

George Herbert Hirst

Mirfield Cricket Club

1891



by Patrick J.A. Neal

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Front Cover photo shows a young G.H. Hirst in his early Yorkshire CCC days and was taken about 1893.

Acknowledgements

A.A. Thomson, *Hirst and Rhodes* (1960)

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The Yorkshire Post – 1891 and 1954

Wisden Almanack – 1890, 1891, 1892, 1893, 1906 and 1955 – *Wisden* extracts are reproduced by kind permission of John Wisden & Co Ltd.

Yorkshire County Cricket Yearbooks

Cricket: A Weekly Record of the Game – 24 August 1893

I would like to thank the following people for their help, support and encouragement:

Lindsay Watkins, granddaughter of George Herbert, who has been of invaluable assistance with documents, photographs and memories.

Debbie Walker for her help with the Census records.

Dr Peter Davies and Robert Light of the Calderdale & Kirklees Cricket Heritage Project.

Hannah Morrison of Todmorden Library.

The staff of Dewsbury, Kirkheaton, Leeds City and Huddersfield libraries.

Andrew Hunt at *The Reporter*.

Staff at the *Spenborough Guardian*.

Clive Brook, President of Mirfield Cricket Club.

Christopher Lane, Managing Director of John Wisden & Co Ltd.

Terence Neal for proof reading.

Gill and John Neal for support and encouragement.

Foreword

Providence must have been wearing a smile as wide as that of George Herbert Hirst when I discovered, quite by accident and from a distance of 300 miles, that Patrick Neal was writing this book about my grandfather. The following weeks were exciting for both of us as we pooled our knowledge of his life and career.

Patrick has researched his subject meticulously, and his readers will find his enjoyment infectious. The very well-written (and occasionally quite comical) contemporary press reports of George Herbert's matches which he has found are greatly superior to what appears on today's sports pages. Particularly vivid is the *Dewsbury Reporter's* use of the word 'trundler' to describe a bowler! But all of these reporters interact with their readers in a way which is no longer seen in these days of television.

We are thus the beneficiaries of their descriptions. Patrick also provides a complete record of Mirfield's 1891 season and places the reports in their context, while also bringing out the many facets of George Herbert's life and personality. His book deserves to be read both as a fascinating record of the Mirfield season of 1891 and as an appreciation of the life of the greatest all-rounder of the Golden Age.

George Herbert Hirst was revered and loved within his family just as he was on the field. So I am very, very proud to have had the privilege of contributing to this book. May Mirfield Cricket Club have a most successful future, and many other gifted young players make it the start of their career.

Lindsay Watkins
February 2006

Some profits from the sale of this book are being donated to the Candlelighters Trust, Registered Charity No: 1045077 to support the work of the Regional Children & Adolescent Cancer Unit at St. James Hospital, Leeds.

Introduction

George Herbert Hirst was one of the greatest cricketers to wear the white rose of Yorkshire County Cricket Club and also to represent his country. He was one part of the famous 'Hirst and Rhodes' partnership of the Golden Age, but did you know that for one summer he played for Mirfield and played his first Championship match for Yorkshire while a Mirfield player?

I have been associated with Mirfield Cricket Club for twenty years and from time to time someone would mention that the great George Herbert Hirst probably played for Mirfield. Indeed there is a splendid picture of him in the pavilion and one also of Wilfred Rhodes whose association with Mirfield I found was predominantly off the pitch. He worked as a cleaner in the railway repairing sheds at Mirfield until as H.N. Pobjoy comments in his History of Mirfield: 'One day when he was due to play, with his friend George Hirst, in an important match at Lascelles Hall, Rhodes left work early without permission. For this he was sacked by the Railway.' Rhodes did turn out for Mirfield once on 26th June 1915 when County players were helping local clubs out during the Great War. He scored 28 and took one wicket in Mirfield's home game with Ossett.

So, one bored lunchtime I went onto the Internet and searched for George Herbert. Much to my delight I found a passage from Wisden in 1905 which mentioned that he played as a professional for Mirfield in 1891. With this information in hand, I decided to set out to uncover the facts about the 1891 season and what part Mirfield Cricket Club played in the story of the life of this great man. This book tells the story of George Herbert's season with our club.

I Life and times: ‘No one plays the game more earnestly’

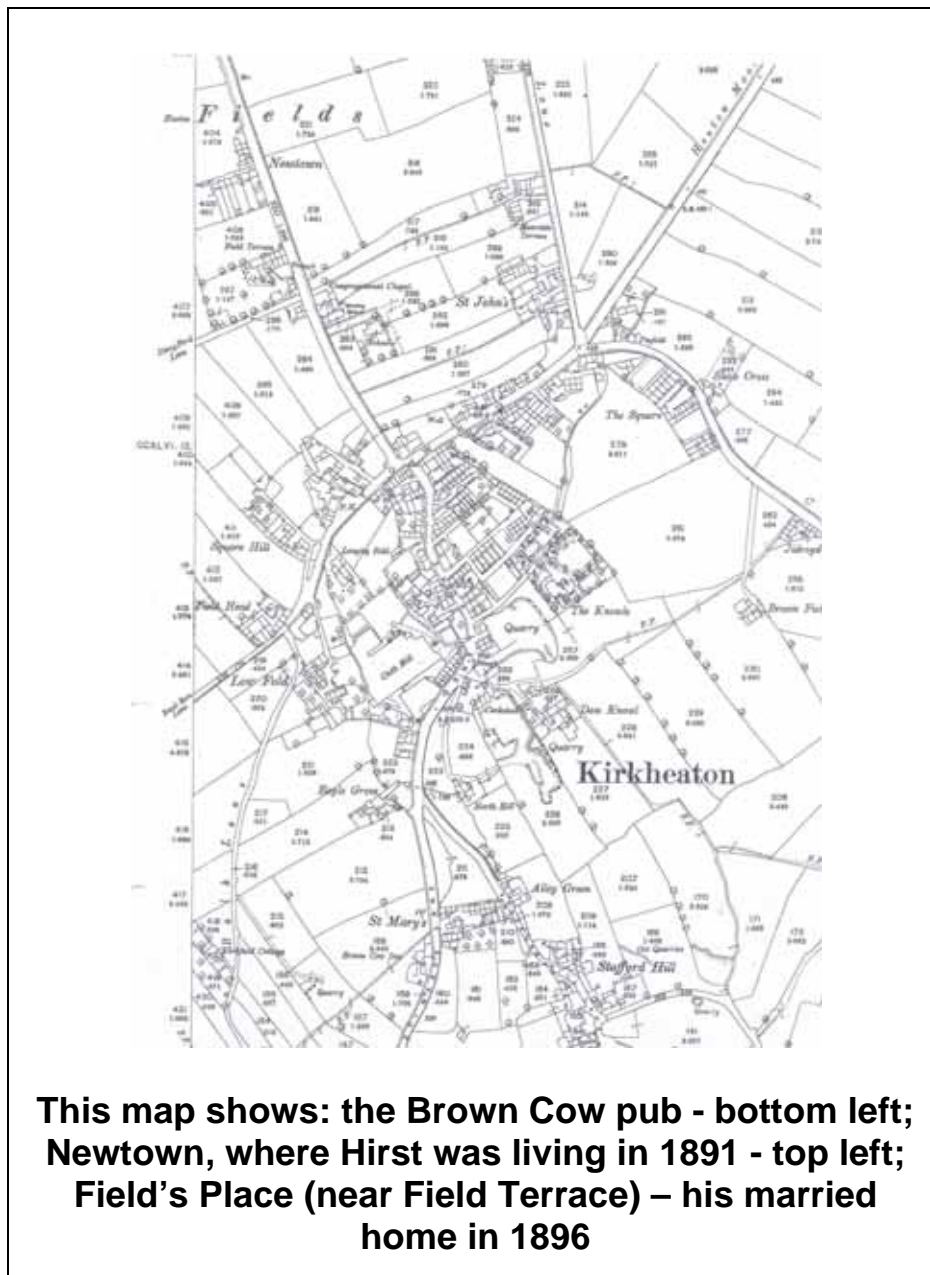


The Brown Cow pub (thanks to Kirklees Community History Service - taken from the ‘Images of Kirklees’)

George Herbert Hirst was born in nearby Kirkheaton on 7 September 1871 at the Brown Cow public house in St. Mary’s Lane. The pub was run by his mother’s parents James and Sarah Maria Hirst. James also farmed six acres attached to the pub.

George Herbert left school at the age of 10 and went to work as a wirer for a hand-loom weaver. He also helped his grandfather driving the cattle, but as his granddaughter says, he told her that he always ‘played cricket from noon till night otherwise’. He recalled in 1937, when asked to write a passage for a brochure to raise money for the new Kirkheaton pavilion: ‘At the Old Brown Cow Inn, there we boys played our cricket in the yard and the Intake field below...It would be about 1885 or 1886 when I joined (Kirkheaton). We lads practised cricket, football and knur and spell every spare moment we could get

after work. In fact, our parents said we lived at the ground. Practice with a ball makes the player – well we got our share.'



**This map shows: the Brown Cow pub - bottom left;
Newtown, where Hirst was living in 1891 - top left;
Field's Place (near Field Terrace) – his married
home in 1896**

Today, we have directives from the authorities on 'over-practising' and bowling youngsters. It obviously did not do the likes of George Herbert any harm! He played his first game for Kirkheaton 2nd XI away at Rastrick when he was 14. He remained in Kirkheaton, living at Field's Place with his wife Emma, whom he married in 1896 and their three children, James, Anne and Molly, before moving to Glebe Street, Marsh, Huddersfield, where he lived for the rest of his life.



