

Medomsley Cricket Club 1970s by Ray Agar

Medomsley Cricket Club played at High Westwood in the 1970s as they do now. We were in the Durham County League, which was at a really high standard at the time, with many teams having professionals. I was at college in Leeds at the time but played when I came home for the summer holidays. Our standard was extremely consistent and winning any sort of match was a major event. Our ace in the pack, however, was Albert Elsdon.

Albert was in his 60s at the time. He had been a professional cricketer in his youth bowling off breaks, leg breaks, googlies, seamers and a few more variations.

I stood in as wicket keeper one game and watched as Albert spun the ball past the bat and past me, time after time. Albert's eyesight was fading at this time and the opposition's young fast bowler was busy lobbing them down at 90 miles an hour. Just as the bowler was about to run in Albert put up his hand and walked up to talk to him. "Excuse me young man," he said, "would you please mind bowling at my bat?"

Albert Elsdon had raised Medomsley's fortunes when he joined in 1929. Albert, who was a colliery overman, started at Langley Park as an opening bat. He became one of the best leg-spinners in the county and 650 victims in five seasons helped Medomsley to four successive North West Durham titles. A sequence beginning in 1930 coincided with the arrival of the penetrative George Hurst. Elected to Tyneside Senior League in 1934, Medomsley ran away with that title, too. Elsdon topped the Tyneside Senior League bowling, snared 477 victims in six seasons. His 1,300 wickets in all matches in the eleven seasons prior to the war was just the start of an extraordinary career. Albert didn't have far to go to matches as he lived in the end terraced house opposite the school in High Westwood.

Albert's great claim to fame was to have been chosen to play against Don Bradman's team, when the Australians toured in 1938, which, quite rightly, he was extremely proud of. Having looked through the details of the 1938 and 1948 Australian tours I can't find any details of Albert. If anyone can help that would be great.



The photo is taken at the Medomsley Cricket Club Dinner in the Civic Hall about 1972. From left to right receiving their awards are Davy Moore, Geoff Bell, Ray Agar, Albert Elsdon and Brian Harkness. Other players who played at the time include Dave Oxley, Robson Irwin, Stan Lancaster, Jeff Strike, David Strike, Alan Dobinson, Ian Johnston, Chris Watcham and many more.

All the best to Medomsley Cricket Club for 2021. It is great to see them still fielding two teams and their win ratio has to be better than 50 years ago.

Cheers

Ray Ager