

BATTYEFORD AND BUCKLEY'S:

**A History of the
Mirfield & District Evening
Cricket League
1949-c.1980**

David I. Peel

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Foreword

For me, someone who lives in Huddersfield, there was a massive challenge in getting to know the cricketing history of North Kirklees as part of the Heritage Lottery Fund-sponsored Calderdale & Kirklees Heritage Project, which began in 2004.

North Kirklees incorporates Dewsbury, Batley and other smaller towns including Cleckheaton, Heckmondwike and Mirfield. And in many ways it sees itself as being closer to the Leeds area than Huddersfield. So it was a challenge – a big one.

It was one I enjoyed. I loved getting the train to Batley or Dewsbury and then getting to know the history of places, and cricket clubs, I had only heard about before.

Mirfield detained us quite a lot. Today there are three cricket clubs in the town – Mirfield, Moorlands and Mirfield Parish Cavaliers - and in yesteryear there would have been many more.

As I travelled round, I started to meet cricket folk with particular historical interests. At Hanging Heaton I got to know David Peel – and we now know that he has a strong interest in the now-defunct Mirfield & District Evening Cricket League.

He has produced an interesting and informative booklet and it is good that cricket folk with special interests are coming forward and producing research of their own.

Peter Davies, August 2011

Acknowledgements

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 the local press library records through the above years seeking information relating to the league.

David I. Peel

Front-cover photo: Buckley's XI, mid-to-late 1960s

Introduction

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, and 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, and many had to work Saturdays – very little cricket was played on Sundays, it 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 some time in the 1980s.

The names of the founders are not known but it seems likely that the initiative came from Taylor Hall Community Centre. On August 27th 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 24th 1949, on page 2 of the same newspaper, it 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 Methodists
British Legion
British Railways
Christ Church
Hopkinson & Shore
H.L.Trees XI
Mirfield Parish
Nab WMC
Taylor Hall Comm. Centre

In the issue of the same newspaper dated 24th 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 10 shillings per match be charged.

The Mirfield & District Evening Cricket League began in the spring of 1950; local councillors, businessmen and perhaps some church leaders would appear to have had some input. On the 20th May 1950, a local newspaper, the *Dewsbury & District News & Chronicle*, stated:

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, the secretary. Mr Chapman is Captain of the Taylor Hall Community Centre Cricket Team.

Some of the teams

Battleyford 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 is now converted to flats.

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.

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.

The firm of Hopkinson & Shore, a company 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 John Cotton's, a large employer at Battyeford.

Mirfield Parish originally connected to Mirfield Parish Church; the cricket section is said to have been formed around the year 1880. Mirfield Parish have 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 CC 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 1980s; 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.

Kershaw's, the market gardeners of Brighouse, entered a team along with Mr H.L.Trees, the Mirfield Council surveyor and cricket enthusiast.



A plaque to H.L.Trees at Mirfield Parish Cavaliers CC

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 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 and also organized a team for inclusion.

The following 10 teams competed in the first season:

Battleyeford 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, Battleyeford
Kershaw's
Mirfield Parish

The teams competed for the League Shield which had been kindly presented by County Councillor John Hardy 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 knockout 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 XI.

Individual prizes for the leading batting and bowling averages were also awarded along with wicketkeeper and fielding awards although records showing the winners are incomplete.

In those first years it would appear that bowlers were not restricted in the number of overs they could bowl.

1951: Battyeford victorious

In the second season, nine 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. Battyeford Methodists triumphed in the final of the Kilner Cup competition, beating Christ Church by 5 runs. Councillor John Hardy (Chairman of the Council) was elected the first President of the League.



From this report it would seem that bowlers were not restricted to the number of overs 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.

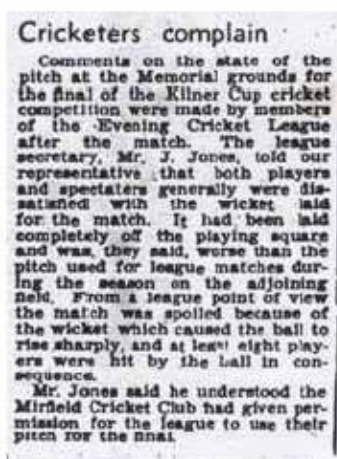
He went on to say that they had looked into all the difficulties which might arise and got down to definite and precise figures of cost. The matter was now left to the people of the district to make the next move.

He also said that it was obviously a matter which was 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: Danger wicket

The same teams again competed in 1952 with the 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 Mirfield Cricket Club's ground and reports in the local press were of the dangerous state of the wicket:



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:

1953: New winners

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: Weather problems

In 1954 the league's secretary was a Mr Jack Bloom and that year the league comprised the same nine 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.

The *Mirfield & Bradley News*, Sat 2nd Oct 1954: 'The Kilner Cup will be shared this season by H.L.Trees XI 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 afternoons and those who only played midweek 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.



Annual Dinner and Prize Presentation, 1954

1955: Enter Mirfield

The chairman of the league in 1955 was Mr Harold Morton. There were changes to the make-up of the league. H.L. Trees XI dropped out and there were 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, and 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 competitions.

The club became a mixed club in the early 1960s. 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 home of Mirfield Parish Cavaliers today

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.



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 Ground; 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 inter-league 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

M. Cass – Gilder Hall, leading bowling average non-Saturday player

1956: Wage rise

One change to the make-up 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 overs 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 on the league's annual meeting held on Wednesday 21st November at the Black Bull in Mirfield:

For the coming season, 1957, clubs could register as many Saturday players as they wished but only three could play in any one match.