Field's Place – then and now



Hirst died on 10 May 1954 at his home, 33 Glebe Street, aged 82 years. A.A. Thomson's book *Hirst and Rhodes* tells us: 'When George Herbert left school (and he left at the age of ten) he was employed as a wirer for a hand-loom weaver, working in a corner cottage at the bottom of the road that rises steeply towards Lascelles Hall. After that he worked in Robson's dye-works on the other side of the valley, and all the time he was playing cricket as a "Saturday man", first for Elland, then for Mirfield, and afterwards for Huddersfield. In the winter he played Rugby football and it would have been hard to find a sturdier full-back.'

In 1889 he had played his first game for Yorkshire when only 17. On 9 August he appeared against Cheshire in a second-class county game. The *Wisden* of 1890 relates: 'Yorkshire did not have a full side, and in the absence of two of their regular team, they gave trials to a lad named Hirst, a left-handed fast bowler from Kirkheaton and Mr H.B. Wilson, a member of the Huddersfield club, upon whose ground at Fartown the match was played.' George Herbert batted eleven and scored 6. In the first innings he took 3 for 35 from 22 overs as Cheshire were bowled out for 67. In the second innings he bowled 10 overs, no wickets for 8, but with 8 maiden overs as Cheshire made 33 for 3.

The *Huddersfield Daily Examiner* (9 August) noted his first wicket for Yorkshire:

This two days' fixture was commenced at Fartown, today in dull weather. The Yorkshire team included H.B. Wilson of the Huddersfield club and the youthful G.H. Hirst of Kirkheaton. The toss was won by Cheshire and the Yorkshiremen took the field at 12-5. The first pair of batsmen were Crankshaw and Wright who were opposed by Hirst (town end) and Peel (pavilion end). Hirst started with a maiden and off Peel's first delivery Wright was caught at the wicket by Hunter...the first contribution from Hirst came in his fourth over, a single to Davenport, who soon after placed him to the leg for four, but, with the total at 14, the youngster bowled Crankshaw who had made 5...rain began to fall heavily at about quarter past one and compelled the players to seek the shelter of the pavilion. No further play took place before luncheon.

On the following Monday, the *Huddersfield Daily Examiner* reported on his innings: 'Hunter was bowled and Hirst whipped in. Moorhouse off-drove Wright for 3, while Hirst, who batted admirably, got him to leg for a like amount...but before the end came Hirst had made his total to 6 by a cut for 2 and a single off Bretherton. The youngster was then caught at point for 6.' With time running out and Cheshire 125 runs behind, they could only hope for a draw. George Herbert bowled eight maidens in his 10 overs without luck but did

have a hand in one of the three wickets to fall. The reporter commented: 'Wright was cleverly run out by Wainwright and Hirst.'

In an interview entitled 'A Coming Bowler' given by George Herbert at Fartown in August of 1893 to a publication called *Cricket: A Weekly Record of the Game*, he tells how he came to play in the match: 'But it was not while [the common Yorkshire word for 'until'] 1889 that I got to be known outside my club. In that year Kirkheaton won the Huddersfield Cricket Cup and as I had done my share in the matches, I was asked to play for somebody who couldn't turn up in the match, Yorkshire against Cheshire, on this very ground.'

Indeed, Kirkheaton had beaten Cliffe End to win the Lumb Cup by five wickets and George Herbert had taken 5 for 23 as Cliffe End were bowled out for 58. He goes on to relate how he fared, but whether due to modesty he forgets he even bowled: 'None too well, I scored an innings of six runs, and I didn't bowl a ball. I suppose I was, as you say, a bit nervous, not funky exactly, but I was so well known on this ground, and a few friends turned up specially to see how I should shape, that it was not to be wondered at if I did next to nothing.'

In 1890, he played two second class county games for Yorkshire. On 6 and 7 June he played against Staffordshire at Stoke-on-Trent. Staffordshire made 71 and 167 and Yorkshire 375 for 7 declared. George Herbert did not bat but bowled 10 overs taking 1 for 20 in the first innings and 12 overs, 0 for 30 in the second innings. On 27 and 28 June he played at Leyton against Essex. Yorkshire made 74 and 140, George Herbert scoring 5 and 5 not out. Essex scored 192 but as *Wisden* 1891 relates: 'Rain robbed the home team of victory in this match, preventing them going in to get the requisite 23 runs'. George Herbert bowled eight overs, none for 17 in the first innings.

The following year, while a Mirfield player, he made his full Yorkshire Championship debut against Somersetshire at Taunton and then broke into the side in 1892 where he missed just a few games. *Wisden* in 1893 commented: 'At the start of the season a good deal was expected of Hirst, a young bowler with a nice action, straight and quick. In one or two matches his success was quite remarkable, but his natural ability was not assisted by any considerable degree of judgement.'

Indeed the following season was to see George Herbert really make a mark as Yorkshire won the Championship. He told *Cricket: A Weekly Record of the Game*: 'This year has been my best in batting and bowling, and I am delighted that our county is right up at the top. Perhaps my best work was up at Lord's when I took twelve wickets – six in each innings – for 48 runs; but I was even prouder of what I did against Surrey for they have such a lot of fine hitters; I got eight of them out for 55 runs, and four Notts men for 11 runs when we got the whole side out for 38 down at Trent Bridge. But I want to do better still. Shouldn't I like to turn out a second Tom Emmett!' The interviewer was

obviously won over by George Herbert and commented: 'There is something in his honest, genial frank face one likes; you feel instinctively he will put on no "side" and that he will tell you all you have any business to know, though his looks indicate that he would be thankful when the operation was over.' He ended his column with what later could have been said as an understated prediction! 'With age, strength and sturdy self-control on his side, Hirst may before long prove to be worthy of a place on the list of great Yorkshire bowlers'.

In his early Yorkshire days Hirst was seen primarily as a bowler but as the seasons progressed so did his batting. His career statistics for the county make amazing reading. Between 1891 and 1921 he played in ten County Championship-winning sides. He played 717 matches, scoring 32,024 runs at an average of 34.73. He scored 56 centuries, his first being at Bristol against a Gloucestershire team led by W.G. Grace in 1894. His top score was 341 against Leicestershire in 1905. This is still a Yorkshire record individual score. A.A. Thomson recalls, 'When Hirst went in Yorkshire were 22 for 3 wickets; when he was out, so to speak, three centuries later, they had reached 515. He was at the crease for seven hours...only two other men made 20. In this mammoth effort he hit a six and 53 fours...the scorers must have been as tired as he.'

Hirst took 2,481 wickets at an average of 18.02. Only Wilfred Rhodes has taken more (and played in 76 more games). He took two hat-tricks and on four occasions took nine wickets in an innings with a best haul of 9 for 23 versus Lancashire in 1910. He took 518 catches and completed the double (1,000 runs and 100 wickets) on 14 occasions. In 1906 he became the only man in history to complete the double-double of 2,000 runs and 200 wickets. He scored 2,385 runs and took 208 wickets. A.A. Thomson recalls the story told to him by George Herbert's younger sister of the day at Scarborough when he took the two hundredth wicket:

Among the thousands of spectators who went to the Festival game for the pleasure of seeing Hirst get his two-hundredth wicket were two elderly ladies who had a vested interest in the matter. One was his mother; the other was Wilfred Rhodes's mother. The desired result was slow in coming. Hirst bowled wholeheartedly, as he always did, but the batsmen defended with obstinacy and some good fortune...the tension mounted. At last the strain grew so great that neither of the ladies could bear it a moment longer. There was only one thing to do and that was to get as far away as possible from this intolerable stress of waiting. Quietly they slipped from their seats and made their way slowly through the massed crowds towards an exit. They were a little breathless as they walked slowly down the North Marine Road. Suddenly from behind them a roar of cheering broke, swelled, and

went rolling up into the sky. George Herbert had taken his two-hundredth wicket. And they had missed the sight of it.

Hirst made his Test match debut against Australia in Sydney on 13 December 1897. England won by nine wickets as George Herbert scored 62 in the first innings score of 551 all out. However, he remained wicket-less, taking 0 for 57 in the first innings and 0 for 49 when Australia were forced to follow on. It must have been a great honour to go with the touring party to Australia but his granddaughter, Lindsay, informed me that he was dreadfully seasick and on both tours to Australia he had to travel by land to Marseilles so that some of the sea journey could be avoided, especially the Bay of Biscay. He played his 24th and final Test at Old Trafford, Manchester on 26-28 July 1909 in a drawn match.

It is interesting to note that if he had played 12 years of Test cricket in modern times he probably would have played nearer 100 tests! Twenty-one of the Tests were against Australia and three against South Africa. But in those 24 tests he took 59 wickets at an average of 30.00, with best figures of 5 for 48. He scored five fifties and scored 790 runs at an average of 22.57.

In 1901 he was made one of the five *Wisden* Cricketers of the Year and the following passage is taken from the Almanack:

GEORGE H. HIRST was born at Kirkheaton, on September 7th 1871. He joined the village club about 1885 and remained connected with it until 1889, in which year the eleven carried off the Lumb Challenge Cup. In the cup ties Hirst did very well as a bowler, and made so good an impression that late in the season he was given a trial for Yorkshire at Huddersfield against Cheshire. In this, his first appearance in anything like good class cricket, he took two wickets but only scored about a half a dozen runs, his batting powers at that time being quite undeveloped. In 1890 he had a professional engagement at Elland, and in 1891 at Mirfield. Then in 1892 he became associated with Huddersfield, and his real career commenced. With local cricket at Huddersfield it may be added he kept up a close connection, till the Yorkshire Committee stopped the members of the county eleven from taking club engagements.

