

Spotlight on Mirfield CC

The new Mirfield team in 1952. (NS)



Civic dignitaries at the ground. (NS)

DOCTOR Peter Davies, senior lecturer in history at Huddersfield University, has been given a Heritage Lottery Fund grant to research cricket history in Kirdees. Here he tells us something about the history of Mirfield Cricket Club.

Cutting reveals club's rich history



Mirfield stalwart Pat Neal, who produced a study of the first season. (NS)

AN early newspaper cutting - wedged in between items relating to Mirfield Prosecution Districts and Mirfield Cotton Districts Relief Fund - from May 9 1863 tells us that club membership stood at 66, the cricket field was being 'levelled and re-laid', and Gomersal Perseverance Club was soon to be challenged in a friendly fixture.

Mirfield Town Hall was the venue for one of the cricket club's big events of 1882 - a fundraising 'entertainment'. This sounds like an evening of variety and cabaret, with all proceeds going to a cricketing cause.

In 1896 the club's annual report revealed a Mr Ingham had paid £270 to build the club a new pavilion.

He had also come to the club's rescue when, at the end of season 1894, the club had been forced to re-locate due to the construction of Heaton Lodge and the Wortley Railway.

In this early period, the club

played in a variety of leagues: the Spen Valley, West Riding and Heavy Woollen.

But the Great War took its toll and in 1919 the 'old' Mirfield club was forced to disband.

The 're-formation' of Mirfield CC in 1952 was due to the efforts of a group of local businessmen and councillors.

They all saw the potential in a new Mirfield CC. They were also helped by the fact that there was a vacancy at the memorial ground.

For in 1951 the lease held by the Craven Gentlemen - another local cricket team - had run out, and new cricketing tenants were being sought.

And local folk were pretty confident that Mirfield CC mark two would be given the green light: the new club was admitted to the Heavy Woollen Cup on September 29 1951, prior to the official re-formation actually taking place!

The town was very enthusiastic about the re-formation and in

this formative period the club was particularly indebted to its female membership.

Thus, 1952 was a milestone year in the history of Mirfield CC - and on the club's 50th birthday, club stalwart Pat Neal produced a fascinating study of the first season.

Key personalities around this time included Charles Buckley - a public schoolboy who skippered the 1952 side; he was a right-hand batsman and off-spinner who dropped down to the second XI and then became a committee member and vice-president; outside cricket he was managing director at Buckley's Brush Works and was the son of the founder.

Wulf Barber, Yorkshire and England cricketer, joined Mirfield at the age of 51 from Halifax side King Cross; he averaged 41.18 and 45.89 in his two seasons at the memorial ground and won the division two batting award in both years. He scored 15,315 runs

for Yorkshire and gained two test caps. Ex-Holmfirth player Hurst Barber made his name as an excellent fielder and a fixture at the top of the order, scoring the new club's first-ever half-century (79 in the opening game); between 1956 and 1960 he led the first XI to a hat-trick of Central Yorkshire League championships and also starred in the 'double'-winning side of 1963; he went on to skipper the second XI, manage the under-18 side and become life vice-president.

In 1962 Mirfield won the Heavy Woollen Cup for the first time. In the same year the second XI won the championship under the captaincy of Cyril Spencer.

More silverware was accrued in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, and Mirfield also hired an array of impressive professional players including Indian Test batsman Ghulam Parizur.

