

Buxton and High Peak Golf Club motto

“By hook or by crook”

Any visitor to our Club will see this motto all over the place. It appears on the Honours Boards in the clubhouse, on the letterheading of Club stationery and on the crest of the official knitwear. But how many Club members have stopped for a minute to think about what this motto means and why we have it?

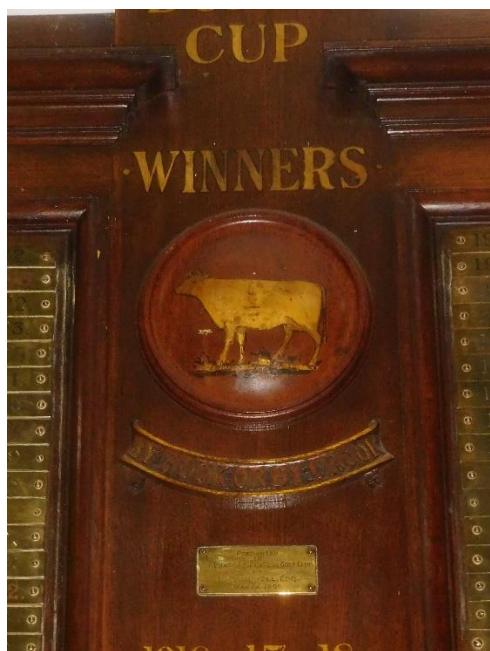
I started thinking about this because we all know that to do something 'by hook or by crook' is to do it by whatever means are necessary - be they fair or foul and this does not really sound very nice!

In the book “The First Hundred Years”, the following story is told.

In 1892, the course was being grazed by cows and sheep. The Club Treasurer (a Mr **Crook**) **hooked** his ball into the rough. A cow picked it up, chewed on it for a while and then dropped it near the hole.

[Note: this goes some way to explain why there is a cow used as the

Club emblem and on the Honours Board for the Duke's Cup.



However, 'Hook' is a word with many meanings and as a consequence it appears in many English phrases - 'get one's hooks into', 'hook, line and sinker', 'on/off the hook', 'sling your hook' and, most notably, 'by hook or by crook'. It was probably in general use by the late 14th century and appears in the *Controversial Tracts* of



John Wycliff in 1380.

Another citation is from John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* of 1390.

“What with **hepe** and what with **croke** they [false Witness and Perjury] make her maister ofte winne.”

[Note: A hepe was the medieval name for a curved bill-hook.]

Gower didn't use the modern 'by hook or by crook' version of the phrase, but it is clear that he was using the reference to hooks and crooks in the same sense that we do now.

A more modern use of the phrase is by Philip Stubbes (1583) *The Anatomie of Abuses*

“Either by hooke or crooke, by night or day.”

Whether the original members of the Club were aware of these old uses remains unclear!

There are several theories on the origins of the modern phrase.

In medieval England there was a custom of allowing peasants to take from royal forests whatever deadwood they could pull down with a shepherd's **crook** or cut with a reaper's bill-**hook**.



This feudal custom was recorded in the 1820s by the English rural campaigner William Cobbett.

The phrase may come from the names of the villages of **Hook** Head and the nearby **Crooke**, in Waterford, Ireland. Hook Head and

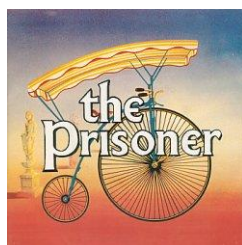
Crooke are on opposite sides of the Waterford channel and Oliver Cromwell is reputed to have said that Waterford would fall 'by Hook or by Crooke', that is, by a landing of his army at one of those two places during the siege of the town in 1649.

A third suggestion is that the phrase derives from the career of judge Sir George Croke (or Crook).



He was on the bench in the reign of Charles I. He became popular for his refusal to accept the legality of a 'Ship Money' tax imposed by Charles without the consent of Parliament. It was commonly said that ship money "may be gotten by Hook [that is, by force], but not by Crook".

The phrase was featured in the opening credits to the 1960s British television series *The Prisoner*. "By hook or by crook, I will!"



It appears prominently (as "by hook **and** by crook") in the short stories by Ernest Hemingway (1936) "The Snows of Kilimanjaro"

(about a hunter with gangrene) and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" by Washington Irving (Ref: headless horseman).

It was also used as the title of a film about two dodgy chancers, *By Hook or by Crook* (2001), directed by Silas Howard and Harry Dodge.

Finally..... this is not only an English phrase. As an example of the international use of this phrase, here it is in the Thai language.

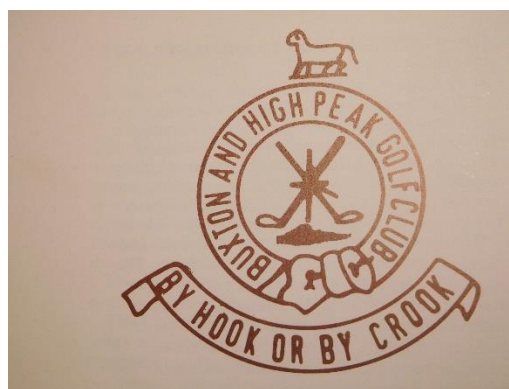
ทุกวิถีทาง...

I am grateful to Ploy, our assistant catering manager, for translating this as

“any way you can”

Conclusion

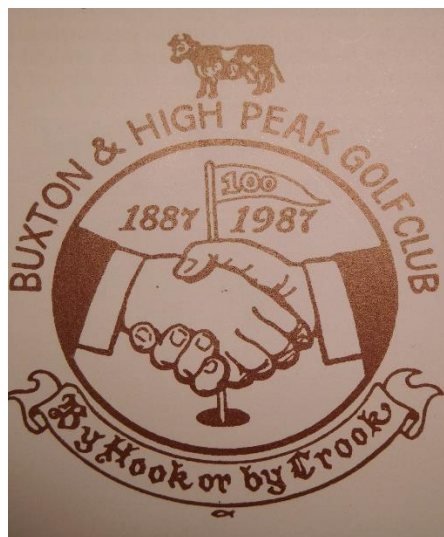
I have quite enjoyed researching this phrase but feel no closer to finding out why it was chosen as the Club motto. It is reasonable to assume that it has a reference to the grazing of cows and sheep on Fairfield Common and I am going to leave it there.



I remain somewhat troubled by the darker side of this phrase, particularly with regard to the effect it might have on visiting teams who could start thinking that the Home side is going to do anything it can to win.

The reality is far from this as we all know that Buxton and High Peak Golf Club is a friendly and welcoming environment, where golf is played in good spirit and visitors are warmly welcomed.

Oh, and we have neither sheep nor cows grazing the course!



JW / Dec 2019