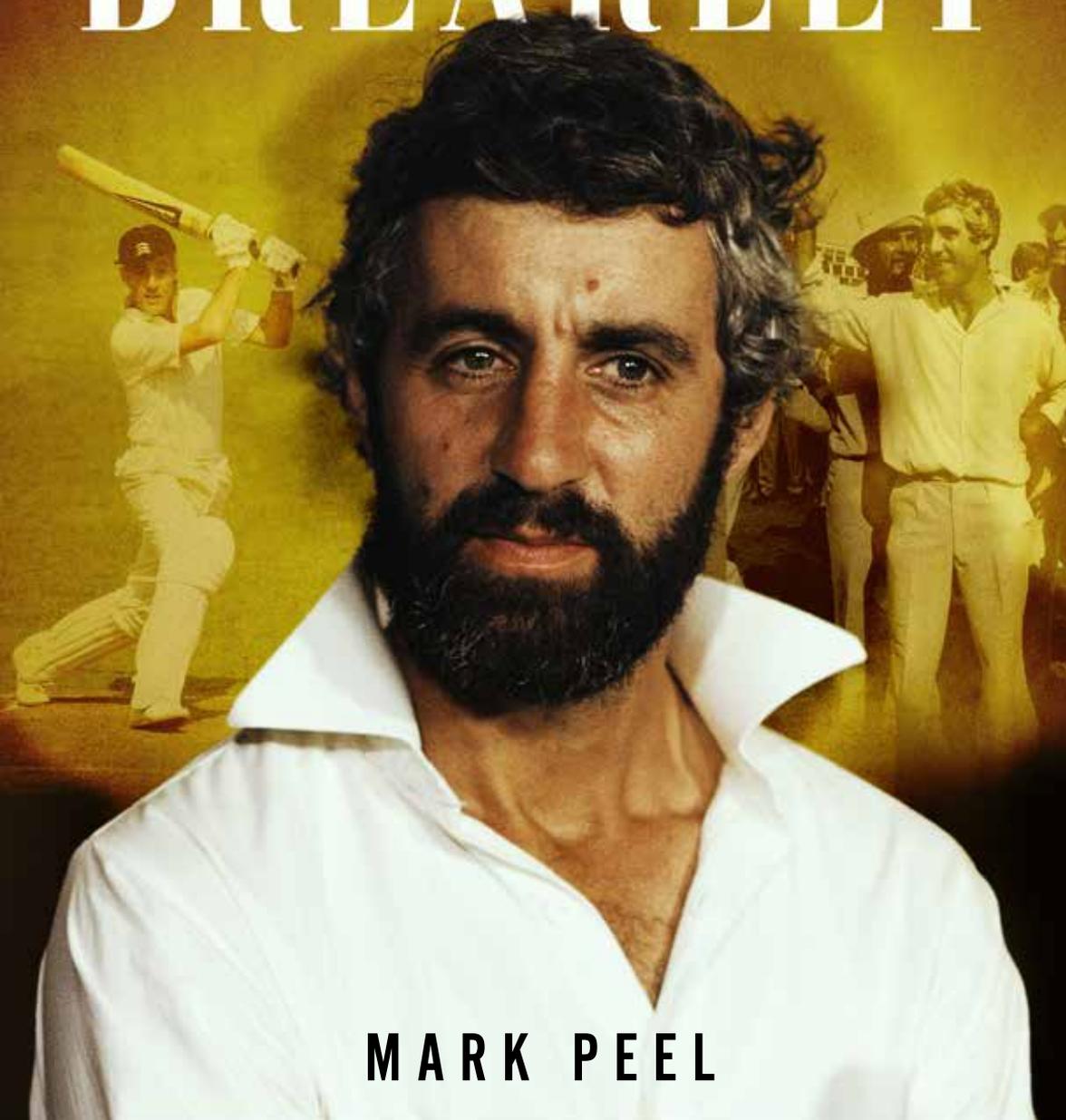


CRICKETING CAESAR

A BIOGRAPHY OF

MIKE
BREARLEY



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Chapter 1

His Father's Son

JOHN Michael Brearley was born in the north London suburb of Harrow on 28 April 1942. Few things used to irritate his father Horace more than Geoff Boycott's contention that Mike was part of a gilded elite compared to his own humble provenance. Not true, he professed, since their ancestry was of lower stock compared to the Boycotts', who, as miners, were the aristocracy of the working class. Horace's grandfather, Joseph Brearley, was a mechanic from Triangle, a village four miles south-west of Halifax in west Yorkshire, who married Emma Normanton in 1868. After the birth of their son James in September 1872 they moved to Heckmondwike, a former mill town, nine miles south-west of Leeds, on the edge of the Pennines, where Joseph continued his work as a mechanic. James, too, began in the same trade, graduating to become an engine fitter who travelled all over the north of England mending and fitting crucial pieces of mill machinery. He was also a fearsome fast bowler for Heckmondwike. Once when Horace came off the field after scoring a century there, an old man in the pavilion congratulated him but told him that he wouldn't have scored it if his father had been bowling.

In 1896 James married Lydia Ann Gregg, the feisty daughter of Michael Gregg, a former carrier turned publican, and his wife Elizabeth Ann. Originally from Commonsides, Dewsbury, a mill town with a radical tradition, they later moved to the village of Gomersal, north of Heckmondwike. They had eight children, the youngest of whom was Horace, born in 1913. The two eldest brothers, Joseph and Percy, both fought in the First World War, along with five other Brearleys from Heckmondwike. Joseph, a clerk in the rate office and choirboy at the local church, enlisted in the Yorkshire Hussars, the county's senior yeomanry regiment, aged 16, in September 1915. In 1917 the regiment was converted to infantry as the 9th West Yorkshire and later that year they were engaged in the bloody battle of Passchendaele, the Flanders offensive which claimed 250,000 British casualties. It was while volunteering for an advance attack that Joseph was shot through the lung and died instantaneously. He has no known grave, but his name is on the Tyne Cot Memorial near Ypres and on