It was in 1892 that Hirst became known to the general public, his first match being for Yorkshire against the M.C.C. at Lord's. Without doing anything sensational he yet showed such capital form, both as bowler and batsman, that no good judge who saw the game could doubt that an all-round player of far more than ordinary promise had come forward. He took four wickets for 29 and two for 58, and though so little was thought of his batting that he was sent in last in the first innings, he scored 20 and not out 43. He was then less than twenty-one years of age, but in appearance a

small Hercules, and it was quite certain that whether or not his skill as a cricketer developed, he would never fail for want of strength or stamina. The present writer happens to remember the match very well, and can recall vividly the energy with which Hirst bowled at the late William Banes, compelling that brilliant batsman, who scored 61 and 71, to play in each innings an unusually strict game.

Still, though his first appearance was such a success, Hirst did not as a batsman do much for Yorkshire in 1892, only scoring in twenty-two matches 243 runs, with an average of ten. Though he tired before the summer was over and lost his place in the eleven, he bowled up to a certain point with excellent results, and in all matches for the county, took 69 wickets for just over 16 runs apiece. In the first-class county matches, however, only seventeen wickets fell to him. For some time after his first season Hirst's career was one of steady progress rather than of brilliant achievement. He proved quite worthy of his place in the Yorkshire eleven, but met with no startling success. Even so early as the season of 1894, however, he made a score of 115 not out, and thus gave an unmistakeable indication that, as afterwards proved to be the case, he would win fame more as a batsman than as a bowler.

In 1895, his batting suffered a temporary decline, but he probably bowled better than in any previous or subsequent season, taking 130 wickets for Yorkshire in first-class county matches alone, and 150 wickets for the county in all engagements. In 1896 his position among the leading professionals of the day was firmly established, as in that year he performed the double feat of scoring over a thousand runs in first-class matches, and taking more than a hundred wickets. To be quite exact he made 1122 runs with an average of 28, and took 104 wickets at a cost of something over 21½ runs each. From that time Hirst has only once looked back, but while he has developed enormously as a batsman he has paid the penalty for getting so many more runs by taking fewer wickets, and at the present time he is more of a change than a standard bowler for Yorkshire, having now and then his deadly days, but not bowling with consistent success in match after match.

In the winter of 1897-98 he went out to Australia with Mr. Stoddart's second team, but it cannot be said that he did himself justice in the Colonies. In the eleven a side matches he only scored 338 runs with an average of 28, and his bowling was so utterly ineffective on the beautiful grounds at Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide, that the nine wickets he took cost him over 75 runs each. He was not in particularly good form when he came back to England, and apart from a score of 130 not out he had a poor season for Yorkshire in 1898, but a year later he was quite himself again, batting better for Yorkshire than he had ever batted before. In all matches

for the county he scored 1546 runs with an average of 37, only F. S. Jackson and Brown being in front of him. In 1899, moreover, he had the distinction of being picked for England at Trent Bridge in the first of the five test matches against the Australians. Unfortunately he met with no success either as batsman or bowler, but his fielding was so superb as to almost justify his selection.

What he did last summer will be found fully set forth in the Almanack in the section devoted to Yorkshire. A better man in a county team than Hirst is at the present time not easy to find. No one plays the game more earnestly, or works more strenuously for his side. Blessed with any amount of pluck and confidence he is just the man to do his best under difficult conditions, and there is scarcely a batsman in England who can hit with greater power and dash on a wicket spoilt by rain. What he can do in the way of pulling on slow wickets must indeed be seen to be believed. His bowling, as we have said, has declined with the advance of his batting, but his fielding remains perfect. It is no exaggeration to describe him as the very best mid-off in the county.

George Herbert's first-class career has been described in full detail in various books especially A.A. Thomson's 1959 book called *Hirst and Rhodes*. So I will not go into great detail but simply include the obituary published in *Wisden* in 1955, the year after his death.

George Hirst, who died at his Huddersfield home a few miles from his birthplace, Kirkheaton, on May 10, aged 82, was one of the most illustrious cricketers who graced the Golden Age. On the 24 occasions on which he played for England, Hirst achieved only a few noteworthy performances, but such was his prowess with bat and ball for Yorkshire in a career spanning forty years that Lord Hawke described him as the greatest county cricketer of all time. Certainly this blunt, outspoken man of extreme buoyancy and cheerfulness brought such a tenacity to the game that no match in which he figured was won or lost till the last ball was bowled. Small wonder, therefore, that in Yorkshire he was an unchallenged hero, and throughout the length and breadth of England his popularity stood unrivalled.

Figures alone tell only part of the story of Hirst, but they show unmistakably his supreme prowess as an all-round cricketer in the fullest meaning of the phrase. Between his first county game for Yorkshire in 1889 and his last in 1929, Hirst scored 36,203 runs, average 34.05, and took 2,727 wickets, average 18.77; at his peak friends and opponents alike recognised him as the best mid-off in the country, with a pair of hands so sure that a considerable proportion of his 550 catches were made from scorching drives in a period when strong driving was an essential

component in every batsman's game. The measure of Hirst's ability is best reflected in that he accomplished the double feat of 1,000 runs and 100 wickets fourteen times, a number surpassed only by his renowned contemporary, Wilfred Rhodes (16), and that he alone made 2,000 runs and took 200 wickets in a season, which he did in 1906. His figures were 2,385 runs and 208 wickets. Years afterwards, when asked if he thought his record might be broken, Hirst made an answer typifying his whole approach. With a twinkle in his eye, he replied: 'I don't know, but whoever does it will be very tired'. Yet, through the years, he himself showed little evidence of fatigue. Only a very fit man, such as he was, could have reached 1,000 runs in 19 seasons and taken 100 wickets in fifteen different years.

The people of Kirkheaton and the surrounding areas almost lived for cricket and from an early age Hirst, born on September 7, 1871, showed that he would be a player of more than ordinary skill. He became associated with Huddersfield when 18 and before his 19th birthday his first ambition, that of playing for Yorkshire, was realised. Hirst was fond of recalling that in those days his equipment, which he carried to the ground in a canvas bag, was worth no more than ten shillings, that he wore a shilling cap, a sixpenny belt and brown boots. Success in county cricket came slowly, but after some seasons of quiet progress, he established himself in 1896 by scoring 1,122 runs and taking 104 wickets. Thenceforward he gathered strength as he went along. Of his 60 first-class centuries, all but four were played for Yorkshire, his highest being 341 - still a county record - against Leicestershire in 1905. Leicestershire suffered particularly from his bowling as well as from his batting. Twice he did the hat-trick against them, once in a match in 1907 in which he took 15 wickets, his greatest success in one game. Five times Hirst bowled unchanged through a match, Rhodes being his partner on three occasions and Schofield Haigh on the other two, and twice he took three wickets in four balls.

The combination of Hirst and Rhodes was feared as much by batsmen as that of Peel and Briggs, Gregory and McDonald and, in later years, Grimmett and O'Reilly. In the 1902 Test match at Birmingham, Hirst and Rhodes bowled out Australia for 36 runs, their lowest total in any Test. Rhodes took seven wickets for 17, and Hirst three for 15. This was the most memorable joint feat of Hirst and Rhodes, but in the next match the Australians met Yorkshire, who put them out for 23 (Hirst five for 9 runs and F.S. Jackson five for 12). Another Yorkshire bowling triumph in which Hirst played a notable part occurred in 1908 when he and Schofield Haigh dismissed Northamptonshire for 27 and 15, Hirst taking twelve wickets for 19 runs and Haigh six for 19.

On his two tours to Australia, with A.E. Stoddart's team in 1897-98, and P. F. Warner's side in 1903-04, Hirst did not realise English hopes but he played a conspicuous role in a dramatic victory over Australia at The Oval in 1902. When Hirst, who scored 58 not out in the final innings, was joined by the last man, his lifelong friend and colleague, Rhodes, England required 15 to win. The story has been passed on that, as Rhodes met him on the way to the wicket, Hirst confidently murmured: 'We'll get 'em in singles, Wilfred' - which they proceeded to do. Whether true or not, that is the type of remark Hirst would have made. One last instance of his versatility; in 1906 he scored two centuries and took eleven wickets in the match against Somerset at Bath.

Essentially a self-taught batsman, Hirst frequently gave of his best when the pitch afforded help to bowlers. His remarkable quickness of eye and feet enabled him to develop the hook and pull strokes so well that some bowlers complained that they found exceeding difficulty in bowling to him anything except a yorker which he did not treat as a long-hop. His liking for the hook was costly only in Australia. By contrast to his right-handed batting, Hirst was a natural left-arm bowler, a shade faster than medium. After a long bounding run, he delivered with a free, easy action and he often made the new ball swerve and dip into the batsman so late that many of his victims confessed themselves as suspecting that they had been thrown out from cover. Hirst, in fact, has been described as the father of all modern seam and swing bowling. Before he showed its possibilities, bowlers rubbed the new ball in the dirt to take off the polish.

Hirst, short and thick-set, found perpetual pleasure in every game he played and captains such as Sir Pelham Warner have testified that they could not have wished for a better man to be in their teams. Both as a player and as a personality, none could speak too highly of him. Sir Pelham has said that when things were going wrong on tour Hirst was first to come to the aid of everybody with his ready wit.

