

Cricket history

The year (1880) in which the Mirfield Parish Cricket Club was formed, hitherto unknown, was revealed to members at the annual general meeting on Tuesday. The information came from Mr. Tom Schofield, who, although now living in Leeds, has remained an ardent supporter of the club, travelling regularly to watch first team games. Another link with the past discussed at the meeting was a membership card of the club for the year 1888 which had originally belonged to Mr. F. Field, a former treasurer of the club who is still believed to be alive and living in Brighouse. The card now belongs to Mr. J. Dunderdale who received it from his father, the late Squire Dunderdale, a few years ago. The Rev. F. R. Greenside was then president of the club and Mr. G. W. Ainley, a former organist at the church, captain. Vice-presidents were the Rev. E. S. Maltby and the Rev. W. N. Bricknell and on the committee were Messrs. J. Armitage, J. T. Blackburn, W. Dransfield, J. Hirst and Whitehead. In those days the ground was at Primrose Farm which is about 20 minutes' walk from where Mirfield Station to-day.

Parish Church pioneers of cricket

Club won many honours

WAY back in the 1870s a group of Mirfield Parish Church choirboys decided to form themselves into a cricket team. They played mostly for their own amusement—it was something to occupy their spare time, but from this small group of young boys has grown one of Mirfield's strongest cricket clubs which over the years has provided thousands of people with Saturday afternoon and evening entertainment.

These choirboys were the founders of the Mirfield Parish Church Cricket Club. They played amongst themselves for about three seasons and then decided to invite the Sunday school to take part and it was in the year 1880 that they formed the Cricket Club. Most people will associate the club with its present picturesque ground along Dunbottle Lane where, for over 60 years, local people have spent enjoyable Saturday afternoons or 7-day grasshopper watching the "local lads" battle through many a match, but there have been other grounds where the club has played.

FOUNDER MEMBER

Probably the best person to recall these old days is Mr. Tom Schofield, who is one of the remaining founder members. Mr. Schofield is 84 and now lives in Leeds. He went to live there from 174 Lane, Ravenshorpe, about ten months ago, but throughout last season he made special journeys to Mirfield to watch the first team home matches. He is hoping to do the same this season.

A "District News" reporter went to Leeds on Tuesday and found Mr. Schofield watching a bowling match in a park close to his home at Hurley Lodge Road. He recalled quite clearly the days when, as a choirboy, he helped to form the Parish Cricket Club and proceeded without difficulty to mention the names of the first team. Amongst them were Herbert Morrill, Harry Green, Charlie Ainley, Tom Cox, Herbert Cox, Latham Jenkins, Frank Savory, Ned Wright, William Dransfield and, of course, himself. The first captain, he said, was Mr. William Henry Lockwood.

"When we moved to Dunbottle Lane we had to make the ground," continued Mr. Schofield. "We spent all our spare time cutting and raising and everybody gave a hand. We had no pavilion and had to change in an old shed." Mr. Schofield does not remember when the present pavilion was actually built and opened but remembers when the building was extended to include a refreshment room.

Mr. Schofield played with the team for many years as wicket-keeper and he was an umpire for about ten years, both in the Wakefield and Bradford Leagues. He was made a life member of the club several years ago.

Asked what he thought about the present team, Mr. Schofield said: "I don't want to criticize any player but on the whole I think they hold their own."

VETERANS

Another long serving member of the club is Mr. T. Ellis, aged 78, of Wellhouse Lane. He first joined the club at the age of 14, but left to join the team at Wellhouse Moravian Church after a few seasons. He came back to the Parish in 1918 and has been connected with it ever since. Another veteran is Mr. A. Brown, of Wellhouse Lane, who has been a member of the club for about 50 years. He was a playing member for several years but is best known for his work as groundman, a position he held until he became ill about two years ago. The present groundman is Mr. H. Smith, of Dunbottle Lane, a former captain of the first team.

Mr. J. Dunderdale, a playing member, has a link with the past in the form of a membership card for 1888 which originally belonged to Mr. F. Field, a former treasurer of the club. Mr. Dunderdale received the card from his late father, Mr. Squire Dunderdale, who was associated with the club for many years. The Rev. F. R. Greenside was then president of the club and Mr. G. W. Ainley, a former organist at the church, was captain. Vice-presidents were the Rev. E. S. Maltby and the Rev. W. N. Bricknell and on the committee were Messrs. J. Armitage, J. T. Blackburn, W. Dransfield, J. Hirst and Whitehead. In those days the ground was at Crossley Lane which is situated on the road to about 20 minutes' walk from Mirfield Station.

LEAGUE SHIELD

Another link which the club has with the days gone by is the old Dewsbury and District Junior League shield which the club won in 1900, 1902, 1907, 1909 and 1912. On the last occasion the club kept the shield for at the end of that season the league broke up.

Over the past ten years the club has had a noted team which has always been in the running for honours. It is the only team to have won the Dewsbury and District League shield for three successive years, from 1947 to 1949. The shield was also won in 1932. Mr. J. Dunderdale has won the league batting averages for two successive seasons and Mr. H. Smith has won the same averages on two or three occasions.

TODAY'S PLAYERS

The present first team captain is Mr. E. Buehan and Mr. Dunderdale is second in command. Mr. H. English is ground team captain and Mr. H. Hoop is wicket-keeper. President of the club is the Vicar of Mirfield (Rev. G. B. Hall) and Mr. E. Marshall is secretary. Mr. Marshall joined the club in 1923 and was a playing member up to being appointed secretary in 1931. Mr. W. H. Ashford has been treasurer since 1947 and a member since 1932.

The club is well-known throughout the district for its annual week-end competition played on week-day evenings and it is through this competition that crowds of people are provided with evening entertainment. The club is also greatly assisted by a ladies section which takes charge of refreshments and organizes social events during the winter months in aid of club funds.