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LIGHTCLIFFE CRICKET CLUB

by H. Aspinall

THE CLUB was formed in 1875, and played friendly matches before joining the Halifax Parish League, in which they remained until 1914. In the early nineteenth century, the captain was Harold Greenwood, and the side included the following well-known local players, Johnny Sucksmith, Edgar Pollard, Milton Cordingley, Norman Naylor (who was later to pro. with Eccleshill, Ayr, and Rastrick) and my father Wilfred Aspinall, who is still a vice-president of the club, and attends most of our matches. The club's first professional was Walter Wilkinson, and during the 1914-18 war, the club played in the Spen Valley League. After the war we became members of the Yorkshire Council, and one of our professionals, was a Lancastrian by the name of Billy Pollard. In 1924 we entered the Bradford League, and in that season, our professionals were L. Ryder, W. Clarkson and G. H. (Judd) Wild (Wicket-keeper and former Halifax Town footballer, and still a regular attendee at home matches). W. H. (Bert) Foster, who had come to the club from Lancashire prior to the war, was captain, later becoming our chairman, and then president of the Bradford League.

In 1925, Albert Hartley started a career which was to last 30 seasons and culminate in the wonderful feat of scoring 10,000 runs and taking 1,000 wickets for the club. In 1926 a new pro. Sam Cadman, a well known Derbyshire County player was engaged, and we won the Priestley Cup for the first time, W. H. Foster being skipper. In four rounds we scored 1,071 runs, a record aggregate for the competition.

In 1928 Harry Taylor joined the club as a professional from Bowling Old Lane, and started a run of 17 seasons as pro., besides acting as coach prior to the 1939 war. In 1929, 30, 31, and 32, our pro's. were H. Taylor, Tom Patefield, and Joe Hirst, and in 1931 Leslie Mollett captained the side. In 1932, A. Hartley left to pro. at Lockwood, and Ronald D. Somers took over the captaincy in 1933. He played with the club for 25 seasons and with Harry Taylor formed one of the best opening pairs ever to play in Bradford League cricket. In 1936 we were defeated by Spen Victoria in the Priestley Cup Final, but won the Cup in the following



A recent picture of the Lightcliffe cricket XI taken by the Bradford Bystander photographer Gordon Hodgson.

year, 1937, beating Great Horton, Albert Hartley scoring 131.

Harold Sharp, one of our life vice-presidents, and still an enthusiastic member (He still keeps all our records and statistics) scored the first century for Lightcliffe in the Bradford League in 1924 against Laisterdyke. Another notable feat was performed by Tom Patefield, who took all ten wickets for 33 runs against Spen Victoria in 1934, whilst A. Hartley took 10 for 36 against Keighley in 1952.

In 1939 the first team won the "B" Division championship, and notable local amateurs in this side were Charlie Young, Donald Mallinson, George Bottomley, Louis Binns and John Naylor, all of whom have rendered first-class service to the club. Another notable member of that side was Jack Webster, a fast bowler who after the war played county cricket for Northants, and is still cricket master at Harrow.

During the war years, one of our pro's. was Clifford Walker, later to play for Yorkshire and Hampshire.

In the first year after the war, Charlie Young again led the side, George Bottomley, Jack Crossley (a pre-war stalwart at Brighouse) and Fred Jakeman, who was to become a leading county batsman with Yorkshire and Northants, as professionals. I was a member of this side, having made my debut with the first team in 1939 at the age of 15, and in 1947 and 1948 we finished at the bottom of the "A" and "B" Division in succession, having to apply for re-election for the first and only time in the history of the club. In 1947 we had the assistance of Johnny Clay, a member of the Notts ground staff, who later became the county opening bat and also captained them.

In 1949 I took over the captaincy, which I have now held for the past sixteen seasons, and Albert Hartley returned as pro. after spending three seasons as pro. to Nelson, where he followed the great Learie Constantine. Our other professionals in that year were Bernard Brooke,

Donald Hirst, and Roy Booth, later to keep wicket for Yorkshire, and now firmly established with the Worcestershire C.C.C. In 1950 these same players helped us to win the Priestley Cup again beating East Bierley in the final, and also winning promotion to the "A" Division, as well as winning the "Bell Trophy", a competition for local clubs only.

In 1952 we were fortunate to have the services of Geoffrey Summers. About this time we had Ken Taylor and David Pickles, both destined to become county men with Yorkshire. In 1955, we again won the Priestley Cup beating Pudsey St. Lawrence in front of a huge gate, our pro's. being Johnny Hunter, Peter Trevitt, and Alwyn Gossop.

We were relegated in 1959, but won promotion again in 1961, being runners-up to Bowling Old Lane. In 1964, we won the Priestley Cup for the fifth time in the history of the club, again beating East Bierley in the final, and, for the third time under my captaincy. Our president for the past five years has been Mr. George M. C. Thompson, a local solicitor, and other post war ones were Mr. Jack Gomersall, the late Mr. Jack Edward Mitchell, and a retired dentist Mr. Fielding. Pre-war ones included Col. H. H. Aykroyd, Col. R. H. Goldthorp, and the late Mr. Algernon Denham.

Season 1965 proved one of our most successful seasons, and we came very close to completing the double, finishing 3rd. in the 1st. Division of the Bradford League, and losing in the semi-final of the Priestley Cup. Our opening batsman and vice-captain, Alan Warren finished top of the league Batting averages and also created a new Lightcliffe record by scoring more runs in a season than any previous Lightcliffe player. Our wicket-keeper Donald Garside was leading wicket-keeper heading the list with 33 victims, whilst our other opening batsman Harry Waterhouse had the honour of making the highest individual league score of the season namely 137 at Pudsey.

