

## Profile of Head Tea Lady Val Kirkby

By James Norbury

Everybody who is associated with Mirfield CC knows that the club has a wonderful social side. The close-knit community is welcoming not just to the cricketers but their families as well.

The Kirkbys are one such family who are involved with Mirfield in a considerable way. Val Kirkby reveals the full extent of her family's involvement: "The whole family is involved with the club. My husband used to play for them, my son still plays for them now and my grandchildren play in the youth teams. The club is a big part of our family." She also appreciates the sheer impact that the club has had socially on her and her family over the years: "My family and I have such strong ties with the club not just on the cricket front, but also socially. Most of our friends are involved with the club in one way or another."



Val herself is heavily involved with the teams behind the scenes. Incredibly, she has been a familiar face in the clubhouse kitchen for the past 35 years. Despite the amount of time that she has been associated with the club, Val has not always been a huge cricket fan. Rugby League was her sport of choice when she was younger and she used to follow it with her father. It was not until she met her husband, former Mirfield cricketer and current committee member Don Kirkby, that she began to have an interest in the sport.

Since then, however, she has become a dedicated cricket fan and, as well as Mirfield, she is also a keen supporter of Yorkshire CCC and of course England. She has her favourite players within the game too: "I like Darren Gough and of course all the Australia national side - they are all very good players."

Val began her duties as a tea lady nearly 42 years ago when she lived in the Midlands. She spent seven years as tea lady at the club that her husband played for then, before they moved back up to her native Yorkshire. She immediately began helping with the teas at Mirfield, after her husband began playing for the club and she has not looked back since.

While Val started out at Mirfield as just an additional helper in the kitchen, she became the chief organiser of the teas following the retirement of the former head tea lady. So what does a match day in the life of a Mirfield cricket club tea lady entail? "Well, because I am the main organiser, it is my job to do the shopping on the Saturday morning. I'm usually at the ground for around one o'clock with the other tea ladies. There are about a dozen of us who work around a rota. The game usually starts at two so we need to make sure that we have everything prepared in time. The players only have 25 minutes for tea so we have to make sure that everything is set up and ready for them when they come in. We then have to start clearing everything away and if we are lucky we may even get a chance to watch some cricket!"

Despite the hectic day that inevitably accompanies every home match, Val admits that she misses the responsibility of the job during the close season: "Obviously I enjoy doing it, otherwise I wouldn't still be doing it after so long. I do tend to get a bit tired towards the end of a season but I'm always itching to get back going again come January. It gets boring without it."

Val has spent 35 long years catering for the nutritional needs of Mirfield's demanding cricketers. And while she admits she cannot go on forever, she has no plans to hang up her apron just yet: "I would like to think I will be doing this job for a few more years to come; I don't think there is anyone who wants to replace me!"