When Hirst was given a benefit by Yorkshire in 1904 he received a sum of £3,703, a remarkable figure in those days. Seventeen years later a testimonial for him produced £700. Virtually that came at the finish of his active career, for he became coach at Eton College in 1921, but he played occasionally for Yorkshire for another eight years. During his 18 years at Eton, Hirst endeared himself to hundreds of young cricketers who benefited from his kindly guidance, and nothing was more fitting than that M.C.C. should include him in the 26 professionals whom they honoured in 1949 with Honorary Life Membership.

Cricket was George Hirst's life and less than a year before his death he sat with Rhodes, now sightless, while England recovered from a seemingly hopeless position against Australia at the Leeds ground on which he

himself so often stood in the breach. In 1921 George Herbert retired from first class cricket and became cricket coach at Eton until 1938. The rest of his life was devoted to coaching and umpiring. Throughout his life he always kept contact with his village club at Kirkheaton, playing when available.

In 1896 after his professional season was run, Hirst turned out at the end of the season along with Wilfred Rhodes and helped Kirkheaton win the Huddersfield & District championship by playing in the last four games. In the two games against Golcar (who were bowled out for 19) and Primrose Hill (bowled out for 23), he took a combined 10 wickets for 13. Rhodes took a combined 10 for 23. On 30 April 1904 the pair played their part in a remarkable win over Slaithwaite. Slaithwaite were bowled out for only 9 runs! George Herbert taking 5 for 2 and Rhodes 4 for 3 and there were four extras. Hirst held the position of President of the club from around 1920 until his death and oversaw a Sykes Cup and League double in 1926 and Sykes Cup win in 1945. He also helped purchase the ground in 1921 for £375. In 1937 it was decided to build a new pavilion at the Kirkheaton ground known as Bankfield. It was to be dedicated to the village's great sons Hirst and Rhodes. A booklet was sold for 1/- showing Hirst and Rhodes' achievements in raising money for the building. However, it was not until 26 August 1950 that the two elderly gentlemen laid two foundation stones on either side of the main door using silver trowels.



The Hirst & Rhodes pavilion at Kirkheaton CC



The foundation stone at Kirkheaton CC's pavilion

The *Yorkshire Evening Post* commented: 'Villagers of Yetton, as Kirkheaton is called, are not usually given to hero worship. In this typical Yorkshire village they call a spade a spade, yet they realize that to Hirst and Rhodes tribute is due.' The pavilion was completed in 1953. In A.A. Thomson's book, a local 'Yettoner' told the author that the stones were laid by left-handed bricklayers. Hirst enjoyed his family life and was a loving father and grandfather.

His granddaughter Lindsay informed me that he was an excellent tenor and his daughters Molly and Anne used to accompany him on the piano, which had been given to him by Yorkshire County Cricket Club. He enjoyed his pipe and loved to listen to *Mrs Dale's Diary* on the radio. He loved his garden at Glebe Street at which he lived from 1908 until his death in 1954.



The house in Glebe Street where Hirst lived and died

II 1891 – Hirst of Mirfield CC

Cast your mind back 114 years to the year 1891 when Queen Victoria was in her early seventies and nearing the end of her glorious reign. The Conservative Party was in power with the 3rd Marquess of Salisbury the Prime Minister and the Liberals, under the leadership of William Ewart Gladstone, were in opposition. The Factory Act was passed, changing the minimum age of a child being able to work in a factory from ten to eleven! Horseless carriages still had to have a man walk in front waving a red flag. It was a year when Britain was linked to Europe for the first time by telephone and the first Crufts Dog Show was held. In sport the first French Tennis Open was staged. The Census was undertaken in March (now an invaluable tool for historians tracing their family trees). The Football League was only three years old. In cricket, Yorkshire County Cricket Club played their first ever match at Headingley, entertaining Derbyshire in a county game in June. Surrey won the County Championship with Yorkshire a poor eighth. It was the first year of the Huddersfield Cricket League. There was no Test cricket played but W.G. Grace would lead the MCC to Australia in December where they would lose the Ashes 2-1 in 1892.

In Mirfield in 1891 the main event, according to Pobjoy, appears to have been work at the Mirfield Colliery Company's coalmine where a new shaft was sunk near the King's Head inn which connected the mine workings in Dark Lane, giving a means of escape in an emergency. It is believed that Mirfield Cricket Club was based in 1891 at a ground on what is now the corner of Pinfold Lane and Crowlees Road. This ground was used until 1895 when the London & North Western Railway Company turned them out by building their new line from Heddon Lodge to Wortley straight through the ground.



**The site of the 1891 Mirfield ground –
as it is today (Crowlees Road)**



The junction of Crowless Road (right) and Pinfold Lane (left) – close to where the old ground used to stand



The site of the old Mirfield ground in 1893

George Herbert Hirst had played cricket for his local village club Kirkheaton before turning to be a professional in 1890 when he played for Elland. In 1891 he travelled over the hill to Mirfield. In his interview for *Cricket: A Weekly Record* in 1893 he tells of his early days in club cricket and how they helped shape his game:

I went to Elland first, then to Mirfield, and lastly to Huddersfield, where last year and this I have been engaged. Besides cricket, I am very fond of football [rugby], and played as centre three quarter for Mirfield. But I like cricket best. And by joining other clubs I learned something. You know what a lot of good cricket there is in these local clubs of ours; why, nearly all our county players belong to one or more of them and help them in the Saturday matches whenever we can get off, so from time to time I met our best batsmen and bowlers. And I found out that you must suit your bowling to the batsman, and to the state of the wicket as well, and in that way my bowling improved. That's the reason, I suppose, why at last I got into the county eleven, for which I played most of last season.

In 1891 the Census taken in March tells us that George Herbert was living in the area known as New Town in Kirkheaton. He lived with his parents John and Mary Berry, who had eventually married along with his brother. He was aged 19 and was employed as a cotton dyer.



The house with the conservatory is where Hirst lived at New Town

His first game appears to have been at home to Marsden on Saturday 25 April, where he scored 24 runs in a total of 62. Marsden scored 104 for 7 in reply, George Herbert taking three wickets. The *Dewsbury District News* reported on the match, even giving him the wrong initials: 'The Mirfield team are this year strengthened by the presence of J.H. Hirst who is acting as professional. On Saturday he opened his account with a well earned 24 before Wrigley displaced his stumps.' The paper also gives an insight into the Mirfield club which obviously had been through a tough time: 'English is again included in the team. A few seasons ago he did wonderful work along with E. Fleetwood. These two lifted the club a little out of the mire into which it had seemed to have fallen. This year a great gap in Mirfield ranks, owing to the loss the club has sustained by the death of Mr. H. Ibberson, a sterling batsman, who played with great confidence and skill. He was of the greatest service to the club. Another player of the best credentials was also absent on Saturday, I mean H.C. Walker, one of the prettiest bats in the district; his presence gives a great amount of confidence to the players.' The *Huddersfield Examiner* wrote: 'None of them was able to stand against Wrigley's bowling, except G.H. Hirst, whose 24 was got by some fine hitting'.

The following, Saturday 2 May, in a game that Mirfield won, scoring 78 against Horbury's 61 for 4, he had a quiet match, scoring a duck and taking two wickets. The *Dewsbury District News* comments on another new addition to the team: 'Hirst and Jones shared the wickets. I am informed that Jones is a very good man and has joined the club owing to his having obtained work in the district.' On the same day the *Huddersfield Examiner* reported on a remarkable game between Dewsbury & Savile and Bradford. Dewsbury & Savile, 'a club which according to some of their supporters ought to supply half the county team', were dismissed for only 2 runs!

The following Saturday, however, Hirst really made his mark against Heckmondwike. Heckmondwike were bowled out for 49 as George Herbert took eight wickets (all bowled) and took a catch. Mirfield scored 51 for 2 to win the game. The *Dewsbury Reporter* dated 16 May commented: 'Heckmondwike without A.E. Gledhill, one of their best bats, and Donald Jewett of football renown, suffered a crushing defeat at Mirfield. Hirst, who did so well with Kirkheaton before he came out as a professional was very destructive. He clean bowled eight of his opponents at little cost. He had a hand too in getting out the ninth man and the tenth was run out. Not one of the visitors could make anything of a stand against him.' The *Dewsbury District News* was equally impressed: 'Hirst was in such form that they were quite unable to stand against his deliveries, he clean bowled eight of his opponents for 13 runs. This is showing that the high words spoken of his capabilities as a bowler are about to be fulfilled. An eyewitness in giving me some idea of his bowling says that such a performance has not been witnessed on the Mirfield ground for some

years. He was simply unplayable. He also had a hand in the ninth dismissal as he caught Parker off Muschamp.'

The *Huddersfield Examiner*, which did not report on Mirfield games unless they were playing against Huddersfield-based sides, however, were keen to report on George Herbert's progress, he being a Kirkheaton lad. They stated: 'I was glad to see that Hirst, the Kirkheaton crack left hand bowler, had done so well for Mirfield on Saturday. He clean bowled eight of the Heckmondwike men, and caught the ninth...Mirfield won with eight wickets in hand before the rain came down.' The scorecard makes interesting viewing.