several war memorials in Heckmondwike. His commanding officer commended him for his bravery and unselfishness, qualities which won him the Victory Medal and the British War Medal. The fourth brother, Arthur, was a fine cricketer and led Heckmondwike to a hat-trick of wins in the Heavy Woollen Cup, the oldest club cricket competition in England, between 1936 and 1938. In 1938 he married Mary Crowther, a member of Spen Valley lacrosse team, and Horace was best man.

Horace, born in 1913, always said it was only because he was the youngest child, and the older ones were earning, that he was able to stay on at school and go into higher education. At Heckmondwike Grammar School, he won a maths scholarship to Leeds University, where he gained a first. A superb all-round sportsman, he played squash for the university and captained it at both hockey and cricket. In addition, he captained the

Combined British Universities cricket team, as well as playing hockey and cricket for Yorkshire, albeit a solitary appearance in the case of the latter.

Making his debut for the Yorkshire 2nd XI in 1935, he topped the averages the following year, scoring 449 runs from ten completed innings, and according to *Wisden*, 'stood out above any of his colleagues'. He was markedly less successful in 1937 but he did make his championship debut against Middlesex as an amateur, a late replacement for the England batsman, Maurice Leyland. Batting at number five in a side that contained legendary names such as Herbert Sutcliffe, Len Hutton, Hedley Verity and Bill Bowes, he made 8 and 9, sharing a brief partnership with Hutton in the second innings during which he complained that Hutton kept monopolising the strike.

That same year Horace began teaching at King Edward VII School, Sheffield, and it was there that he met Marjory Goldsmith, a fellow mathematician who taught at the sister school. Brought up in Surrey and educated at London University, Midge, as she was known, was a warm, sprightly person whose love of sport, especially netball and tennis, made her the ideal wife for Horace. They married, and on the outbreak of war they moved south when he enlisted in the Royal Navy. On being ordered to report to HMS *Hood* in March 1941, he was delayed on the railway and arrived in time to see the battleship putting out to sea. Two months later, she was sunk by the *Bismarck* with the loss of all but three of her crew of 1,418.

