

## MIRFIELD & DISTRICT EVENING CRICKET LEAGUE

Mirfield is a small town in West Yorkshire, formerly the West Riding of Yorkshire, in the heart of an area known as the Heavy Woollen District. The district was so named due to the large concentration of woollen mills in the surrounding areas famous for the manufacturing of cloth for clothing and blankets. During the first half of the twentieth century workers were mainly employed in those mills. The churches and chapels were at the centre of community life and supported many social events and sporting activities; the mill owners of the area also played their part. Employers such as Marshall Kay & Marshall, woollen manufacturers of Netherfield Road, Ravensthorpe, Wormald & Walker's blanket makers of Dewsbury, provided excellent sporting facilities for the workers and had their own cricket grounds close to their mills. The Yorkshire Woollen District Transport Company (the local bus company) was another with a cricket ground in Thorncliffe Road, Batley; some churches also had their own grounds. The hours worked in those days however were long, many had to work Saturdays – very little cricket was played on Sundays being considered a non working day and families went to church or chapel. The only other free time for many was in the evening and this was limited.

The origins of the '**Mirfield and District Evening Cricket League**' are not quite clear but it began in 1950 only a few years after the Second World War had ended. It would seem to have filled a gap for lovers of cricket unable to play regularly on Saturday afternoons and flourished in its early years. It continued for over 30 years ending sometime in the 1980's, at the time of writing its demise is also unclear.

The names of the founders are not known but it seems likely that the initiative came from Taylor Hall Community Centre. On August 27<sup>th</sup> 1949 a report in a local newspaper (Dewsbury District News – Mirfield Newsreel p.5) read:

- ❖ *Members of Taylor Hall Community Centre Cricket Team are to call a meeting of all local cricket clubs in the district in the hope of forming an evening cricket league next season. The meeting will be held next month after all the clubs have been circulated.*

On September 24<sup>th</sup> 1949 on page 2 of the same newspaper read:

- ❖ *'Evening Cricket League Formed at Mirfield' – Although the cricket season has drawn to a close interest in the game is far from being dead as was proved by representatives from 10 Mirfield cricket teams who met in the Taylor Hall Community*

*Centre on Monday evening and decided to found a Mirfield and District Evening Cricket League to operate next season.*

*Mr Maurice Wood (Chairman of Taylor Hall Tenants Association) presided and stated.*

- 1. 13 teams had applied to join the league.*
- 2. Mirfield Urban District Council had 'almost promised' the use of the field adjacent to Mirfield Memorial Recreation Ground.*
- 3. If the league proved successful there was no reason why they should not hope, at a future date, to form a Mirfield representative team which could be entered into the Yorkshire Council or similar senior league.*

*❖ Among the teams represented at the meeting were:*

- Battyeford Methodist's*
- British Legion*
- British Railways*
- Christ Church*
- Hopkinson & Shore*
- H.L. Trees XL*
- Mirfield Parish*
- Nab WMC*
- Taylor Hall Comm. Centre*

In the issue of the same newspaper dated 24<sup>th</sup> December 1949 an article read:

- ❖ An application by the secretary of the Mirfield & District Evening Cricket League for the use of the small cricket field at the Memorial Recreation Grounds during the 1950 season has been granted by Mirfield UDC subject to the usual conditions and that a fee of 10shillings per match be charged.*

## **1950**

The Mirfield & District Evening Cricket League began in the spring of 1950, local councillors, businessmen and perhaps some church leaders would appear to have some input.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> May 1950 in a local newspaper the Dewsbury & District News & Chronicle under 'Mirfield Newsreel' an article read:

- ❖ *At a meeting of the MECL Committee on Monday – the first since the season opened Mr Jim Chapman was appointed assistant to Mr Frank Wright<sup>1</sup>, the secretary. Mr Chapman is Captain of the Taylor Hall Community Centre Cricket Team.*

### **The Teams:**

Battyeford Methodists - situated in Nab Lane, just a few yards from the junction with Stocksbank Road, Mirfield. This Chapel was once at the heart of a thriving local community but like many others, fell victim to dwindling support and rising costs, the building still survives but converted to flats.



**Battyeford Methodists Chapel**

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<sup>1</sup> Frank Wright was the father of the Mirfield Butcher

Christ Church (Christ the King) - Stocksbank Road situated near to the Community of the Resurrection contributed to the formation of the Mirfield & District Evening Cricket (M&DECL). The original church building was destroyed by fire in 1971 and the present church of modern design was consecrated in 1973 and named 'Christ the King'.

Mirfield Parish originally connected to the Mirfield Parish Church, the cricket section is said to have been formed around the year 1880. Mirfield Parish has their own ground (originally belonging to the church) on land situated between Dunbottle Lane and Wellhouse Lane. The ground was gifted to the club with the proviso that sport must always be played on it! Mirfield Parish Church C.C. was a member of the Dewsbury & District Cricket League for many years and in the early and middle decades of the twentieth century the club enjoyed their fair share of success in that league.