Players would only be eligible for the Kilner Cup competition if they had been registered prior to the 1st Round.

Umpires fees were increased from 2/6d to 4 shillings.

Officials of the League were elected as follows:

President: Mr A. Morgan Kilner

Chairman: Mr H. Morton

Vice-Chairman: Mr H. Hesp

Secretary: Mr B. Goodall

Treasurer: Mr F. Brown

Umpires Sec.: Mr J. Chapman

1957: New regulations

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 took effect (no more than three 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 overs a bowler could bowl in a match may have been introduced this year as the qualification was reduced to 20 wickets in the season. The limit was four overs for a 20-over game and 3 overs where matches were reduced to 15 overs. 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 20 six-ball overs per side, bowlers limited to four overs each; early season and late season, the games were reduced to 15 overs 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 Jack Bond. Walkden batted first and in the allotted two 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 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 five players for one fixture. The club's fortunes improved the following month when they beat Christ Church by 4 wickets mainly due to the efforts of Harry Fretwell who scored 34 including four successive boundaries to pull the game around.

Callenders failed in their attempt to win the League Shield for the third consecutive year, finishing in second place to Battyeford Methodists. The 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.

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.

Wicketkeeping – B. Lister, Buckley's

1958: Star man Fred

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 organiser 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 towards the end of the 1958 season although it is not known which team won the match. Fred was a good friend of Huddersfield Town football star Vic Metcalfe.



Standing (left to right): Harold Woodhead, George Harvey, Arthur Smith, Bill Black, Bruce Kendall, Tom Harrow, Tony Green, C. Arthur Buckley, Philip Harvey, Keith Goodland, Eric Smith.
 Seated (left to right): Jimmy Lasswell, Wally Saynor, Arthur Smith, Albert Woodhead, Vic Metcalfe, Ray Green, John Green, Peter Forrest, Jack Traynor, John Smith.

1958 Challenge Match: Buckley's v Battyeford Meths

During these years, Battyeford Methodists were often able to call on Vic Metcalfe's services along with teammates such as Len Quested, 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 £10.10 shillings cash in hand; they had ended the year with £101.10 shillings.

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 presented at the annual dinner by Yorkshire cricketer Mr Raymond Illingworth to:

Leading Batting Ave. Saturday player – V. Metcalfe,
Battysford Methodists
Leading Batting Ave. Non Sat. player – D. Bastow,
Battysford 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
Wicketkeeping Prize – B. Lister, Buckley's



1958 Annual Prize Presentation Evening

1959: VIP guest

Another team joined the league in 1959, Marshall Kaye Marshall, woollen manufacturers of Netherfield Road, Ravensthorpe. 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 1960s and early 1970s and subsequently closed, the sports facilities lost forever to the community. Callenders (BICC.) would 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. He 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: 3 minutes 57.2 seconds. By the 1980s 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)
Wicketkeeping – B. Lister

1960s: Competitive league

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 radios, televisions and other electrical appliances. They had premises in Dewsbury, Batley, Heckmondwike and Birstall. The company closed its business in the 1990s. The West Riding Treasurer's Department (W.R.T.D.) based in Wakefield also entered a team.

Other teams taking part during the 1960s included:

British Monorail (Brighouse)

Dawson's (Gomersal)

Double Two/Eagles

Firth's

Kossett Carpets (Brighouse)

Lower Hopton – Formed from Lower Hopton FC

Mackenzie Methodists – Batley

Mirfield United (formerly Gilder Hall)

J.S. Newsome Printers (Batley)

Woodhouse & Mitchell/Town Woodhouse/Clifton Bridge

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 season's 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 two England caps in the early 1950s.

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. Among 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 manager at Halifax Town and invited to the Mirfield Evening Cricket League 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.



Buckley's XI, mid-to-late 1960s

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.

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 skipper Vic Wilson. Harry subsequently left Wakefield for Hanging Heaton in the mid-1960s; he also had spells with leading Bradford League side Pudsey St. Lawrence and Ossett before returning to Hanging Heaton.

Ronnie Hudson, a hard-hitting cricketer 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 league's history to score a double century; batting at number three, 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 associated 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 knockout 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 wicketkeeping prizes.

1970s: Coming and going

By 1970 the league had seen several teams come and go but Buckley's, due to the enthusiasm of Mr Charles Buckley, were still members. 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 1960s 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 arenas.

Whitley Lower were 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 were 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 competitions with a much strengthened side. Harry Lime were subsequently to merge with Mirfield Cricket Club when Mirfield C.C. went through troubled times in 2004/5.



Cleckheaton Colts – winners of both the Mirfield & District Evening Cricket League and Kilner Cup in 1977

Pub sides began entering teams: The Crackenedge Hotel, The Crown Inn, Stott's Arms Brighthouse and 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 leagues, among their number, joined the league.

The league had to abandon the Saturday player rule as being paid for playing cricket on a Saturday afternoon became more open during the 1970s. 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 Mirfield Evening Cricket League.

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.. He arrived to play a game one evening and 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 1970s, 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 organising almost everything from fixtures to umpires and finance; without him the league would have folded much earlier.

The 1980s: Decline and fall

Press coverage in the local papers was virtually non-existent through the 1970s and disappeared altogether by 1980. Records of the league's 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 league's trophies are now.



The DMCC badge

Moorlands Cricket Club began playing on the Memorial Gound in 1987 and we are told there was no Evening League cricket being played then.