With Horace away for much of the war either on the high seas or in South Africa, where he taught navigation and meteorology to ratings, life was hard for Midge. After a spell living with her mother in Ealing, west London, she was evacuated to Yorkshire before moving to Portsmouth once Horace, now a Lieutenant Commander, was stationed there. On his discharge in 1946, he

returned to teaching, first as head of maths at Sloane School, before joining CLS in January 1950 and remaining there till his retirement in 1978.

A warm, friendly man with a droll sense of humour, Horace was a natural schoolmaster liked and admired by his colleagues for his reliability and integrity. Never one to get embroiled in petty disputes, his down-to-earth bluntness and Yorkshire common sense ensured that the common room maintained its sense of perspective.

A gifted teacher of maths and mechanics, he made his lessons both interesting and fun. Having explained a topic for 10 or 15 minutes he would then give the class examples to work on, making himself available to those who were in difficulty. On occasions he would invite individuals to explain solutions and Terry Heard, later head of Maths at CLS, recalls that it was the satisfaction gleaned from such an experience that persuaded him to become a teacher.

Horace's ability to empathise with the less able was his particular forte. In later years, ex-pupils would come up to Mike and share their delight at his father getting them through their O-level Maths, and how both he and they did a jig of celebration when they heard the result. 'I had a great affection for Horace,' recalled former pupil John McGeorge. 'He was a very warm character; both as teacher and friend. He did not tell us how to solve a mathematical problem: he would solve it with us, as our friend.'

'Horace displayed a pastoral interest in us, very important during our turbulent teenage years, and to me personally he showed great kindness.'^[1]

In addition to his work in the classroom, Horace played a leading role in the life of the school: organising the timetable, singing in the choir, coaching rugby and hockey and running

the school cricket. Although the least sentimental of men, he would always help those in trouble, on one occasion standing up for a boy whose strong right-wing views had alienated the School Society, even though his own politics were very different. It was a measure of the man that when Mike was in his class, he didn't favour him over other pupils and that Mike, in turn, was never embarrassed by having his father teach or coach him. He thought his father a 'terrific teacher' and once commended his style of 'invisible leadership' to a panel of international cricket umpires.

From 1945 the Brearleys lived at 62 Brentham Way in Brentham Garden Suburb, Ealing. It was the coming of the Great Western Railway in 1838 which opened up Ealing to the rest of London and led to a surge in development. Brentham Garden Suburb, built between 1901 and 1915, was the original garden suburb built on co-partnership principles, primarily by Henry Vivian, a trade unionist, the chairman of the Ealing Tenants Ltd and later a Liberal MP. Committed to the ideal of communal living in beautiful surroundings, the directors of Ealing Tenants designed cottage homes for working people in the Arts and Crafts style, each with their own garden. It was in this 'paradise' that Fred Perry, the greatest of all British lawn tennis players, grew up in the years after the First World War, and its green open spaces held a special appeal to Horace. Hailing from the industrial north, he used to marvel at the sight of trees in the street.

Growing up in their modest, terraced home, one of 600 or so on the Brentham estate, Mike and his two younger sisters, Jill and Margy, enjoyed a happy, secure childhood. Both Horace and Midge were warm, loving personalities who provided the most stable and caring of environments. Friends of Mike such as Brian Waters, John McGeorge and Martin Smith, who were guests at

their home, recall the gracious hospitality. Shunning her teaching career for the responsibilities of motherhood, Midge was very happy with her close family, cooking, walking and playing the piano, as well as supporting them in all their endeavours.

Inheriting their parents' sharp intelligence, all three children succeeded at school and developed a wide range of cultural interests, but it was sport that most preoccupied them, with Mike persuading his sisters to bowl at him. His requests couldn't have been too taxing, since they remained very close to him and, in later years, they accompanied their parents to Lord's to watch him play.

