

Harry Fretwell

1st XI Captain in 1980

CRICKET CLUB KNOCKS UP 100

By CHRIS
MAGUIRE

ONE HUNDRED years ago, a group of choirboys decided to form a cricket team simply for their amusement. The club they formed was called Mirfield Parish Cricket Club. From its unlikely beginning, the team has grown and become one of Mirfield's strongest and most successful clubs.

And on Friday, the club celebrated its centenary at The Marmaville Country Club with a dinner and dance — and their special guest was former England and Somerset player, Brian Close.

For more than 75 years, local people have watched cricket played on the picturesque ground in Dunbottle Lane. This pitch is a marked contrast to their previous one at Primrose Farm in Crossley Lane, which subsided due to nearby coal workings!

Things have changed since they first moved to this ground. The players originally had no pavilion and had to change in the nearby public house, The Sheppers Arms, now been converted to cottages.

Eventually, a small pavilion

was built and later a tea room was added, which was also used as a committee and store room.

Since then the club has prospered, but hasn't had a completely smooth run. In the summer of 1965, a large hole suddenly appeared, where groundsmen Harold Smith was cutting the grass. It was at least six feet in diameter and 12 feet deep.

Tons of rubble were used to fill the hole and members gave up their time in order to have the ground ready for a game the following Saturday.

The cause of the trouble was due to a tip at the bottom of the ground. In 1977 the whole wicket had to be relaid at a cost of £5,000, when it was found that parts of the pitch had begun to ripple and sink in places. Again the dedication of the members, non-members and ground staff ensured that the pitch was rescued.

During the past decade, the

club has made large steps forward, with new and improved facilities.

For many years the President was the Vicar of Mirfield, but in recent times, local businessmen have held the office — at present it is Mr. Bill O'Donnell, of Ossett.

But at Mirfield Parish, the members have made sure that cricket is not totally male dominated. They have a good ladies' section.

Over the years the club have won more than 50 trophies, including the Crowther Cup which they won last year. Since the war, the club's players have won the League's and President's batting, bowling, and wicket-keeping individual prizes on 28 occasions.

Many Test and County cricketers have also visited the club including Geoff Boycott, Ray Illingworth, and John Edrich. Foreign players have also come to the ground, including Wasim Raja and Madan Lal.

During the club's centenary year, they are holding benefit evenings for Geoff Cope and Barrie Leadbetter.



Brian Close (right) at the centenary dinner with Mr. Brian Tattersfield (left), treasurer, Mr. Bill O'Donnell, president, Mr. John Balmforth, secretary, and Mr. Richard Ingham and Mr. Harry Fretwell, second and first team captains. — (RN).