

Profile of Clive Brook

By James Norbury

When it comes to legendary cricketers in the history of Mirfield Cricket Club, there are few players who can claim to have surpassed the achievements of Clive Brook during his illustrious playing career, which stretched for over 30 years.

Clive will forever be remembered at Mirfield for captaining the club to the league and Heavy Woollen Cup 'double' back in 1963. This incredible feat came during the club's golden era between 1958 and 1963, when they lifted the league title four times (including three titles in a row). The team also won the Heavy Woollen Cup twice during this period.



During the 1963 Heavy Woollen Cup final, their opponents, Batley, were all out for 31, which is the lowest score in a Heavy Woollen Cup final even to this day. While Clive accepts this as his greatest and proudest achievement during his time playing with the club, there are many other memorable moments that have occurred during his time at Mirfield.

Clive was born in Upper Hopton in 1933. Upper Hopton Cricket Club was just over the wall from where he lived, and this helped him first become involved in the sport. He began playing for the Upper Hopton 2nd XI in 1946, when he was just 13 years old. This was the same year that he watched his first live Test match as England took on India. This was in fact the first Test match after the war. During this game he witnessed performances by English sporting heroes such as Len Hutton and Denis Compton. All this helped to further shape Clive's love for the game.

The defining moment, however, came at Headingley in 1948, as he watched the great Don Bradman perform for Australia on his last tour of the UK. A friend lent him his entry card for the final two days of the tour. The fans formed a guard of honour for Bradman as he came to the crease for the final time and, as he did so, the great man passed within touching distance of Clive. Typically, Bradman finished the game with 170 not out and, as he did for so many other cricket fans, he instantly became one of his sporting heroes.

Clive began playing for Mirfield Grammar School cricket team between 1946 and 1949. Towards the end of the 1949 season he made a couple of appearances for local

side Chickenley, who at the time were playing in the Yorkshire Central League. The following season he began playing league cricket for Staincliffe. In 1952 Clive agreed to play for Lascelles Hall who were a well established club in the Huddersfield League. This came at the same time as the re-formation of Mirfield Cricket Club. Incidentally, Clive was present at the special re-formation meeting that took place. He played that season for Lascelles Hall but for the 1953 season he switched to Mirfield. He spent the rest of his playing career at the club and has been there for 53 years and counting.

In the beginning, Clive had trained as an engineer and in 1953 he joined the RAF and worked as an air traffic controller at Prestwick Airport for two years. Later, he became a production engineer and eventually changed trades altogether, becoming head of personnel for the same company, Brook Crompton. Clive was a good opening batsman; however, he was also a fine left-arm spin bowler. During his first season with the club he took his first six-wicket haul against his former club Chickenley and helped guide the team to promotion.

Soon after joining Mirfield, Clive formed a successful batting partnership with fellow youngster Colin Peacock. They became known as the 'Mirfield twins' and produced one of the most prolific batting partnerships in the club's history. Like Clive, Colin Peacock joined the Forces, but the partnership was re-formed in 1957 and they became the club's opening batsmen until the early sixties, when Peacock eventually left the club. During this period a number of clubs attempted to sign up the pair, but this was to no avail as Clive was intent on staying with his beloved MCC.

It was during this period that Mirfield had their 'purple patch', where the team won three consecutive league titles and two Heavy Woollen Cup finals. The team completed the league and cup 'double' in Clive's debut year as first-team captain. In 1966 the club's dominance of the league was officially ended when they were relegated to the second division. The club bounced back quickly, however, and they were promoted straight back into the top flight the following season.

In 1983 Clive Brook decided to hand over the batting and bowling responsibilities and to retire after 30 years of playing with the club. His final match was not without incident, however. During the game, the match scorer dropped his cigarette, igniting a pile of leaves that set the scoreboard on fire. "It was at that moment I knew it was time to retire," jokes Clive while recalling the day. During his illustrious playing career, Clive took an impressive seven hat-tricks, four of which came playing for Mirfield.

In 1987 he made a one off appearance for the Mirfield 2nd XI because they were short of players for the match. He showed that the years away from the game had changed nothing as he took an incredible nine wickets in a match-winning performance. Having been on the club's committee for much of his playing career, Clive became vice-chairman in 1975, and following his retirement in 1983 he was made club chairman. He carried on with this role until 1989 and in 1995 he was made president of Mirfield CC. This is an honorary role that he continues in to this day.

Clive admits the biggest low during his 53 years with the club came in 2004, when Mirfield were forced to withdraw from the Bradford League. Looking back on the period, Clive said: "There was a time when I really thought the club could go under."

Thankfully, however, Mirfield were able to sign up to Section 'B' of the Huddersfield Central League for the following season and have successfully begun their recovery. This became even more of a reality when Mirfield gained promotion to Section 'A' in their very first season.

Clive married in 1965 and has two daughters. He also has four grandchildren, including three boys who he hopes will follow him and become accomplished cricketers themselves. He will be forever remembered as one of Mirfield's greatest ever cricketers and he looks upon his playing days at Mirfield with great fondness. "There is no substitute for walking off that field, realising the entire team have pulled together, and knowing you are all going to have a few drinks afterwards."