- *A set of rules issued by the old Mirfield Parish Cricket Club included Rule 2: 'that the Vicar of Mirfield (if willing) be President of the Club, and the Assistant-Clergy Vice-Presidents'. This confirms the club-church link, but also gives the vicar an 'opt-out' if he so desires!*

It would seem that Mirfield Parish competed in the evening league's first season (1950) but for some reason withdrew the following year. They did however return to the league some years later. The club itself has gone from strength to strength over the past 30 years or so leaving the Dewsbury League for the Leeds League in the early 1980's they merged with Dewsbury Cavaliers in 1987 and were subsequently accepted into the Central Yorkshire Cricket League. Although the cricket ground is small it is extremely well presented and a credit to the members who have worked hard over the years.

British Railways employed a large number of people in the district at this time as there were several stations local to Mirfield and a locomotive shed and so a team representing British Railways were able to enter the league.

Buckley's Brushworks, Lowlands Road, Mirfield entered a team, the Managing Director and son of the founder, Charles Buckley was himself a keen cricketer and played in the team. The firm of Hopkinson & Shore a firm of dyers and finishers of woollen and worsted cloths situated at Crossley Mills, Sunnybank, Mirfield ( the site is now occupied by 'The Coppice') with their main factory in Brighouse, did the same as did John Cotton's a large employer at Battyeford. Kershaw's the market gardeners of Brighouse entered a team along with Mr H.L.Trees the Mirfield Council's Surveyor, and cricket enthusiast.

The Community Centre situated in Taylor Hall Lane served the needs of the inhabitants of the 'Prefabs'. The Prefabs were the result of the 1944 Temporary Housing Programme, and were designed to provide a quick solution to the massive lack of housing caused by the war. They had an important social function too as many families or couples, were living in rented rooms with shared facilities or in with the in-laws. Overcrowding and lack of privacy were real problems; prefabs offered a proper home, in fact an up-to-date detached bungalow. The building of the nearby London Park and Kitson Hill Council Estates soon swelled the membership and increased the range of

activities offered. It would seem that those involved with the Community Centre had the original idea for formation of the league also organized a team for inclusion.

❖ The following 10 teams competed in the first season:

- *Battleyford Methodists - Nab Lane, Mirfield*
- *British Railways*
- *Buckley's Brushworks (C. Buckley's) - Lowlands Road, Mirfield*
- *Christ Church – Stocksbank Road, Mirfield*
- *Community Centre – Taylor Hall Lane, Mirfield*
- *H. L. Trees XI ( A team from the Mirfield Urban District Council)*
- *Hopkinson & Shore Ltd – Sunnybank Road, Mirfield*
- *John Cotton Ltd – Huddersfield Road, Battleyford*
- *Kershaw's*
- *Mirfield Parish*

The teams competed for the '**League Shield**' which had been kindly presented by County Councillor John Hardy<sup>2</sup> and Mr W Buckley. In the first season Hopkinson & Shore took the league title. Messrs G. G. Hopkinson and G. Shore donated the '**Alfred Shore Trophy**' to the league which was to be presented to the runners up each season.

There was also the '**Kilner Cup**' presented to the league by Mr A. Kilner, this trophy was competed for on a knock out basis. The final was played on the larger of the two 'Memorial Grounds' and was increased to 30 overs per side and played over two evenings. The first winners of the cup in 1950 were H.L.Trees XL.

Individual prizes for the leading Batting and Bowling averages were also awarded along with Wicket Keeper and Fielding awards although records showing the winners are incomplete. In those first years it would appear that bowlers were not restricted to the number of over's they could bowl.

## **1951**

In the second season 9 teams competed, Kershaw's and Mirfield Parish had withdrawn and a team representing Old Bank Working Men's Club entered the league. John Cotton's team won the league shield with H.L.Trees runners up. Battleyford Methodists triumphed in the final of the Kilner Cup Competition beating Christ Church by 5 runs.

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<sup>2</sup> Councillor John Hardy (Chairman of the Council) was elected the 1<sup>st</sup> President of the League.

## KILNER CUP FINAL

JUL 5

LEAGUE LEADERS' FIVE  
RUNS MARGINMethodists win an all-  
Battye ford final

The Kilner Cup final, between league leaders Battye ford Methodists, and Christ Church, occupying sixth position in the Evening League, provided an exciting finish and a margin of only five runs in favour of the Methodists.

Battye ford made an uncertain start, losing their first wicket at 7, and against the useful attack of Booth and Bates who bowled unchanged throughout the innings, saw their sixth wicket fall at 37. J. Littlewood, however, was alone undaunted and closed one end until he unfortunately lost his wicket, run out, when requiring one more run for his half century. He had, however, materially helped his side to total 89, which, thanks to a splendid bowling performance for Battye ford by Redfern of 8 for 33, proved a winning total.

Christ Church made an even worse start than Battye ford, losing three wickets for 10 runs, but their middle batsmen, particularly Williams (32) improved their position and only 17 runs were needed with four wickets standing. Bates made a valiant effort but Redfern removed three of his last four partners and a run out ended, disappointingly for Christ Church, their bid for victory. Richardson took two Christ Church wickets for 25 and for the losers Bates took 5 for 47 and Booth 4 for 38.

Presenting the cup to Mr. F. Field (capt.) in the absence of the donor, Mr. Albert Kilner, Councillor J. Hardy said that as a representative of Battye ford ward, he was pleased to see an all Battye ford final. A quarter-of-an-hour before the end it seemed to be anyone's game and the only thing they could be sure about was that the cup would go to Battye ford. In spite of the tense position, the match had been played in a sportsmanlike manner, he said.