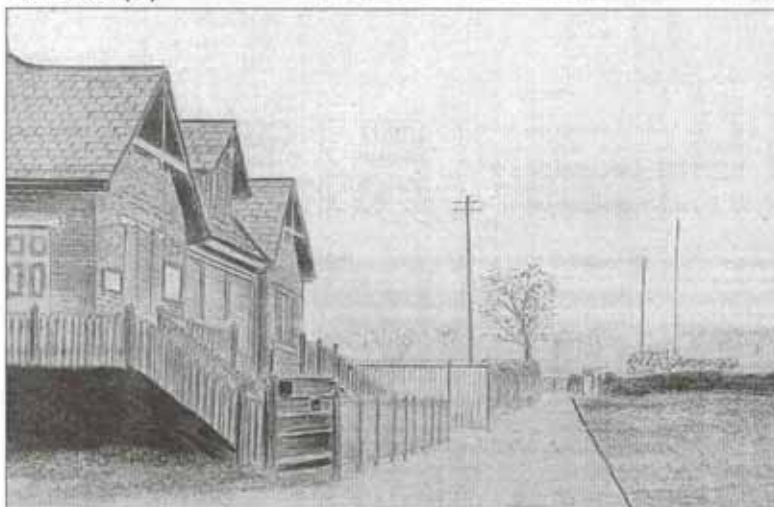
Between 2001 and 2004 the club locked horns in the Bradford League, but due to a financial cri-



An 'annual entertainment' bill from 1882. (NS)

sis, and an accompanying exodus of players, Mirfield were forced into a life-saving merger with Harry Lime CC in 2005.

The new club plays in the Huddersfield Central League.



A drawing of the ground. (NS)

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When women cricketers were 'too anxious to run'!



AND AGAIN! The team with 1975 Heavy Woollen Cup. (NS)

RIGHT: The team in 1952 with the Heavy Woollen Cup. (NS)



THORNHILL'S first ground was situated where Valley Road Estate now stands. The club played here between around 1861 and 1867. In the beginning Thornhill Cricket Club was connected to Thornhill Parish Church. Indeed, in the 1860s the church magazine made regular mention of the cricket club, and on one occasion actually referred to it as "our cricket club". The club moved to its present ground in 1867. In the early days, the ground covered six acres, one rood and 20 perches, and the club paid a rent to the Saville Estate.

The venue came to be known as The Combs after the former Combs Colliery. Archdeacon Brooke put the club on a sound basis in the early days as

well as entertaining the famous Grace brothers whenever Gloucestershire played at Saville Town. 1867 witnessed a women's cricket match being played at Thornhill Cricket Club - an unusual event for the era. The match resulted in a draw, with each team scoring all-out totals of 27.

INTEREST

The *Dewsbury Chronicle* reported that the "novel cricket match" had generated a "great amount of interest". The loss of wickets and subsequent low scores were put down to the fact that some of the women were "too anxious to run". In 1889 the club underwent the first of its major name changes, from Thornhill Cricket Club to Thornhill

Cricket and Lawn Tennis Club. In 1909 the club embraced the local crown green bowlers - hence the name change to Thornhill Cricket and Bowling Club. This moniker was to stand the test of time. 1911 was a big year for local cricket watchers as the club installed a bar. Spectators could now sit in the sun, have a drink, and watch the cricket.

Like all cricket clubs, Thornhill has had to think of novel ways to raise money. In 1924 it decided to hold a dance on the cricket pitch! Having competed in the Heavy Woollen Cup since it first started in 1863, and being finalists on four occasions, Thornhill finally won the trophy in 1942, as war raged across Europe. Thornhill beat Morley by 11 runs at Heck-

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mondwike to bring the trophy home.

ELECTRICITY

In 1945 Thornhill's pavilion was connected to electricity... and in 1952 the club scooped the Heavy Woollen Cup again, beating Hartshead Moor by three runs. The 1960s and early 1970s saw lots of money being spent on the ground - with four phases of ground extensions. The opening of the 1978 season saw Thornhill sign Colin Peacock, Staincliffe's opening batsman. He was one of three players who had shocked the Hatley club by leaving with only a few days to go before the start of the season. Only one of them came to Thornhill, though. The Thornhill clubhouse was extended again in 1985 - and today stands as a warm, welcoming and multi-purpose facility.

LEFT: Thornhill cricket team pictured in 1893. (NS)



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