Mirfield v. Heckmondwike – Saturday 9 May 1891

Heckmondwike innings

Smith		b.Hirst	4
Kitcheson		b.Hirst	7
Pearson		b.Hirst	3
Archer		b.Hirst	1
Slater		b.Hirst	0
Jowett		b.Hirst	0
Crowther		run out	3
Clough		b.Hirst	7
Brailford		Not Out	8
Parker	ct Hirst	b.Muschamp	2
Dulton		b.Hirst	0
		Extras:	14
		<u>Total:</u>	49

As I uncovered the matches mostly through the *Dewsbury Reporter* and the Dewsbury District News newspapers it was quickly noticeable how low the scores were in the matches compared to nowadays. The games of course were not limited in overs and played over one afternoon. However, sides in all games were being bowled out very cheaply.

On 16 May Mirfield lost to Dudley Hill by one run, scoring 74 in reply to Dudley Hill's 75. George Herbert scored seven runs and picked up five wickets. During the Whitsun holiday week on Tuesday 19 May Mirfield entertained Roberttown. Unfortunately, this appears to have gone unreported by the local press. It may have been that the result did not make the print run for the papers sold on the Saturday and then the following week would appear old news. From the evidence of the game later in the season and the full averages obtained we can be pretty sure that Mirfield won the match and that George Herbert did not bat but took six wickets. In fact, George Herbert played on the Monday and Wednesday of Whit week for Kirkheaton. On the Monday he scored 13 and took four wickets as they defeated Dalton by 51 runs and on

the Wednesday he scored 10 in their innings of 209 for 6 and followed this up with four wickets, as Spen Victoria were bowled out for 77.

The following week away at Staincliffe the *Dewsbury Reporter* commented: 'Hirst was seen to great advantage with the ball. He took seven wickets at a very low average; later Hirst hit well for 20'. The *Dewsbury District News* reported: 'Staincliffe batted first and found Hirst in magnificent form with the leather. Hirst captured seven wickets at a trifling cost.' *The Dewsbury Chronicle & West Riding Advertiser* observed: 'In the trundling department Hirst was in his best form and seven of the homesters had to retire through his efforts.' Staincliffe were bowled out for 50 and Mirfield scored 80 for 3.

On 30 May Mirfield entertained Dewsbury & Savile. Their ground at Savile Town was being used for the Yorkshire versus Sussex county game. It was reported by the *Dewsbury Reporter* that after the county game Lord Hawke told one committee man that it was the best ground he had played on. The crack team of the area however struggled, as evidenced by the *Dewsbury Reporter*. 'A strong Dewsbury & Savile side played Mirfield. The bowling of G.H. Hirst was too good to be trifled with. Six wickets to his credit for just 16 runs. Hirst was to the front in the batting department also and mainly due to his play Mirfield's splendid victory was due. He played with much dash whilst compiling his 56, which was the only double figure score on his side'. The *Huddersfield Examiner* went on: 'Cricketers in this district will be glad to see how well Hirst, the Kirkheaton left hander is doing at Mirfield. On Saturday, he played with them against Dewsbury and in addition to the fine bowling performance of getting six wickets for 16 runs he made 56 out of a total of 92, the only man in his side to get double figures.' Dewsbury & Savile scored 55 all out with Mirfield scoring 92 and George Herbert had scored his first half-century for the club.

On 6 June Mirfield easily defeated King Cross of Halifax, Mirfield scoring 70 with George Herbert only scoring four, but he took four wickets as King Cross were bowled out for 35. The following Saturday George Herbert was back in the news as Mirfield travelled to Heckmondwike. The home side were skittled for 38. The *Dewsbury District News* reported the improvement in Mirfield's play and Hirst's great bowling performance, taking 7 for 5 and a hat-trick, and the modest response to it all of George Herbert:

A decided improvement is notable in the play of Mirfield this season. On Saturday they went to Heckmondwike and defeated that club in a most decisive manner. Some excellent bowling on the part of Hirst, the Mirfield professional. Hirst's deliveries have a peculiar way of imitating greased lightning (if such a thing could exist) as they leave the pitch and on Saturday the Heckmondwike people were completely foiled at every turn of the game...Hirst obtained the magnificent analysis of seven wickets for five

runs and dismissed three men in successive balls. This had not been noticed at first as the first fell from the last ball of an over and the other two from the first balls in the succeeding over and it was not until one of the spectators desired the affair to be settled that it was found to be. Hirst with his usual retiring disposition had not made any outcry. He evidently did not want that talent money.

Again the *Huddersfield Examiner* delighted in their local lad's heroics: 'GH Hirst, the Kirkheaton left hander, did another good thing for Mirfield, the club with which he is engaged. Against Heckmondwike he had no fewer than 7 wickets, all clean bowled.' The *Dewsbury Chronicle & West Riding Advertiser* said: 'Heckmondwike seem in poor form this season...the trundling of Hirst for Mirfield was very testing, he secured no less than seven wickets.' The *Dewsbury Reporter* merely stated of the game: 'Heckmondwike never appeared to settle against the trundling of Hirst who bowled seven. He and Jones bowled throughout the innings.'

The trundling description of George Herbert's bowling seems to be a trait of the reporter who uses this description a lot but when looking into the meaning of the word to trundle it appears that 'trundle' was used instead of the words 'to bowl' in early cricketing times. It is also the first reference to G.H. Jones, who you will see seems to have formed a formidable partnership with George Herbert for Mirfield during the season. It soon becomes 'Hirst and Jones' and a good prequel to 'Hirst and Rhodes'.

On 20 June Mirfield entertained Halifax. Halifax amassed 150 with George Herbert taking three wickets and two catches. In reply he retired for nought as Mirfield ended on 60 for 6 to draw the game. I was delighted to find in the *Dewsbury District News* a full report on the game by one of their cricket correspondents simply named 'Wanderer' who visited a different match each weekend. This is the full report by 'Wanderer', which gives a great insight into the Mirfield club of 1891. It shows that times may not change, with one man being captain, secretary and treasurer! A poor fielding performance leaving Mirfield with little time to win the game and George Herbert feeling the effects of the sun!

On Saturday I wended my way towards the Mirfield enclosure to witness the doings of this now famous eleven and to see them make the Halifax eleven climb down. Unfortunately, Halifax were not in a climbing down humour, though the weather was melting. On arriving at the ground I was fairly 'capped' to see such a large number of spectators present, and later I spoke to one of the supporters of the club and remarked upon the large attendance. 'Yes' he said 'the gate amounts to £4 9s today, but I remember

one season about nine years ago when it only amounted to 36s for the whole year'. A decided improvement, eh?

The clubs were both strongly represented, the visitors have three professionals with them, viz J. Lister, an old Birstallite, T. Barstow and J. Hamilton. The latter is really a Halifax native but is engaged with the Spalding club as professional this year. Being on a visit to Halifax he assisted his old club.

Having heard of the wonderful bowling performances of Hirst, the Mirfield pro, I ascertained his doings in that department and found that for this season up to last Saturday he had taken 48 wickets for 151 runs, a rattling good performance. He is undoubtedly a great acquisition to the team as a good all-round fellow.

The two captains Oldroyd and Wilkinson having participated in that questionable habit of tossing the coin, and the home captain coming out second best, the visitors decided to bat, and literally did bat (or swipe) in oceans of luck. By the way I am told that the genial skipper of the home eleven, that slim gentleman, you know has almost innumerable offices to fill and does his work admirably. The kind hearted are always sat on, or put on sometimes in a threefold manner. Lister and Hamilton opened the batting with a heavy onslaught upon the enemy's bowling. With the score at six or thereabouts, the first wicket should have fallen to Hirst, but Muschamp's fingers were not smeared with bird-lime. Jones was proving very expensive, the more so as the fielding was not A1. Good old Wilkinson missed Hamilton when he had scored 13, but the ball was very low and bending is laborious sometimes. Muschamp thought that if he couldn't catch then he could bowl, and took the place of Jones. Hirst gave way to English and Dransfield appreciated the change by catching Hamilton the first wicket [why wasn't it the fourth?] having produced 61.

The first two bowlers resumed and Oldroyd's first ball from Hirst made him think his fingers were off. This bowler also wakened Lister. Two or three batsmen dropped their furniture rather when Hirst took possession. Shortly after Lister had earned his sovereign, he lost Oldroyd. Barstow fell prey to the alertness of Ellis before he had scored and now the outlook became brighter. This is no pun, nor does it refer to the weather.

Who said Wilkinson could not catch? I never wish to see him take a better than that which dismissed Lister off Hirst. Wasn't there a yell when it was safely held? Another inch and all would have been over. Good old Captain! Good old Secretary! and Good old Treasurer! Sutcliffe followed, but Walker immediately knocked his central peg clean out. Barlow I was informed is the luckiest fellow in creation, and I believe he is, as for while 13 runs were added he had three lives. Wilkinson and Jones then went on, and I was startled with a cry of vast dimensions. It appeared that Ellis had caused the

Hey and mightily to fall. The next two wickets fell for the addition of one run, an English man being about. Jones was determined to have Murgatroyd's blood or wood and tried all ways to get him out, but after all had to bowl him out. Fletcher and Myers proved stayers and it was not until the former sent a tame to Hirst that the innings was closed for 150 or about 80 more than they should have reached. The fielding of the home eleven somewhat imitated that which our county has been adopting lately. Ellis at point did one or two smart things and again when he displaced Shaw behind the stumps his catching of Barstow and stumping of Hey being very fine. Muschamp's mistake cost his side at least 61 runs which is rather expensive; while Hamilton put on 11 after Wilkinson missed him. Hirst's bowling – and by the way he got the *Sunday Chronicle's* bowling prize for his Heckmondwike display – was accomplished with terrific force, no man being to tell twice to throw down his bat if he was hit. The bowling analysis was

Hirst 21 overs 3 mdns 35 runs 3 wickets

Jones 19-2-53-4

English 3-0-12-1

Walker 5-1-12-1

Muschamp 7-0-25-0

Wilkinson 2-0-3-1

With an hour and a quarter wherein to rub off the runs Walker and Shaw journeyed to the wickets and opposed Barstow and Hamilton. Shaw opened the account by driving Barstow for two, which led a spectator to remark 'they nobbut want 149 to win'. Good old spectator!...Walker was unfortunately caught by Hamilton low at short slip, with the score at three. Jones joined Shaw and then one of the silliest things ever seen on a cricket field took place and one which deservedly lost Shaw his wicket. He drove the ball slightly past cover point but would not run at first. He afterwards balked Jones who returned to his wicket, but Shaw getting off a second time found the ball quick returned and was run out. I could not have thought that such a downright foolish trick could have been done by an adult cricketer. But we live and learn and as folks grow older they sometimes appear more foolish. Jones was not to blame at all and had Shaw responded to his call at first all would have been well.

