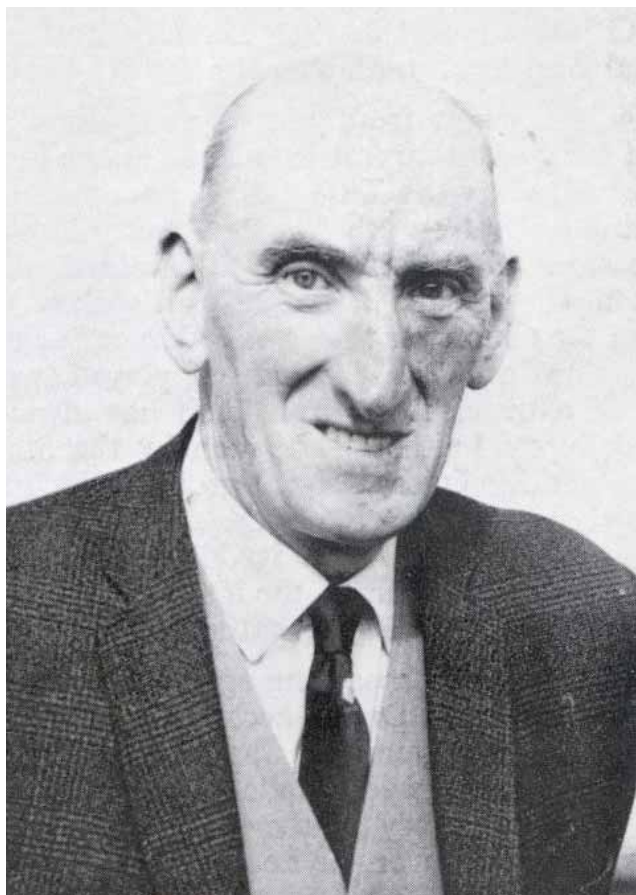


Profile of Leonard Battye

By Dave Wooding

The epitome of the phrase 'dedicated clubman', Leonard Battye was the life and soul of Shepley Cricket Club for many decades. A former chairman and later president of the Marsh Laners, he made an immense contribution towards rebuilding the club in the post-war period until his death in the summer of 1978. Indeed, his tall, imposing figure was rarely absent from any function or event involving the club - and he spent many years as a player before moving to off-field duties. Leonard, despite his physical presence, was a humble man, described by many as one of the nicest people they ever had the pleasure to meet. A weaver in the textile industry by trade, he spent much of his spare time devoting himself to the club he loved.



Many Shepley folk will have fond memories of Leonard, and few would argue that anyone else did more to give the club the platform that has allowed it to develop into what it is today. Indeed, Brian Kettlewell, who spent time at Shepley as captain under Leonard's guidance, is quick to hail the contribution of a man whose life revolved around the club, stating that he "almost single-handedly kept the club together at one time."

While Leonard was responsible for introducing the ground improvement fund, along with a forecast lottery, to generate additional resources, he was not one to shy away from the more menial tasks involved in keeping a cricket club going. Those old enough to remember him will remember him with a pea in a bucket - part of his apparel as groundsman! In addition to groundsmanship, he held many other off-field duties, from organising the raffles to collecting the membership money that was needed to keep the club going. Mr Kettlewell recalls that "at least half the money would not have been collected if it hadn't been for Leonard."

Unfortunately, Leonard died before the club hit the big time in terms of collecting silverware. His death was tragic: in his mid-sixties he collapsed with a heart attack just before the team reached their first ever Sykes Cup final. He left £200 to the club in his will. The money was "for the lads to have a drink on his behalf" – a real symbol of his affection for the club. It was also fitting that his ashes were later scattered over the Marsh Lane ground by the local vicar, at teatime during a match. Shepley CC certainly owe a lot to the efforts of Leonard during his life.