Councillor J. H. Sykes, chairman of Mirfield Council, expressed thanks to Councillor Hardy, and Mr. H. Furness, vice-chairman of the Evening Cricket League, introduced him.

Battye ford Methodists: S. Field, c Carter b Bates 6; J. Richardson, c Carter b Bates 7; J. Jones, b Booth 7; J. Littlewood, run out 49; A. Barton, lbw b Booth 3; G. Carter, b Bates 1; W. Humphrey, c Wood b Bates 0; H. Brown, b Bates 5; W. Redfern, b Booth 1; H. Archer, not out 3; F. Field (capt.), c Williams b Booth 3; extras 4; total 89.

Christ Church: H. Barber (capt.), lbw b Richardson 7; A. Wood, c Jones b Redfern 1; N. Carter, b Redfern 0; G. Unsworth, c Littlewood b Redfern 1; W. Booth, b Redfern 19; N. Williams, lbw b Redfern 32; F. Jessop, b Redfern 3; E. Bates, not out 13; J. Kaye, c Jones b Redfern 0; A. Humphrey, st. Littlewood b Redfern 2; G. Hardcastle, run out 0; extras 6; total 84.

.....from the above report it would seem that bowlers were not restricted to the number of over's they could bowl.

Individual prizes were awarded that year for:

- Batting – A. Dunderdale – Community Centre
- Bowling – W. Booth – Christ Church

### Further News That Year

The founders of the league had hopes of entering a team in the Central Yorkshire Cricket League at this time as in June of this year they wrote to the CYCL expressing that they were desirous of making an application to join the league. Mr F. Morton the President of the CYCL said that the Emergency Committee had been sympathetic and details had been gone into as to how a club might be formed. He went on to say that they had looked into all the difficulties which might arise and got down to definite and precise figures of cost. The matter was now left to the people of the district to make the next move. He also said that it is obviously a matter which is going to call for local enthusiasm and he thought he could report that progress had been made. It would seem obvious that the problems were too great as nothing appears to have come from the idea!

### 1952

The same teams again competed in 1952 with John Cotton's team taking the league title for a second year. Christ Church and Hopkinson & Shore were joint runners up. Buckley's had their first taste of success by winning the Kilner Cup Competition although complaints were made about the state of the pitch. The Cup Final was played on the Mirfield Cricket Club's ground and reports in the local press were of the dangerous state of the wicket:

**Cricketers complain**

Comments on the state of the pitch at the Memorial grounds for the final of the Kilner Cup cricket competition were made by members of the Evening Cricket League after the match. The league secretary, Mr. J. Jones, told our representative that both players and spectators generally were dissatisfied with the wicket laid for the match. It had been laid completely off the playing square and was, they said, worse than the pitch used for league matches during the season on the adjoining field. From a league point of view the match was spoiled because of the wicket which caused the ball to rise sharply, and at least eight players were hit by the ball in consequence.

Mr. Jones said he understood the Mirfield Cricket Club had given permission for the league to use their pitch for the final.

**THAT CRICKET PITCH**

Sir,—With reference to the comment in your issue of Saturday last regarding the condition of the turf on which the Kilner Cup final was played on Tuesday and Wednesday, August 19th and 20th, on behalf of the Mirfield Club I would like to make it clear that the loan of the ground and pavilion for the match was a matter dealt with entirely by the Kilner Cup Committee and the Mirfield Council.

The Mirfield Club was not consulted and was in no way concerned with the selection and preparation of the wicket on which the match was played.

H. FURNESS,  
Hon. Secretary, Mirfield C.C.

## BUCKLEY'S XI 1952



A friendly match between Mirfield Cricket Club and an Evening League XI was also arranged that season Mirfield C.C. coming out on top:

### VICTORY IN LAST OVER

Mirfield 145.

Mirfield Evening Cricket Lge. 109.

This game was keenly contested and the Council side snatched victory in the last over of the game. Thanks to a fine half-century by Clough and valuable scores by Buckley, Farmer, Dixon and Wilf Barber, the league side made 145. Their opponents' fielding and bowling was very tight, and Mirfield did not find runs easy to make. K. Blackburn took 3 for 36 and when his side replied contributed 25, the Evening League's highest scorer. Their batsmen were troubled by slow bowler Peckover, whose final return was 6 for 48. Dixon took 4 for 71.

Mirfield. — W. Barber, c Dunderdale b Redfearn, 14; J. C. Clough, lbw b Brook, 82; E. Milton, run out, 1; H. Farmer, lbw b Blackburn, 12; J. Gates, c Peacock b Blackburn, 6; H. Dransfield, lbw b Blackburn, 11; C. W. Buckley, c Barber b Wilson, 21; L. Peckover, lbw b Brook, 6; F. Wright, c Tabern b Wilson, 3; C. H. Dixon, not out, 12; T. Scurah, run out, 2; C. English, not out, 9; extras, 8; total, 145.

