



Harry Lime CC: An Alternative History

By James Norbury

Sitting at a table in Mirfield Liberal Club surrounded by past members of Harry Lime CC and laden with enough photo albums, club records, programmes and other forms of memorabilia to start up a small museum, I began attempting to dig up the history of Harry Lime CC.

Three hours of informal, and quite often humorous, conversation later, I had uncovered all sorts of incredible stories that included coast-to-coast bike rides, pub-of-the-year awards and the purchase of not one, but four, greyhounds! I quickly began to discover that Harry Lime was much more than your average local cricket club.

When you begin to write a piece about the history of a cricket club, you expect to focus upon great matches, cup glories and personal achievements – often in the face of adversity. However, that was not what Harry Lime CC was all about. To understand the true meaning of Harry Lime, we must look at the way it was first formed.

Harry Lime CC first came into being in 1972. The team was started by a group of players who played for Mirfield Grammar Old Boys and Rendezvous Rangers Football teams. The founding members were Kevin Thompson, Ian Greaves, Richard Blackburn, Chris Barker, Stephen Walker, Dave Lodge, Arthur Dewhurst and Geoff Senior. John Hudson, Martin Hatfield, Charlie Woodcock and others later joined them. It was, however, Arthur Dewhurst who was the driving force in the formation of Harry Lime. They had originally started off playing football but, as they were all at a loose end in Summer, they decided to join the local evening cricket league.

Harry Lime CC is unlike other cricket clubs in a number of different ways. But one of the most distinctive attributes of the club is its name. As the evening league contained teams with names such as Eagles and Changing Lights it meant that the players could be as creative as they wanted in the naming of their newly formed club.

Early suggestions ranged from 'Long John Silver XI', (short leg being the connection here) and to the somewhat absurd 'Bill's Bail-Bashers'. However, it was the suggestion made by Arthur Dewhurst that not only proved to be the chosen name, but that also signalled the beginning of a style of cricket club never seen before, or arguably since, in Yorkshire league cricket. The name 'Harry Lime' comes directly from Graham Greene's novel (and subsequent film) *The Third Man*, in which it is the name of one of the characters in the story. As teams traditionally put their worst fielder at third man, it was decided that this would be a fitting name for the club.

The Mirfield evening league games took place at the ground in Mirfield which is now the HQ of Moorlands CC. Ironically, the field is right next door to the ground where the Harry Limers would eventually go on to play after merging with Mirfield CC. Only a couple of months after forming, the Harry Lime cricket squad joined the Mirfield Liberal Club *en bloc*, and it quickly became the side's regular watering hole after they had finished their matches. This was quite possibly the first sign of what was to come with regards to the 'social side' of Harry Lime.. Over time they developed a process of pub-visiting after Thursday practice nights and then on through the Winter keeping a record of all the pubs they visited.. Each pub was named and then 'marked' on a number of criteria including the quality of beer, service and finally the ambience of the pub itself. Each drinker in attendance gave a mark out of five and the average scores were calculated.



A comment was then left by one of the players that summed up the team's general opinion of the pub in question. The book is quite fascinating, as well as amusing, and really does give an insight into the social side of Harry Lime CC.

Harry Lime also decided to hand out an award to the local pub that impressed them most during the season. Self-proclaimed Harry Lime 'tea lady' John Hudson is an internationally famous potter and he produced commemorative plates that were then awarded to the landlord of the chosen pub. John remembers one particular instance when he handed out a 'Pub of the Year' gong. "One year we gave a plate to The Dolphin pub in Bradford. The landlord was so pleased that he had the *Telegraph and Argus* newspaper come round to take a photograph of us all." There was also a commemorative plate awarded to the 'Fish & Chip Shop of the Year'.

It was not just vendors of food and drink who were rewarded by Harry Lime. There was also a series of player trophies and awards, handed out within the cricket club itself, that acknowledged an array of individual attainments achieved by its players. There was the 'Timperley International Trophy', or 'TIT' as it was more commonly known. There was also the 'Wooden Spoon Trophy' which featured a wooden spoon balancing on a ball and wicket. Last but by no means least, there was the highly coveted second eleven award that went to the 'Finest All-Round Tryer'.

Many of the teams that they played in the evening league used players from the Bradford League using the games as hard practice. Martin Hatfield remembers: "We knew after the first few games, I think, that we were just going to get hammered by Bradford League pros such as Ronnie Hudson and John Burton so we went and got ourselves a few decent players." The players that Harry Lime signed included Mirfield legend Colin Peacock. Alf Hewitt and Jeff Senior. They also brought in players to play as guests from time to time.

