

GEORGE HERBERT HIRST: MIRFIELD CC 1891

by Patrick J.A. Neal

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MIRFIELD CC secretary Patrick Neal has produced a fascinating local cricket publication focusing on a young, likeable player who in 1891 was starting to make his way in the game and played for the Club that summer as their professional.

In due course George Herbert Hirst from Kirkheaton would become a legend in Yorkshire cricket and one of the greatest county cricketers of all time. Appropriate then that this book should be published in 2006, 100 years on from Hirst's unique and remarkable 'Double Double' summer (2,000 runs and 200 wickets) in 1906.

The season of 1891 was a significant one for G.H.Hirst. Having turned pro the

previous year he joined Mirfield, after a season at Elland, and made his debut against Marsden in late April. His first significant contribution (eight wickets [all bowled]) came against Heckmondwike in May and from there his obvious talent quickly blossomed. His first-class debut for Yorkshire (v Somerset at Taunton) was made on 23 July but it was to be his only appearance for the County that year and so Mirfield benefited from his presence for most of the season.

Utilising contemporary newspaper reports and Club records the author recalls Hirst's deeds in local cricket that memorable cricket season. His Mirfield figures serve to underline his obvious ability – 416 runs at 34.80, two centuries and one fifty; 80 wickets in 17 games at a remarkable average of 4.70. Such was Hirst's impact in his one season at Mirfield that when Tommy Hyland became the professional and coach in 1952 (the year the Club

reformed) he was told, 'Well, you'll have to be darned good to be as good as the last one.'

Published as part of the Calderdale & Kirklees Cricket Heritage Project (the Society welcomes the project co-ordinator Dr Peter Davies in October), proceeds from the book will go to the Candlelighters; a charity at St James's Hospital, Leeds helping families of children suffering from cancer and leukaemia. The great George Herbert Hirst "...made of Yorkshire beef and English sunshine" as C.B.Fry once described him) would be proud to think his exploits at Mirfield CC 115 summers ago could help with such a cause. Buy a copy and read about one of England's finest all-rounders at the very dawn of what became a famous and notable career.

Mick Pope