Evening League Side. — A. Barber, c Buckley b Dixon, 6; A. Dunderdale, c Gates b Dixon, 12; L. Wilson, c Farmer b Peckover, 20; C. Peacock, c Dixon b Milton, 7; K. Blackburn, b Dixon, 25; H. Redfearn, c Farmer b Peckover, 3; L. Brook, c Dixon b Peckover, 6; H. J. Jones, b Peckover, 8; D. Cliffe, c English b Peckover, 1; B. Lister, b Dixon, 13; R. Tabern, not out, 8; F. Sheard, b Peckover, 4; extras, 6; total, 109.

### **1953**

In this season Old Bank WMC were replaced by Callenders (British Insulated Callender Construction - Ravensthorpe) and they proved to be a force by winning 11 of their 16 games and losing only 3. Their final tally of 25 points left them clear winners of the league shield in their first season, Hopkinson & Shore came second once again and the Kilner Cup winners were Community Centre.

J. Fretwell was the leading batsman and for the second successive season W. Booth won the bowling prize.

### **1954**

In 1954 the leagues secretary was a Mr Jack Bloom and that year the league comprised of the same 9 teams. It must have been a wet season as the Dewsbury Reporter printed the final league positions and in a supporting article reported that '15 end of season matches in the Mirfield Evening Cricket League had to be cancelled because of bad weather and the state of the pitch.' The report went on to say that Community Centre and Callender's shared top position with 25 points each. The committee however, after investigating an alleged irregularity, declared the game between Callender's and British Railways a draw, thus reducing Callender's total to 24 points. The final paragraph of the article stated that the Kilner Cup final between H.L.Trees and J. Cotton's was to be played the following Saturday. The League handbook records however that the Kilner Cup was shared that season between those two teams suggesting that the weather again intervened and prevented the final being played.

- ❖ *Mirfield & Bradley News Sat 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct 1954 – The Kilner Cup will be shared this season by H.L.Trees XL and John Cotton's – Trees to hold the cup until March 1955 and Cotton's from March until the end of the season. Cotton's to receive replicas of the cup and Trees sets of wine glasses.*

This year the records show that the league had started to identify between those players representing clubs on Saturday afternoon's and those who only played mid week in the evening league (*i.e. Saturday Players and Non Saturday Players*) as there were now bowling and batting awards for non Saturday and Saturday players. The Batting prizes went to A. Dunderdale, Community Centre (Saturday player) and J. Howard, J. Cotton's (Non Saturday). Keith Goddard won the bowling award as a Saturday player and for the third successive year W. Booth claimed the best average as a Non Saturday player.

An inter-league friendly match had been played in July of this year against the Huddersfield Evening League at the David Brown's ground. It seems it was a very

close contest Huddersfield making a total of 142 all out and Mirfield making 142 for 9 wickets.

# Two views on evening cricket

## Should Saturday players be barred?

**CONFLICTING** views on the playing of "Saturday men" in the Mirfield and District Evening Cricket League were put forward at the annual dinner and prize presentation of the league at the Co-operative Hall, Knowl Road, last Friday evening.

Mr. George Wood, who presents a bat for the best batting averages by a non-Saturday player, said he was completely against regular men playing with novices. He preferred to play in the class of sport in which he considered himself capable to play and he felt that non-Saturday players could really be described as non-cricketers. Mr. Wood presented his bat to Mr. J. Howarth.

Mr. Keith Goddard, who received the "J. P. Burnhill" bat for the best bowling averages for a Saturday player, presented by Councillor J. Hardy in the absence of Mr. Burnhill, said that there were Saturday players in every team.

After it had been announced that no one had qualified for the bat presented to the best non-Saturday bowler, Mr. Wood said that his remarks had been proved.

The league shield (given jointly by the late Mr. W. Buckley and Councillor Hardy) was presented to the captain of the Community Centre, Mr. A. Dunderdale by Mr. Hardy, who said it had always been a matter of regret that Mr. Buckley had never been able to present the trophy.

Mr. Buckley, he said, was keenly interested in seeing that Mirfield had some sport of its own and he one would have been more pleased that he with the formation of the Mirfield Cricket Club and the way in which the evening league had been carried on.

The trophy, he said, went for the next twelve months to the Community Centre at Taylor Hall Estate. Most people in Mirfield, whether interested in cricket or not, admired the way in which that Centre had progressed over the years. So far as the Council was concerned he thought it was true to say that there had always been close co-operation between them and the Centre. The Council had been delighted to assist in any way because they realised the efforts in the Centre were worthy of encouragement.

### WORTH WATCHING

Councillor Hardy said that in spite of the fact that the weather had not been good the evening league had continued to provide some really good entertainment for a lot of Mirfield people. There were certain people, he thought, who preferred watching the evening league to watching even the Mirfield first eleven—or even Yorkshire—because they got the sort of thing which gave them a thrill.

Efforts were being made to restore both fields at the Memorial Grounds to as near perfection as possible. It was a pity that the league was robbed of certain matches at the end of the season, but certain steps had been taken to make the ground ready and in good condition for next season.

Councillor Hardy also presented the "Alfred Shore" league runners-up trophy to Mr. J. Wainwright, captain of Callenders' team.

The Kilner Cup, the final of which was not played because of weather conditions, was presented by Councillor P. Copley (Chairman of Mirfield Council), to the captains of the two finalist teams, Mr. L. Brook (H. L. Trees XI) and F. Woodhouse (J. Cottons XI).