Despite bolstering their squad with some bigger-name players, Harry Lime kept the team mentality that everybody should be given an equal opportunity to participate. Martin remembers with amusement one such episode: "In some of the other sides the best players used to bowl and bat and the rest of the team used to just field. In our team we had a democratic thing that if you batted you didn't bowl. We shared things out." He goes on: "This guy called Raja played once when I was captain and he got about 60 runs for us. And then with about three overs left, things were getting a bit tight and I hadn't had a bowl. He pointed out that he could bowl very good off-spinners and asked if he could do the bowling. And I said, 'no, no, you've had your batting - I'm bowling.' Of course we lost the game, but I'd had my bowl and that was it."

Harry Lime CC decided to make their first move into weekend cricket when they joined the Saturday Dewsbury League in time for the 1975 season. The ground allocated to them was at Rectory Park Thornhill "That was the nearest one to us that was available. It was a nice little ground, so we were happy to have it," says Martin Hatfield. It was a small ground, great for batting but not much fun fielding when the ball was hit down a steep hill onto the adjacent golf course. The club stayed there for three seasons before swapping grounds again. The club enjoyed their first success in their second season in the Saturday league when they lifted the Section 'C' title.

Prior to the start of the 1977 season, it came to the attention of Harry Lime CC that there was an unused cricket pitch belonging to Castle Hall School (the majority of the founding members had attended the school when it was known as Mirfield Grammar School).



The pitch had quite a lot of potential but needed plenty of work to bring it up to standard for the upcoming season. Following an enquiry from the Limers, Castle Hall gave the club permission to use the field. In exchange, the players from Harry Lime marked out and re-instated the square, mended and repainted the pavilion, repaired the rollers and offered coaching to local schoolchildren. Harry Lime witnessed some success while playing at the ground, and again lifted the Section 'C' title in 1982. In 1985 they went on to capture the Section 'B' title as well being runners-up in the Super Cup.

The link between Harry Lime and the school allowed the club to become an embedded part of the local community. The relationship proved to be extremely beneficial for both sides. On the one hand, Harry Lime got a new home that was suitable in both its location and quality. Castle Hall School also benefited from the deal as they had their ground improved to a good standard and also gained free coaching for children. Another development that came out of the connection with Mirfield High School was the establishment of a Harry Lime second team. This was the idea of Charlie Woodcock. The second team was used to accommodate Limers who were on the fringes of the first team, as well as some of the best players from the school. This acted almost as a 'youth academy', with some of the best players even making appearances for the first eleven when needed.

The good relationship with Castle Hall lasted from early 1977 all the way up until the end of the 1994 season. The Limers had previously paid around £200 per season to keep the ground. However, the school began to have other ideas about usage of the ground and requested a figure of closer to £1,000 for use of the ground for the forthcoming season with no lease or guarantee for future year's usage. This was a massive and hugely disappointing blow for Harry Lime and they were left with no choice but to find a new ground.

It was not just cricket that Harry Lime were concerned with when it came to sport. As Dave Lodge points out, "We would pretty much play anyone at anything." The Limers were always looking for new challenges, and they met their match on a number of occasions. They played a series of rugby games (first union and then league) against works sides in the Halifax area; played hockey and lost to a Harry Lime ladies team; and even played football and had a swimming contest in Leeds borstal

Another annual highlight was the Harry v Lime New Years Day Rugby match. The match was an internal affair between two teams of Limers. It was during one of these matches that a memorable moment occurred involving John Hudson. They were playing on a field that incorporated two pitches running parallel to each another. John remembers: "I was day-dreaming near the touchline when suddenly the ball ended up in my hands. I just turned and legged it to the far end of the pitch and scored a try. When I turned around everyone was rolling on their backs in hysterics. I had crossed the touchline, and scored the try on the other pitch!"

John Hudson also gained a reputation within the Dewsbury League for his teas. John went beyond the norm of ham sandwiches and cups of tea with his unique blend of traditional and Asian gourmet meals that rival teams were able to enjoy. "I definitely think teams looked forward to playing us because of John's teas," comments Kevin Bell. John's teas were even given recognition in the book *We Don't Play It For Fun*, written by former *Test Match Special* commentator Don Mosey. In the book he was labelled as "the best tea man in the league." The comment was made in the appendix and referred to his days as tea man for the Blackley Cricket Society. John stopped doing the teas in 1995, but still holds an annual barbeque at his home.



