more detail. Thus there is, at least, agreement that the ground was to the north-east of Falkner Square.

Even more definite is that Crabtree Lane ground was in use for at least ten summers by Liverpool Cricket Club and others, as shown by various *Liverpool Mercury* announcements and reports. These include Friday 9 July 1819: ‘On Thursday next, the gentlemen of the Liverpool and those of the North Shore Cricket Club, intend to have a match on the Liverpool ground, Crabtree-lane.’ Also Friday 22 August 1828: ‘*Cricket Match.*—There will be a grand field day this day, and a match at Cricket played on the Liverpool Cricket-ground, Crabtree-lane; wickets to be pitched at two o’clock.’

That these matches were not always purely local is shown by an article of Friday 27 August 1824: ‘The second cricket match, between the Liverpool and Manchester Clubs, was played on Monday, on the ground of the former, in Crabtree-lane.’ (Liverpool won by 88 runs.)

A *Liverpool Mercury* announcement of Friday 27 June 1828 suggests that Liverpool Cricket Club have just recently moved from Crabtree Lane.



The 27 June 1828 announcements also include a ‘game of prison-bars ... on the cricket-ground behind St. James’s-walk.’ Prison bars, also known as prison base (and mentioned by Spenser and Shakespeare simply as ‘base’), was a chasing and capturing game played by two equal teams, each having a base, 20 or 30 yards apart. We’ve found no other references to a cricket ground on St. James’s Mount; and the fact that the *Mercury* doesn’t have a name to call it by suggests that it was perhaps an informal affair within the public park area here. It’s certainly an odd site for cricket, with the constant possibility of the ball being knocked into the recently-closed quarry below – at that time being landscaped in readiness to become a cemetery the following year.

A Friday 21 August 1829 announcement in the *Mercury* tantalizingly mentions a Falkner Cricket Club, but gives precious little information. The entire announcement reads: “*Cricket Match.*—The return match between the Falkner and Wellington Cricket Clubs was played on the 18th instant, and won by the former with three notches and eleven wickets standing.’

Text: David Bateman. Research: Janet Ormrod.  
2019

### **Main Book Sources**

Tony Onslow & John Sturgeon, 2007. *Dogs And Ladies Not Allowed: the 200 year history of Liverpool Cricket Club*. Birkenhead: Countywise.  
PN Walker, 1988. *The Liverpool Competition: a study of the development of cricket on Merseyside*. Birkenhead: Countywise.

### **Newspaper Sources**

*Liverpool Courier* (quoted in Onslow & Sturgeon, 2007).  
*Liverpool Mercury*. Dates as cited in essay.