### CHAIRMAN'S APOLOGY

Councillor Copley said the Council were perturbed at the conditions of the Memorial Grounds after the Mirfield Agricultural Show and it was thought that maybe a little more care could have been taken with the evening league field, and particularly with the wicket. However, since last year, the Council had appointed a parks superintendent and created an autonomous parks department and he was certain that they would not have a repetition of that sort of thing if the grounds are to be used again for anything in the nature of an agricultural show.

He thought he should apologise to the league for the condition of the ground, but it was something which they could not avoid. Although instructions had been given nobody had thought about the protection of the wicket. The Council could not be blamed but he thought they should offer some sort of an apology.

### ENJOYABLE CRICKET

The president, Mr. F. Fowler, congratulated the officials and players on the manner they had conducted the league. In spite of the weather and the fact that they had had to postpone or abandon fourteen matches they had got through the season amazingly. The league was a good amenity for Mirfield and although they had not had the artery of Hutton they had had a 100 per cent enjoyable cricket. He also paid tribute to the work of the secretary, Mr. H. J. Jones. Mr. Fowler presented a bat to Mr. A. Dunderdale for the best batting averages for a Saturday player.

Chairman at the dinner was Mr. H. Morton. Arrangements were made by the secretary and entertainment was provided by Mr. G. Rounding.

### Local news report - Annual Dinner and Prize presentation 1954

### 1955

The Chairman of the league in 1955 was Mr Harold Morton. There were changes to the makeup of the league, H.L. Trees XL dropped out and two new teams, Thornhill B.E.A. which was one of several official names for Thornhill Power Station, Calder Road,

Ravensthorpe, which during this time was a major employer in the area. Gilder Hall Boys Club which was situated in Greenside Road at the junction with Pumphouse Lane, Mirfield also entered a team. For many years this club provided sporting and cultural activities for boys of 12 years and upwards. They were particularly successful in the Heavy Woollen Minor Football League and Cup competitions and also saw much success in team and individual table tennis competition. The club became a mixed club in the early 1960's. The club's building is now gone and the playing field largely neglected, public protest has so far managed to keep the developers from taking the site. Several plans to bring the area back into public use have been discussed but to date (January 2009) nothing has come to fruition. The cricketers were allowed to play their home matches on the Mirfield Parish ground in the early years but by 1959 played all their matches on the Memorial Ground. Gilder Hall had reasonable success in their first season finishing runners up to Callenders who also won the Kilner Cup beating Community Centre in the final played over two evenings on the main pitch at the Memorial Grounds, the cup was presented to Callenders captain Mr Joe Wainwright by Major Morgan Kilner. Gilder Hall was in fact the only team to beat Callenders that season and they achieved this twice.

In July of this year an interleague match took place again versus the Huddersfield Evening League, this year the game was played at the Memorial ground in Mirfield and Huddersfield came out on top. The teams were restricted to Non-Saturday players as the Huddersfield League did not allow them in their set up.

The annual dance and prize presentation took place at the Vale Café and prizes were presented to Kenneth Blackburn – Community Centre, leading batting average for a Saturday player, Vic Metcalfe – Battyeford Methodists, leading batting average Non Saturday player. D. Banks – Callenders, leading bowling average for a Saturday player and to M. Cass – Gilder Hall, leading bowling average Non Saturday player.

## **1956**

One change to the makeup of the league, this year saw the withdrawal of Hopkinson and Shore; they were replaced by David Brown Tractors who had a large factory at Meltham, Huddersfield. They also had other premises in Lockwood and Heckmondwike. John Cotton's lifted the Kilner Cup comfortably beating Buckley's in the final towards the end of July. Cotton's batting first made 156 in their 20 over's mainly due to an unbeaten 104 from E. Gill. Buckley's could only manage 85 in reply. B. I. Callenders took the league title once again.

- ❖ *The Mirfield & Bradley News Reported that at the MECL Annual Meeting held on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> November at the Black Bull in Mirfield.*

- ❖ *For the coming season 1957 clubs could register as many Saturday players as they wish but only 3 may play in any 1 match.*
- ❖ *Players would only be eligible for the Kilner Cup Competition if they had been registered prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> Round.*
- ❖ *Umpires fees were increased from 2/6d to 4shillings.*
- ❖ *Officials of the League were elected as follows:*  
*President: Mr A. Morgan Kilner*  
*Chairman: Mr H. Morton*  
*V. Chairman: Mr H. Hesp*  
*Secretary: Mr B. Goodall*  
*Treasurer: Mr F. Brown*  
*Umpires Sec.: Mr J. Chapman*

## **1957**

There were again 10 teams in the competition this season British Railways dropping out and being replaced by Woodhouse & Mitchell a firm of engineering tool makers in Brighouse. The new Saturday players rule taking effect (No more than 3 per team in any one match - players under the age of 16 yrs were classed as Non-Saturday players). **It is thought that a limit on the number of over's a bowler could bowl in a match may have been introduced this year as the qualification was reduced to twenty wickets in the season. The limit was 4 over's for a twenty over game and 3 over's where matches were reduced to 15 over's.**

It was a purely amateur league and rule 1 defined a bone-fide amateur.

