

FRED MITCHELL



A dedicated cricket fan, Fred Mitchell served Booth as an official but also as groundsman. His time as groundsman spanned the traumatic war years (1939-45) when the field was ploughed up for food production, decimating years of hard work.

It must have been with a great feeling of satisfaction that he saw the new ground – Broad Fold - take shape after the war. Generations of Booth cricketers remember how Fred would take up his stand by the roller.

Fred Mitchell sees down the years a grand parade of Booth cricketers

Booth Cricket Club.—Part II

TO survive and prosper for a period of 80 years it is obvious that a cricket club must have had many loyal personalities and Booth Cricket Club admit to having been very fortunate in this respect. Many names are brought to mind, but one in particular stands out and that is Mr. Fred Mitchell.

Fred is nearly 80 years old and his memory, which covers a life-long connection with the club, links the early days with the present.

He has been happy to be associated with the game as an official and mainly a groundsman—the sort, in fact, without whom few cricket clubs are really successful.

It is said that when the plough cut across the wicket in 1942 he wept unashamedly, and not without reason, for he more than any other person had brought it to its then splendid condition. There are those who well remember the look of relief on his face in 1950 when the tractor and harrows came off the new field after seeding had been completed, and the grunt of satisfaction when ten minutes later it started to rain. Generations of Booth cricketers remember how Fred Mitchell would take up his stand by his roller. He made no request, for all knew what he wanted. Once under way he would often comment "This is what makes batters." May he be granted many more years to enjoy that which he has helped so much to create.

Taught the straight bat

Among playing personalities in the early days were William Ellwood, George Spencer who was cashier at Brackens, J. Hodgson, Dr. Foulkes, who was also a noted Rugby player and lived a short time in the district before emigrating to

New Zealand. John Ambler, son of James Ambler of Glen Royd, was another. It is said that, having been away at school and there being coached, he was the first man to demonstrate the virtues of a straight bat. He no doubt had a difficult task overcoming the then more practised art of 'billet swinging.'

John Ambler purchased a bat which was to become the property of the first man to score 50 and



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How many years for Booth cricket?

unbelievable as it may seem to present-day Booth cricketers, this bat remained unclaimed for several years.

Jim Harry Ogden then batted through an innings for 49 not out and this was considered a feat worthy of the prize. The proud owner used this bat for many years

and in the course of time it became black with age and linseed oil. A veritable barn door.

The fact that this bat remained unclaimed for so long reflects more on the poornees of the wickets rather than the excellence of the bowling or deficiencies in the batting. An innings total of 50 was regarded as good. In 1892, a Booth team which consisted of G. Dean, A. Horsfield, H. Greenwood, H. W. Wade, J. H. Ogden, W. Ingham, W. Smith, R. Robson, J. Pollard, J. E. Bedford and M. Wade bowled out local rivals, Luddenden Foot St. Mary's, for eight runs.

It is believed that Herbert W. Wade is the sole survivor of that team to-day and he is a most sprightly veteran of 82. He subsequently played for Luddenden Foot S.M., but was lost to Booth cricket at an early age when he went to live in Halifax. He was one of six cricketing brothers, Herbert Major, Angus, Frank, Horace and Herman. All at some time played for the village club and the first four actually played in the same team.

Of that 1892 side, J. H. Ogden is regarded as being one of the most prominent, for he was a fine batsman and a bowler good enough to open the attack. Although he played most of his cricket for Booth he had a spell with both Siddal and Sowerby Bridge. It is hard to imagine a better performance than his 116 not out when facing a Stainland score of 216. Even so Booth lost, being out for 195.

Herbert Wade was also a good opening batsman and Jimmy Pollard is remembered as a wicket-keeper of no mean ability. Bill Ingham was known as a hard hitter and H. Greenwood was the first of a line of slow bowlers, being followed by Henry Akroyd and he in turn by Bob Midgeley.

It was in 1900 that Booth cele-

brated their first championship success, winning the Sowerby Division. Herbert Wade still has his medal and another recipient was Frank Sheard, who was to have a long and successful career with the club.

Frank had a spell with Sowerby Bridge during the first war and he recalls with pride playing in a benefit match with George Hirst and making top score of 13. Hirst's contribution was 12, and Frank



WILLIAM HEY

Honorary life member, Booth C.C.

further remembers that in this match he saw a ball swerve in the air for the first time. The bowler was Richardson, then professional with the Elland club.

In 1904, Booth reached the semi-final of the Parish Cup, but were defeated by Lord Nelson on the old King Cross ground. This was the site of the present Riley's Toffee Factory and Archer Rigg, of Rugby

fame, was a member of the Lord Nelson team.

Two years later the club played in their first Parish Cup final, but again met with defeat, by seven wickets to Illingworth, after scoring 81. F. Sheard was the captain, and principal scorers were Angus Wade 23, Martin Addison 18, and Frank Wade 15. The failure of the Booth batsmen in the final was in contrast to the semi-final when they scored 250 runs, of which Frank Wade made 105 and Oliver Smith 67 in an innings which included 15 boundaries.

Veteran trio

James Sutcliffe virtually won the match for Illingworth with seven wickets for 30 runs. He was undoubtedly one of the finest bowlers of his generation in the district, and Booth were perhaps a little unfortunate to meet such a grand bowler on top form for such an occasion.

Also playing for Illingworth that day was a man called Harry Huatwick. That grand old man of Illingworth cricket, along with Herbert Wade and Fred Mitchell, make up a remarkable cricketing trio.

A group photograph of 1912 features Joe Greenwood commemorating his 21 years in office as treasurer and it is said that during his years of office the club never showed a deficit. It is fairly generally known, however, that in some years this happy state of affairs was only maintained by his personal generosity.

The group also includes Mr. Priestley Crossley now actively connected with Mytholmroyd Methodists Cricket Club, Ernest Gallop, J.P. (now at Nuneaton), Charlton Robson (son of R. Robson of the 1892 team), Frank Sheard, Fred Mitchell, Johnnie, Albert and Walter Priestley, and many other names which will live for ever in the annals of Booth Cricket Club.

(TO BE CONTINUED)