Ill-luck dogged the steps or the wickets of the home team and Dransfield was sent back for nothing, which he would perhaps find. With three wickets down for 4 Hirst essayed to alter affairs and Jones evoked loud laughter by having to lie full length on the ground to peer between the legs of the visitors stumper to see that his wickets were not disarranged. Jolly for you,

Jones that! Hirst only saw two added when he retired overcome by the heat. Muschamp and Jones relived the monotony a little and carried the score to 29, when the latter was given out leg before. This was a genuine surprise packet to him and being one which did not contain a prize, was therefore disappointing. 'Did he dispute the decision'? you ask. 'Well, rather'. He has offered a huge prize for certain kinds of bowling from certain positions. Fleetwood joined Muschamp, both played fastly and furious (it's alright Mr Printer – it's only a new phrase brought over from Central Africa)...After just doubling the total for the fifth wicket Muschamp was bowled by Hamilton. English and Fleetwood played out time. The match ended in a draw. The Mirfield eleven out of the last six matches have won five and drawn one.

The game on the 27 June away at Walsden near Todmorden appears to have beaten the poor weather. Very few games were played in West Yorkshire and this game may only have gone ahead as Mirfield had travelled so far. The *Todmorden Advertiser & Hebden Bridge Newsletter* gives an account:

The weather on Saturday was greatly disappointing at many places. The Todmorden first eleven went to Bacup, but no start was made...A telegram was sent to the Bacup club that the second eleven need not come as the weather was unfavorable at Todmorden, and no play possible. Walsden made a big stand against Mirfield, valuable assistance being again accorded to the Walsden men by the Rev. J.R.Napier, who on this occasion played a grand not-out innings of 87. Wade, on the same side contributed 35, and Walsden closed their innings at 138 for 5 wickets, but had not time to get their opponents out, although they after lost four wickets for 61. Hirst (24) and Mushamp (22) were not out when the stumps were drawn.

It is interesting to see the local Reverend opening the batting and scoring so well. I wonder did he wear his dog-collar? In fact the Reverend John Russell Napier had become vicar of Walsden in 1890 after playing first-class cricket for both Cambridge University and Lancashire. In 1888 for Lancashire he had taken 7 for 102 against the touring Autralians and 4 for 0 in bowling out the Yorkshire tail. At that time he was reputed to be the fastest bowler in the country. In the Walsden innings George Herbert took one wicket, bowling opener Woodhead for a duck. G.H.Jones and H. Muschamp both took two wickets each.

The return game with Dewsbury & Savile was played at Savile Town and again George Herbert shone. The *Dewsbury Reporter* stated: 'The home club found the bowling of Jones and Hirst so difficult that they were got rid of for a total of 74. Hirst then played splendidly for his contribution of 115 not out.

Hirst, who is a first-class young player, will have the refusal of more than one good offer for next season. His claim for county honours will again come up next year and if he keeps in form he will stand well for a place. Besides being an excellent bowler he knows how to bat. Mirfield are very fortunate in having his services and for the sake of the club, I hope they may be able to retain him for some time to come.' Dewsbury & Savile were bowled out for 74 with George Herbert taking five wickets and two catches. Mirfield's reply was 184 for 7, the giant total built around his 115 not out. The scorecard read:

Dewsbury & Savile v Mirfield

Mirfield Innings

H. Muschamp		b Crawshaw	19
F. Shaw	c Ellis	b Hill	3
G.H Jones		b Hill	0
G.H Hirst	Not Out		115
H.C Walker	c Gomersal	b Stapleton	13
J. Ellis		b Bailey	7
W. Kenworthy	c Stapleton	b Bailey	4
H. Fleetwood		b Ellis	10
		Extras:	13
		<u>Total:</u>	184-7

Already it was becoming obvious that George Herbert was a special talent and it would be hard for the club to keep hold of him. Either he would be offered a better deal or he would be playing for Yorkshire. Indeed, George Herbert was playing some midweek cricket for the highly-rated Huddersfield club. On Wednesday 8 July he played against Leeds. The *Huddersfield Examiner* reported that the game at Lockwood was played 'before a large attendance' - 'G.H. Hirst of Kirkheaton-Mirfield fame was tenth man. Hirst was missed off a difficult running chance...He hit Peate finely straight over the ropes, amid general applause in which Peate joined...Hirst carried out his bat for 8.' Huddersfield scored 69 and Leeds 83 with George Herbert bowling both openers. He also went on tour with Huddersfield during the week commencing 20 July. This was to be a historic week in his cricketing life. He played against Cheshire, a game in which Huddersfield scored 289 (George Herbert 14) and bowled Cheshire out for 43 and 57 (George Herbert bagging two and five wickets). They then went on to play against Cardiff where George Herbert scored 11 in both innings but did not bowl.

It was on Wednesday 22 July that dramatic news broke in the *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*. 'We are informed today a telegram has been received at Huddersfield from the Yorkshire Cricket Club committee, asking that G.H. Hirst of Kirkheaton would play for Yorkshire against Somersetshire which match

commences tomorrow. The telegram was re-transmitted to Hirst, who is now on tour with the Huddersfield club, playing for them in Cardiff.' On Thursday 23 July at Taunton, George Herbert made his full Yorkshire debut against Somerset, probably as a replacement for Robert 'Bobby' Peel. The *Yorkshire Post* reported: 'Neither eleven is fully represented, Yorkshire sadly missing especially in the attack. Mr F.S. Jackson and Peel, the Cantab suffering from a bad leg and Peel from a sore hand; the vacancies were filled by Tunicliffe and Hirst, a young professional fast bowler.' The *Huddersfield Daily Examiner* stated: 'Commenced today at 12.10 in dull weather, before a numerous assembly. The Northern side were without Peel due to a damaged hand.'

In a side led by Lord Hawke but minus F.S. Jackson and Bobby Peel, Yorkshire won the toss and batted, making 291 all out with George Herbert batting at nine and scoring 10. Lord Hawke made 126. The *Yorkshire Post* described Hirst's first innings: 'With seven wickets down, Tunicliffe and Hirst quickly hit up 27, though the former was missed off each bowler from strokes on the off-side. Hirst at 276 was easily caught at point.' At the end of day one Somerset were 111 for 2 in reply. They were bowled out for 220 with George Herbert bowling 20 overs for 0 for 51. A respectable return from 20 overs but no wickets. However, he took a catch. Ted Wainwright took 6 for 66. In the second innings Yorkshire ended day three on 199 for 5 with George Ulyett 110 not out. On the last day Yorkshire were dismissed for 315, George Herbert made just 5, and this left Somerset requiring 387 to win. The *Yorkshire Post* stated: 'At 231 Hirst was taken in the long field for 5.' Ted Wainwright again had success with the ball, taking 5 for 74 as Somerset were bowled out for 124. George Herbert took 2 for 32 from 14 overs, his first wicket for Yorkshire being G. Fowler caught by Louis Hall for 22. The *Yorkshire Post* recorded the historic event: 'In the next over from Hirst, Mr Fowler, who was credited with 22, was taken at third man by Hall and Tyler three balls later.' This was George Herbert's only game for Yorkshire that season and so it was back to his Saturday commitment for Mirfield.

The next two weeks saw Mirfield victories over Horbury and Elland. Horbury were bowled out for 34 with George Herbert taking four wickets but then scoring another duck in Mirfield's score of 86. Elland were bowled out for 40 with George Herbert taking six wickets and scoring 15 in the total of 83. The *Dewsbury Reporter* commented of the Elland batsmen: 'None did much against the bowling of Hirst and Jones. These men trundled throughout the innings and captured six and four respectively.'

On 25 July Mirfield had travelled to Adwalton in the first round of the Heavy Woollen Cup. Although Hirst was playing for Yorkshire on this day, it is probable that professionals were not allowed to play, as the all-rounder didn't play in the following round either. Mirfield won, bowling Adwalton out for 47 and scoring 50 for 5 in reply. The following week saw the second round with

Mirfield losing at Cleckheaton. Cleckheaton scored 125, but at one stage were 60 for 9. Mirfield were bowled out for 71 in reply. On Feast Holiday Monday 3 August, George Herbert scored his second century when Mirfield entertained Halifax. There is no report in the *Dewsbury Reporter*, merely an announcement saying that 'Mirfield batted all afternoon' for 213 for 3. May this have been to give George Herbert the chance to get his century? The *Dewsbury District News* tells a very different story!