## **RULES**

1. (K) This League shall be open to any player who is a bona-fide cricket amateur at the time of playing and who had been so for at least one (1) year previously. A player shall be classed as a professional, within this League, and be barred from playing, if he receives £1 or more in payment for playing in any one cricket match.

Generally all matches were played midweek evenings consisting of twenty six ball over's per side bowlers limited to four over's each, early season and late season the games were reduced to fifteen over's per side.

A local newspaper article reported in late May that year.

❖ **Evening Cricket:** *Mirfield Evening League cricket is now well under way and the keen competition of the "brighter cricket brigade" – the team with the highest number of runs in 20 overs wins – is attracting large followings at the Memorial Ground. The demand to join the league has been so great this year that the League committee has had the happy – or unhappy – experience of refusing applications.*

*Among the personality parade are two Huddersfield Town footballers, Vic Metcalfe and the South African goalkeeper, Sandy Kennon, as well as a number of Yorkshire Council and Huddersfield League cricketers.*

In June of that year a side representing the Mirfield Evening League played a friendly fixture against Walkden the Bolton League champions which included Lancashire colt Jacky Bond. Walkden batted first and in the allotted 2 hours scored 209 for 9 wickets (14 year old Lancashire County Schoolboy, Ian Greenhalgh made 50). In reply the Mirfield Evening League side made 175 for 9 wickets at the close with Vic Metcalfe on 92 not out.

A club struggling to raise a team this season however was Gilder Hall Boys Club who could only muster 5 players for one fixture. The clubs fortunes improved the following month when the side beat Christ Church by 4 wickets mainly due to the efforts of Harry Fretwell who scored 34 including 4 successive boundaries to pull the game around after his side had lost several quick wickets.

Callenders failed in their attempt to win the League Shield for the 3<sup>rd</sup> consecutive year finishing in second place to Battyeford Methodists. Battyeford Methodists side included three Huddersfield Town footballers, Vic Metcalfe, Jimmy Glazzard and goalkeeper Sandy Kennon, all three were present at the annual dance and prize presentation to receive batting and fielding awards from Yorkshire County Cricketer and Huddersfield Town teammate Ken Taylor, the event was once again held at the Vale Café in mirfield. Ken Taylor presented the following awards.

- Batting Ave. Saturday player – B. Goodall – Callenders
- Batting Ave. Non Saturday – J.Glazzard – Battyeford Methodists
- Bowling Ave. Saturday – Not listed
- Bowling Ave. Non Saturday – J. Booth – Battyeford Methodists

- Fielding Prize awarded jointly to - S. Kennon and V. Metcalfe Battyeford Meths.
- Wicket Keeping – B. Lister – Buckley's

## 1958

Christ Church left the league to be replaced by Ashworth Ross engineering company manufacturers of weighing machinery and situated at Scouthill in Dewsbury.

Buckley's were winners of the league title with Woodhouse & Mitchell runners up this year. Battyeford Methodists under the captaincy of Fred Field lifted the Kilner Cup beating Woodhouse & Mitchell in the final. Fred was a well-known local farmer and dairyman who enjoyed a game of cricket. His son Robin said that he was the organizer of the team and kept wicket but was a 'stopper rather than a keeper'. Fred would often stand down if a better keeper was available, hence he did not feature in the challenge match with Buckley's toward the end of the 1958 season although it is not known which team won the match (*see photograph of the two teams taking part*). Fred was a good friend of Huddersfield Town football star Vic Metcalfe. During these years Battyeford Methodists were often able to call on Vic Metcalfe's services along with team mates such as Len Qusted, Jimmy Glazzard, Sandy Kennon, and Bill McGarry. Former European wrestling champion Wally Saynor was also a regular in the team. Wally would wrestle under the title of 'The Monocled Man'.



At the league's annual meeting that year President Mr A. Morgan Kilner said that the season had been successful despite 26 of the 90 scheduled fixtures being rained off. The Treasurer also reported that the year had been successful financially, the league having started the season with £10.10shillings cash in hand; they had ended the year with £101.10shillings.

The following officials were elected at the meeting: - President Mr A. Morgan Kilner; Chairman Mr Harold Morton; Secretary Mr Brian Goodall; Treasurer Mr Fred Brown.

**Individual prizes that year were as presented at the annual dinner by Yorkshire cricketer Mr Raymond Illingworth to:**

- Leading Batting Ave. Saturday Player – V. Metcalfe, Battyeford Methodists
- Leading Batting Ave. Non Sat. Player – D. Bastow, Battyeford Methodists
- Leading Bowling Ave. Saturday Player – K. Goddard, Buckley's
- Leading Bowling Ave. Non Sat. Player – C. Ashton, BICC.
- Fielding Prize – W. Dransfield – Buckley's
- Wicket Keeping Prize – B. Lister – Buckley's



Left to Right - Bob Lister, Dennis Goddard, George Oldrod, (?) Charles Buckley, (?) (?) Ray Illingworth, Keith Goddard, Harold Morton, Harold Dransfield, Arthur Wailes.