Going into the 1995 season without a home, Harry Lime eventually managed to relocate to a venue at Thornhill High School. This was their home for the next two years. During this period they left the Dewsbury League, joining the Huddersfield Central League. Harry Lime switched homes again in 1997 when the ground at Bradley Mills became available. The previous occupiers had folded and Bradley Mills were keen to have another team playing there on a regular basis. Commenting on the move, Martin Hatfield says, "We were playing better quality opposition on a fantastic pitch."

A secret that can now be revealed is that Harry Lime did not always field registered players. Sometimes when the squad was short, positions would be filled at the last minute. "We had a wide variety of people playing for us," explains Hatfield. and we maintained many registrations long after people had stopped playing. On one occasion one of our players, Gordon Tiffany played for both teams on the same day and I came back from holiday once and read in the paper that I had taken six wickets!"

During the club's history, the players have always thought up new ways to vary their time spent outside of cricket. One of the most unusual events was the purchase of a greyhound. It was bought from a breeder in Wimbledon and cost £1,000. The players dug deep into their pockets to buy the dog and were "expecting great things." The greyhound, named Para Bluebelle, raced at Elland Road and only won its first race at the 19th attempt – much to the disappointment of the Limers. The greyhound was traded in for three others, one of which was called *Fallwick Sun*. The name was an anagram, and the players were disappointed to see the name spelt with just one 'l' on the race card. The same greyhound also ran on non-licensed track under the name *Sunny* in tandem with another greyhound called *Cher*.

There were a number of other things that Harry Lime did outside of matches that distinguished them from other cricket clubs. They produced internal newsletters that featured witty drawings and anecdotes and they also produced a Harry Lime songbook. They occasionally sang at pubs, as well as holding annual Harry Lime golf and crown green bowling tournaments and annual dinners. The spectrum of social events that the players participated in knew no bounds, and they were always looking for new challenges and forms of entertainment.

One such challenge came in the form of a coast-to-coast bike ride. The event saw players from Harry Lime complete a bike ride from Blackpool to Bridlington. The total distance was 120 miles and it was done in relay form. The event was originally set up simply as a challenge; however, it was then decided that it should be done as a charity fundraiser. The bike ride raised £1,111.11, which was donated to a daycentre for people with disabilities.

Up until 2002 the future had looked very bright for Harry Lime. They had found a new home, and had found their way into a higher quality league. However, at the end of the 2002 season they were once again forced to find a new ground. The trustees of the Bradley Mills ground, where Harry Lime had spent the past five seasons, decided that they wanted the field to be used by a team that would utilise it every weekend. As Harry Lime now only had one team and only needed it once a fortnight, it was decided that Edgerton CC would become its permanent residents. As a result Harry Lime were forced to move again, this time to Britannia Works at Salendine Nook. The move had serious repercussions for the club, as club members found the long trip to Salendine Nook difficult and with a weakened squad; the Limers began to struggle in the league.



Things came to a head following the end of the 2004 season when they were approached by Mirfield CC's president Clive Brook. Mirfield were also struggling and the clubs decided to merge as one. "We had two options," says Martin Hatfield. "Either we could retain our identity but face a slow demise at Salendine Nook or we could risk losing our identity in a merger but play cricket nearer home on a great wicket with first class facilities. The vote at the AGM was very much in favour of the merger

The merger with Mirfield CC has proved to be the right decision. Towards the end, even the renowned social life of Harry Lime had begun to be affected, with there being fewer opportunities for the players to get together outside matches. "Now (after the merger) we are able to meet socially a lot more than we were towards the end of Harry Lime," comments Dave Lodge.

Harry Lime CC may be a thing of the past, but the special bond between the individuals involved has remained. And the name also lives on: Mirfield second team are now known as Mirfield Harry Lime. There are plenty of other stories: from rugby injuries to one-armed umpires. These tales and recollections will, however, live long in the memory of those associated with the club, as will the legacy of Harry Lime itself.

What I discovered from talking to the former members of Harry Lime is that the club was first and foremost a means for a group of people to meet together and to enjoy themselves. It was primarily a group of friends who decided on cricket as their pastime of choice. The club could quite easily be described as more of a social club that enjoyed cricket, rather than the other way around. Founding member Dave Lodge best summed this up: "Occasionally, the cricket got in the way of the social side!" I do not think any other words could better describe the true meaning of Harry Lime Cricket Club.