A somewhat serious tale reaches me from Mirfield to the effect that the Halifax representatives are too high in the scale of Yorkshire clubs to arrange with Mirfield for next year. That having come to the ears of the Mirfield gentlemen they determined to take a little gilt off the Halifax fraternity and proceeded there on Monday to wipe them clean out. How does this read for the accomplishment of their objective. Mirfield batted all afternoon and scored 213 for 3. That hardly shows that the position of the Halifax club towards Mirfield at present justifiable. All honour is due to the visitors for their excellent stand made against their superiors(?). The greatest honour is undoubtedly due to Hirst who, proceeding to the wickets at the fall of the first wicket, carried his bat through the whole of the innings and was not out with a magnificently complied 117. Every member of the Mirfield eleven who had the privilege of batting performed his duties in an excellent manner...Hirst's presence in the eleven is without doubt creating quite a revival of interest in the players and spectators. He is a good all round man and though his opponents sneer at his non success with the County, yet he is a sterling player and having youth on his side he will yet be found doing his duty in first class matches. I am very glad that Mirfield did administer that pill at Halifax on Monday.

The scorecard read:

Halifax v. Mirfield – Monday 3 August 1891

Mirfield innings

H. C Walker		b Kershaw	23
H. Muschamp	c Wood	b Barstow	16
G.H Hirst		Not Out	117
W. Kenworthy		b Lister	32
G.H Jones		Not Out	19
		Extras:	6
		<u>Total:</u>	213-3

On Saturday 8 August Hirst followed up his century with his third duck for Mirfield! Staincliffe had scored 62 with George Herbert taking another five wickets and a catch. But a weakened Mirfield were bowled out for 48. The *Dewsbury District News* commented: 'Mirfield were only indifferently represented, several regular players being absent from the ranks.'

On 15 August there only appears to be a record in the press of a Mirfield 2nd XI game (the only one I found). They played at home against a team called Mr Anderson's Team. They made 41 against Mr Anderson's Team's 70. George Herbert was not in the eleven. On Monday 17 August the *Huddersfield Examiner* reported that George Herbert had taken three wickets for Kirkheaton against Beeston Manor: 'G.H. Hirst did good work with the ball.' On 21 August there appears no result for Mirfield. However, their game may have been rained off. Certainly the Yorkshire CCC versus Yorkshire Colts game at Bramall Lane, Sheffield, was washed out. George Herbert had been selected in the Colts 22-man squad for this game, as highlighted by the *Dewsbury Reporter* the previous week. It was interesting to note that after his name it said Kirkheaton (the place of his birth) and not Mirfield (his club). The *Dewsbury District News* offered a weather update: 'Last Saturday was a real soaker and they were hardy patrons of the game who either took part in matches or watched them.'

During that week the Lady Cricketers of England, who were touring the country, played a Reds-versus-Blues match at Savile Town. They also played a game on the Tuesday against a Dewsbury Tradesmen XI. The Tradesmen made 115 and the Ladies were 17 for 5 when the weather prevented further play. The weekend of the 28 August saw Lascelles Hall defeat Ossett to win the Heavy Woollen Cup, the final being played at Savile Town. Lascelles Hall scored 91 for 6 and Ossett just 33. Mirfield travelled to Halifax to play King Cross. George Herbert took three wickets as King Cross made 30, Mirfield scoring 85 for 7 in reply. The *Dewsbury Reporter* remarks that this time it was G.H. Jones who took the honours: 'Jones and Hirst trundled well, the former clean bowled the first four men and also took seven wickets. He also carried the honours in the batting department, making 29.'

5 September appears to be George Herbert's last game for Mirfield. In the local derby at Roberttown he finished with five wickets again as Roberttown were dismissed for only 38. He scored 16 not out as Mirfield scored 47 for 2. The *Dewsbury Reporter* declared: 'On a good wicket on getting in the two bowlers (Hirst and Jones), as on many previous occasions this season, gave the best exhibition with the bat. Between them they ran up 34 out of the 47 for 2.' The *Dewsbury District News* reported:

We may safely say that cricket has about run its course this season though the weather is only just beginning to appear fit for cricket...The end quickly

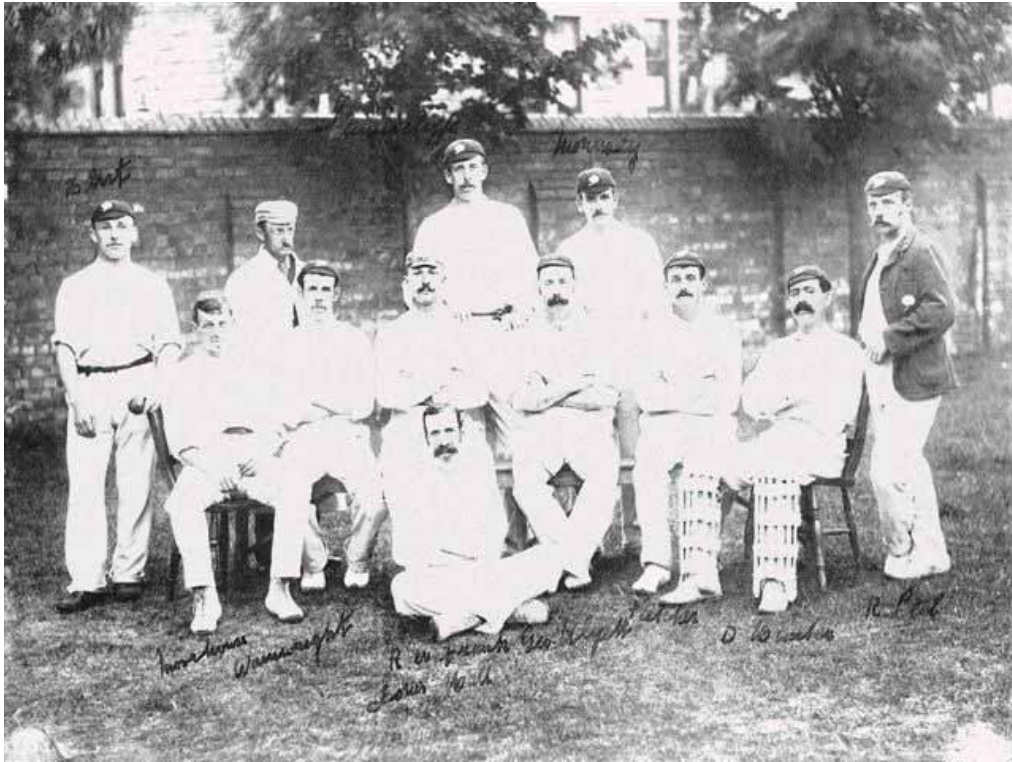
came through the instrumentality of Hirst, who simply mowed his opponents down...Thus Robbertown suffered their second defeat at the hands of Mirfield, this time by 8 wickets. There was a time, only a few years ago, that had one told the Robbertown people that Mirfield would have trashed them so easily, that person would have found his life a misery and a burden unless he had removed that quickly to a more congenial clime. The Mirfield season of 1891, which is now quickly drawing to a close has been one of the most successful for many years, both in regard to matches and finances.

This appeared to be the final game of the season and probably of George Herbert's Mirfield career. However, he did turn out for the club for one game aged 44. On 24th July 1915, during the Great War when no county games were played he took five wickets as Batley were bowled out for 32. In the eight wicket victory he scored 24 not out."

On 19 September the *Huddersfield Examiner* commented on the impact that George Herbert had had that summer and relays his Mirfield, Kirkheaton and Huddersfield averages for the season: 'I am very pleased to notice the excellent results that GH Hirst has achieved with Mirfield. He stands easily first in the batting averages with 34.8 to his credit, almost double the next man. In bowling he has taken 80 wickets at a cost of 327 runs giving the magnificent average of 4.7 per wicket'. For Huddersfield he had 14 wickets at an average of 12.5 and for Kirkheaton 14 wickets for 89 runs from 59 overs. The *Dewsbury & District News* on 19 September printed the full club averages. It shows the club playing 20 matches, winning 12, drawing 4 and losing 4. The full batting and bowling details can be found at the end of this book. The following year the *Dewsbury District News* on 9 April 1892 stated that the Mirfield secretary, now Mr J.T. Steele, had informed them: 'The team will be a moderately strong one, and will have the assistance of G.H. Jones of Selby as professional'. George Herbert's partner in crime appears to have taken over the professional's job. However, G.H. Jones does not appear in reports of 1892 games. A fortnight later, the *Dewsbury Reporter* reported: 'G.H. Hirst is expected to be the professional again but at present it is not definitely settled.'

A.A. Thomson, in his book, stated that George Herbert played for Huddersfield in 1892 and the *Huddersfield Examiner* backs this up. After a game for Kirkheaton on 23 April, in which he took 5 for 4 against Honley, he played the opening game of the season on 30 April for Huddersfield away at Werneth in Oldham, taking 4 for 6 and scoring 2 runs, and on the Monday scored 2 not out against Sheffield United at Bramall Lane. Records show that George Herbert played for Huddersfield through to 1897 when his county commitments allowed. On 16 May 1892 he played for Yorkshire at Lord's

against the MCC and then on 23 May he starred in his first Yorkshire championship game on home soil, at Bramall Lane again - Sheffield against Sussex. He played in the majority of matches for the county that season.