**Photograph taken at 1958 Annual Prize Presentation Evening**

**1959**

Another new team joined the league in 1959, Marshall Kaye Marshall, woollen manufacturers Netherfield Road Ravensthorpe, Dewsbury. The company had their own sports ground including a cricket field near to the mills, their cricket team competed in the Dewsbury and District Cricket League. The mill suffered like many of the mills in the district during the late 1960's and early 1970's and subsequently closed, the sports facilities lost forever to the community. Callenders (B.I.C.C.) will play under the name Ramblers this season, David Browns withdrew from the league.

Derek Ibbotson MBE was the guest at the 1959 annual dance and presentation held at the Vale in Mirfield. Derek Ibbotson was born in Huddersfield in 1932 and attended King James's Grammar School in Almondbury. He was of the generation that included great British athletes such as Chris Brasher, Christopher Chataway and Roger Bannister, Bannister being the first person to run the mile in under 4 minutes in 1954. In 1957 Derek Ibbotson had set a new record for running a mile, the time he achieved was 3 minutes 57.2seconds. By the 1980's Sebastian Coe, Steve Ovett and Steve Cram were running the same distance 10 seconds faster!

Derek Ibbotson presented the following awards:

- Batting Ave. Saturday player - E. Gill – John Cotton's
- Batting Ave. Non Saturday - R. Smith – Gilder Hall
- Bowling Ave. Saturday player - R. Ellam – Battyeford Meths.
- Bowling Ave. Non Saturday - W. Booth – Buckley's
- The Fielding Award was presented jointly to - A. Ambler, Gilder Hall. C. Ashton, Ramblers and P. Hellewell John Cotton's. (Fielding)
- Wicket Keeping – B. Lister

**The 1960's**

By 1960 the league had been established 10 years and had attracted players from many of the top senior Saturday league clubs in the area including a number of Yorkshire Colts, the league was proving to be very competitive. Only four sides remained from the original members, Battyeford Methodists, Buckley's, Community Centre and John Cotton's. However, the league was still able to maintain 10 teams, C.E.A. and Ramblers dropped out to be replaced by J.W.Thornes well known locally as retailers of radio's, televisions and other electrical appliances. They had premises in Dewsbury, Batley, Heckmondwike and Birstall. The company closed its business in the 1990's. The West Riding Treasurer's Department (W.R.T.D.) based in Wakefield also entered a team.

Other teams taking part during the 1960's included:

- *Mackenzie Methodists - Batley*

- *Woodhouse & Mitchell / Town Woodhouse / Clifton Bridge*
- *Lower Hopton – Formed from Lower Hopton F C*
- *Dawson's (Gomersal)*
- *J. S. Newsome Printers (Batley)*
- *Mirfield United (Formerly Guilder Hall)*
- *Double Two/Eagles*
- *Firth's*
- *British Monorail (Brighouse)*
- *Kossett Carpets (Brighouse)*

By the same time the smaller local papers had been merged into The Reporter group and coverage of the league in the sports section became less. Teams continued to drop in and out of the league. Jas Smiths a well established dry cleaning company appeared in 1961 and Double Two Shirt Manufacturers' from Wakefield the following year. By 1961 Vic Metcalfe's playing career as a footballer was reaching the end and he was invited as a guest to Ravensthorpe Ambulance Rooms that year to present that seasons prizes. In his football career he made well over 400 appearances between 1946 and 1958 for Huddersfield Town before moving on to Hull City for a time. He also gained 2 England caps in the early 1950's.

Many sporting celebrities were invited to present the prizes at the league's annual dinner over the years. Harry Atkinson recalls the event being held at the Ravensthorpe Ambulance Rooms in 1962 and the prizes and wards being presented by Anita Lonsbrough. Amongst her many achievements was a gold medal at the 1960 Rome Olympics in the 200 metres breaststroke. She was also the first woman to be awarded 'BBC Sports Personality' of the year in 1962. She became an MBE in 1963.

Willie Watson was both a professional cricketer and footballer, a double international playing in 23 Test Matches and 4 soccer internationals for England. A left handed batsman he scored over 25,000 runs in a career with both Yorkshire and Leicestershire. In 1964 he was Football Manager at Halifax Town and invited to the MECL Annual Dinner held at the 'Freemasons Arms' that year to present prizes.

By 1966 only Buckley's remained from the founding members of the league, the number of teams was down to eight and by this time a large percentage of players from the established Saturday clubs were playing in the league and using it as match practice. Colin Peacock was one such player who on Saturday afternoons represented Mirfield Cricket Club but had played in the evening league since its early days. In 1959, 1960 and 1963 Colin won the Central Yorkshire League's batting award setting a new record for the league with 1,011 runs in 1960. Many of those who knew and played with him

over the years have said that he was the best batsman locally of his day and perhaps rejected by Yorkshire County Cricket Club because of his unorthodox style. Records show that Colin was one of the most prolific run scorers of that period at local league level.



### **C. Buckley's XI Mid to Late 1960's**

There were many other very good cricketers who had either been called to the Yorkshire nets or represented Yorkshire as Colts taking part in the league. Malcolm Naylor a forceful batsman and spin bowler with Castleford in the Yorkshire League John Crowhurst who played most of his league cricket with Hanging Heaton, Keith Goddard another. Harry Atkinson played regularly in the evening league; he would describe himself as an all-rounder in his younger days and became one of the most respected quick bowlers in the area. He started his cricket at Sandal before being advised to move to College Grove, Wakefield whose captain at that time was former Yorkshire captain Vic Wilson. Harry subsequently left Wakefield for Hanging Heaton in the mid 1960's; he also had spells with leading Bradford League side Pudsey St Lawrence and Ossett before returning to Hanging Heaton. Ronnie Hudson, a hard hitting migrant from

Jamaica in the West Indies also left Wakefield for Hanging Heaton at about this time; he too played in the evening league. In a Bradford League match, Hanging Heaton versus Keighley in 1980, Ronnie became the first player in the leagues history to score a double century, batting at number 3 he was dismissed before Hanging Heaton had completed their 50 overs for 201. Colin Ashton was connected with the league for a number of years being connected with Ramblers, Double Two and Eagles.

In 1967 there was success for Mirfield United winners of the league title and two of their bowlers, B. Dunderdale and A. Watts scooped the bowling awards. Town Woodhouse, were runners up in the league competition and losing finalists in the Kilner Cup K.O. competition to Buckley's. S. Nichols (Town Woodhouse) was top of the batting averages as a Saturday player and R. Stead (Eagles) Non Saturday player. Mirfield United players, A. Trevitt and D. Jones won the fielding and wicket keeping prizes.

### **The 1970's**

By 1970 the league had seen several teams come and go but Buckley's, due to the enthusiasm of Mr Charles Buckley, was still a member. In 1970 that year Blakeborough's Engineers of Brighouse entered a team; Mirfield Parish rejoined the league and with the inclusion of Dewsbury Cavaliers from the Dewsbury and District League there were 10 teams in the league once again. Dewsbury Cavaliers and Mirfield Parish were to merge in 1987 to become Mirfield Parish Cavaliers and were subsequently accepted into the Central Yorkshire League. Dewsbury Cavaliers, formerly St. Andrew's Church Cricket Club (Batley) played their home matches at Hyrstlands Park, Batley in the 1960's before relocating to a small ground at Healds Road, Dewsbury opposite Staincliffe Hospital. In 1974 they moved again to the Memorial Ground, Mirfield which meant that for the first time Saturday cricket was being played regularly on the smaller of the two 'Memorial Grounds'. Whitley Lower was another club from the Dewsbury & District League to join the evening league in this period. Whitley Lower was formed in 1921 and based at Hopton Mills, Woodbottom in Mirfield. The ground belonged to the Wheatley family, owners of the Hopton Estates and the long established Henry Wheatley's textile mill. The Whitley Lower Club paid an annual peppercorn rent of one shilling (5 pence) to the estate for over 50 years. In 1989 Whitley Lower C.C. merged with Dewsbury C.C. to become Hopton Mills Cricket Club and accepted as members of the Central Yorkshire Cricket League. Cleckheaton Colts, a team initially consisting of Cleckheaton Cricket Club juniors joined in 1972 along with Harry Lime. Cleckheaton Colts had little or no success until 1977 when they won both the League and Cup Competition in with a much strengthened side (See *photograph below*).



**Cleckheaton Colts Winners of both the Mirfield & District Evening Cricket League & Kilner Cup Competitions 1977**

Harry Lime was subsequently to merge with Mirfield Cricket Club when Mirfield C. C. went through troubled times in the year 2004/5. Pub sides began entering teams, The Crackenedge Hotel, The Crown Inn, Stott's Arms Brighouse, Batley and Calor Gas. Just to keep things in order the local Police also played in the league for a while. A team playing under the name Eleven C.C. (later to become Changing Lights) with players from the Bradford, Huddersfield and Central Yorkshire Cricket Leagues amongst their number joined the league. The league had to abandon the Saturday player rule and as being paid for playing cricket on a Saturday afternoon became more open during the 1970's. The amateur rule was also impossible to police, John Burton, who played with Staincliffe and Heckmondwike in his early years, was professional with Middleton in the Central Lancashire League at this time and had become a regular player with Dewsbury Cavaliers in the MECL. The league therefore became open for anyone to play. Solly Adam a local Asian businessman and cricket fanatic had contacts with many overseas stars and played with Eleven C.C. arrived to play a game one evening and had brought Iqbal Qasim the Pakistani Test Spin Bowler with him. The

match was cancelled however as the opposition was unable to raise a team that evening. The Saturday team players welcomed the competition as it was good practice as well as a social outlet.

Through the 1970's the league remained popular and as competitive as it had been in its early years. Throughout this period Phil Swire one time player, umpire and Life Vice President of the Central Yorkshire Cricket League was the figurehead and totally dedicated to organizing almost everything from fixtures to umpires and finance, without him the league would have folded much earlier.

### **The 1980's**

Press coverage in the local papers was virtually nonexistent through the 1970's and disappeared altogether by 1980. Records of the leagues affairs have not been located. This decade saw the end of the Mirfield & District Evening Cricket League; no one seems to know when the last games were played. **It would be interesting to know when exactly it ended and where the leagues trophies are now.** Moorlands Cricket Club began playing on the ground in 1987 and we are told there was no evening league cricket being played then!

I would like to thank all those who have assisted me in compiling this brief history in particular Mr Albert Ambler of Mirfield who painstakingly searched the library archives for of the local press library records through the above years seeking information relating to the league.

David I Peel  
Mirfield  
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