**Yorkshire in 1892 – versus Leicestershire at Leicester,
9-11 June**

**Back row – G.H. Hirst, unknown umpire, J. Tunnicliffe,
J. Mounsey, R Peel; Seated – R. Moorhouse, E. Wainwright,
Mr R.W. Frank, G. Ulyett, W. Fletcher, D. Hunter
Front – L. Hall**

In one season for Mirfield, George Herbert had scored two centuries, one fifty and three ducks! He had a batting average of 34.80, scoring 416 runs, 156 more than anyone else. His top score of 117 not out was 78 runs better than any other batter, G.H. Jones scoring 39 not out. On the bowling side he had taken five wickets or more on ten occasions, taking a total of 80 wickets in 17 games (in one of which only Mirfield batted) with a staggering average of 4.70. His nearest rival was G.H. Jones with 63 wickets at an average of 7.46, also a very decent performance. He had really capped his season off by making his Yorkshire first-class debut.

George Herbert's achievements both with bat and ball in 1891 had certainly caused a stir in the county and in the Heavy Woollen district, and must surely have helped him break into the county set-up. His time with Mirfield was well remembered even in 1952 when the Mirfield club re-formed. Clive Brook, now club President, related the following story: Tommy Hyland, the new professional player and coach in 1952, was stopped as he walked down the drive to the pavilion in the Memorial Grounds and was met by a man in a flat cap who said, 'Are you Tommy Hyland? You're our new professional are you?' When Tommy replied yes, he was, he was told by the elderly man, 'Well, you'll have to be darned good to be as good as the last one'. When Tommy enquired further who the professional was, the man informed him it was George Herbert Hirst.

George Herbert, throughout his career, seems to have been a player and person that everybody could love. Anthony Woodhouse, in *The History of Yorkshire County Cricket Club*, comments: 'He was a generous hearted man... and there was never a more popular cricketer anywhere in the world...His capacity as batsman or bowler always appeared to be equal. That cannot be said of any other player in the game...He was worshipped by players, spectators and all who came into contact with him.' A.A. Thomson sums up George Herbert with these words:

In George Hirst's cricket we have, almost perfectly displayed, the outlook of the true cavalier...always attacking. An over from Hirst was like a cavalry charge by Prince Rupert. The fact that he was an honest, homely professional made no difference to his attitude: he batted and bowled with all his might and nothing he ever did on a cricket field was without purpose; yet he could say 'cricket's a game, not a competition'...Above and beyond his skill, his keen eye, and his boundless enthusiasm there was that additional something in his play and person that came from nature, something that was never taught or learnt at the nets, an endearing, untamed element that was distinctly akin to the old England of Robin Goodfellow.

On his death in May 1954 many great cricketers paid tribute to him, and they were recorded in the *Yorkshire Post* on 12 May. They show how respected George Herbert was by some of the all-time greats. Wilfred Rhodes said, 'He was a lion-hearted cricketer and one of the greatest, if not the greatest all-rounder.' C.B. Fry: 'He was a wonderful cricketer and character. As a cricketer, he was a tremendous force on any side. He was one of the greatest left-handed bowlers that ever held a ball – a terrible ball on a bad wicket and a good bowler on any wicket.' Sir Len Hutton, who had been coached as a youngster at Headingley by George Herbert, commented: 'My guide and

counsellor...he did more for me than any other cricketer.' Herbert Sutcliffe: 'I had more than a glimpse of the big heartedness of George Hirst and as the years rolled by I learned to appreciate the value of this class sportsman.' Finally Sir Jack Hobbs stated: 'I am not sure that he does not rank as the greatest all-rounder of all time now.'

George Herbert, along with his friend and Kirkheaton compatriot Wilfred Rhodes, went on to become one of the greatest all-rounders of the 'Golden Age'. Which one was the best? A.A. Thomson says: 'In the end the old question and the old answer remain. Who, W.G. apart, was the greatest all-rounder? He batted right-hand and bowled left; and he came from Kirkheaton.' In the modern era there have been some great all-rounders. Names such as Keith Miller, Sir Garfield Sobers and Ian Botham spring to mind. They all made major impacts during their playing time but I believe that they do not compare to Hirst and Rhodes.

Well, which of the two Yetton lads was the greatest? It is said that when asked, George Herbert always said Rhodes was the greatest, and when Rhodes was asked he always refused to comment. I believe that it may be fair to say that the greatest all-rounder batted right-hand, bowled left, came from Kirkheaton, and also played for Mirfield!



Hirst & Rhodes Memorial at Fartown

Mirfield Cricket Club – 1st XI Averages 1891

Batting

	<u>Innings</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>HS</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Ave</u>
G.H Hirst	16	4	117*	416	34.8
H. Muschamp	17	4	35*	226	17.5
G.H Jones	19	3	39*	260	16.4
E. Dransfield	6	0	26	62	10.2
H.C Walker	15	2	23	125	9.8
H. Fleetwood	14	3	35	97	8.9
F. Shaw	16	1	23	113	7.8
W. Kenworthy	9	0	32	62	6.8
E. English	5	2	6*	19	6.1
J. Ellis	10	2	7	43	5.3
J.L Cowdell	7	3	7*	18	4.2
W.H Wilkinson	9	2	11	25	3.4
W. Dransfield	4	0	6	10	2.2
W. Deadman	6	1	5	12	2.2

Bowling

	<u>Overs</u>	<u>Mdns</u>	<u>Runs</u>	<u>Wkts</u>	<u>Average</u>
G.H. Hirst	209.3	70	327	80	4.7
G.H. Jones	197	35	487	63	7.46

Also bowled: W.H. Wilkinson 4 for 31; H.C. Walker 5 for 39;
 E. English 1 for 12;
 H. Muschamp 5 for 79; W. Dransfield 2 for 49

G.H. Hirst – Mirfield CC

Results and Performances 1891

25 April at Mirfield	Mirfield (62) lost to Marsden (104-7) <i>GHH 24 and 3 wickets</i>
2 May at Horbury	Mirfield (78) lost to Horbury (61-4) <i>GHH 0 and 2 wickets</i>
9 May at Mirfield	Heckmondwike (49) lost to Mirfield (54-2) <i>GHH did not bat and 8 for 13</i>
16 May at Dudley Hill	Dudley Hill (75) beat Mirfield (74) <i>GHH 7 and 5 wickets</i>
19 May at Mirfield	Mirfield beat Roberttown scores unknown <i>GHH did not bat and 6 wickets?</i>
23 May at Staincliffe	Staincliffe (50) lost to Mirfield (80-3) <i>GHH 20 and 7 wickets</i>
30 May at Mirfield	Dewsbury & Savile (55) lost to Mirfield (92) <i>GHH 56 and 6 for 16</i>
6 June at Mirfield	Mirfield (70) beat King Cross (35) <i>GHH 4 and 4 wickets</i>
13 June at Heckmondwike	Mirfield (108) beat Heckmondwike (38) <i>GHH 2 and 7 for 5</i>
20 June at Mirfield	Halifax (150) drew with Mirfield (60-6) <i>GHH 0 retired and 3 for 35</i>
27 June at Walsden	Walsden (138-5) drew with Mirfield (61-4) <i>GHH 24 not out and 1 wicket</i>
4 July at Savile Town	Mirfield (184-7) beat Dewsbury & Savile (74) <i>GHH 115 not out and 5 wickets</i>

11 July at Horbury	Horbury (34) lost to Mirfield (86) <i>GHH 0 and 4 wickets</i>
18 July at Mirfield	Elland (40) lost to Mirfield (83) <i>GHH 15 and 6 wickets</i>
25 July at Adwalton	Adwalton (47) lost to Mirfield (50-5) <i>GHH did not play. Heavy Woollen Cup</i>
1 August at Cleckheaton	Cleckheaton (125) beat Mirfield (71) <i>GHH did not play. Heavy Woollen Cup</i>
3 August at Halifax	Mirfield (213-3) drew with Halifax <i>GHH 117 not out</i>
8 August at Mirfield	Staincliffe (62) beat Mirfield (48) <i>GHH 0 and 5 wickets</i>
28 August at King Cross	Mirfield (85-7) beat King Cross (30) <i>GHH 16 and 3 wickets</i>
5 September at Roberttown	Roberttown (38) lost to Mirfield (47-2) <i>GHH 16 not out and 5 wickets</i>

About the Author



The author with the Huddersfield Central Cricket League, Section 'B' championship trophy 2005

Patrick Neal was born in Wakefield in 1961 but was brought up during his school years in Ledbury, a market town in rural Herefordshire where his father and mother were headteachers. He gained a B.A. Honours degree in History and American Studies while studying at St. John's College, York, where he met his wife Gillian. He now works as a Regional Administrator for the United Co-op funeral division after spells working for a Building Society and then a firm of Solicitors.

He has been a member of Mirfield Cricket Club for 20 years and has held the position of club secretary for several years. In 2002 he wrote *Mirfield CC-50 Not Out*, a booklet about the 1952 season when the club was re-formed, and also the brief history of the club that can be found on the club's website www.mirfieldcc.co.uk. In addition, he has compiled a record of club results dating back to 1952. As a player, he has played in 11 cup finals for Mirfield. He has won two league titles and winners medals in the Heavy Woollen Cup, Jack Hampshire Trophy and Wheatley Cup twice. Mainly a batsman, he has scored twelve centuries for the club and is very occasionally allowed to bowl his leg-spin! He lives in Mirfield with his wife Gill and son John, with their two cats Ginger and Hobbs.

George Herbert Hirst - Mirfield Cricket Club - 1891
charts a year in the life of one of Yorkshire and England's
greatest all-rounders.

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