At the heart of the Brentham estate was the Brentham Club and Institute, a focus for social and sporting life, adjoining 12 acres of cricket, hockey and football fields, as well as numerous tennis courts. Situated two minutes from the Brearley home, it became the centre of their universe, Horace playing cricket and football for Brentham, Midge and Jill active on the tennis courts and the young Mike an avid spectator. In the football season, when play was safely down the other end, he would chat to the Brentham goalkeeper Paul Swann, who, along with his brother, John, was one of his great heroes. Not only were both of them excellent footballers and cricketers, especially John, a classic left-hand bat, an accurate leg-spinner and a fine fielder good enough to have played for Middlesex, they were both men of sterling character who, like Horace, exemplified the very best of sporting values.

The coming of peace saw the re-emergence of Horace's cricket career. Aside from playing twice for Middlesex in 1949 – his second match against Somerset marked Fred Titmus's debut, aged 16 – and gaining his 2nd XI cap, he became a pillar of the Brentham club, scoring 15,000 runs for them as a solid opening batsman. David Bloomfield, a leading player for many years and

now the club president, recalls how he had a great influence on everyone at the club, a source of encouragement to the younger members. Always kitted out in plimsolls, fast bowlers would try to hit his toes with a yorker but he was more than capable of looking after himself.

By the age of two, Mike was batting in the garden. Immediately captivated by the game, he laid out his own little pitch, mowed it and rolled it, before playing out his fantasy matches, his hero being Jack Robertson, Middlesex's prolific opener in the post-war era and a professional version of his father. 'From a very early age, my father was instilling in me not only a straight bat and a pointed left elbow [which had a suspiciously Yorkshire quality],' he later wrote, 'but also a sense of who was bowling and why someone else should have been; of where certain fielders stood and why they ought to have been elsewhere.'^[2] Encouraging and supportive, Horace would spend hours making him dive for catches, but if they were playing catch uphill he'd be at the higher point so if Mike missed it, he would have to go all the way down the hill to retrieve the ball. It was the same when his father bowled to him at the recreation ground near the house they rented in Bognor each year, since Mike would have to run to fetch the ball whether he missed it or hit it.

At the age of seven his mother escorted him to Lord's for the first time to watch Middlesex and, shortly after joining CLS, his father took him to Jack Hobbs's sports shop in Fleet Street to buy him his first cricket bat, signed by 'The Master'. That same year he played in his first official match at Middleton-on-Sea in Sussex, near Bognor, where his family holidayed throughout the 1950s. As a small boy Mike would wander along the beach asking to join cricket games in progress, inducing a certain exasperation from those who couldn't get him out, before he gravitated to something more challenging.

Every August from 1945 to the 1960s, a local parish councillor, Betty Richards, organised a month of sporting activity for children at the Middleton Sports Club, including a colts' cricket week. When Middleton found themselves one short against Worthing Colts, a team comprising boys as old as 18, Brearley stepped in as a late replacement. Clad in his long whites which his aunt had managed to send him in time, he batted at number ten and scored 5*, a hook and an off-drive. Two years later, he was photographed in the local paper playing for the colts alongside Mike Griffith, later a team-mate at Cambridge; then aged 14, he scored two fours off the Bognor Colts' opening bowler John Snow, the spearhead of the England attack in the late 1960s and early 70s. As he hit his second four, Brearley's mother heard Snow's father say that her son would one day play for England. Such praise wouldn't have gone to his head because Horace's down-to-earth Yorkshire mentality wouldn't stand for it. Days later he had cause to quietly rebuke him for boasting as they walked round the Middleton boundary. 'I felt and can still feel the shame,' Brearley later wrote. 'I had been both arrogant and falsely modest, commenting to Mike Griffith and my father that my wicketkeeping was not "quite as good as Mike's on the leg side".'^[3]

That same year, playing for the Middleton Sunday XI, Brearley came up against another future great cricketer, the Nawab of Pataudi, later captain of India, at Wisborough Green. Between them they barely troubled the scorers but this was the exception rather than the rule as Brearley began to make his mark, impressing Mike Griffith with his talent and application, 'one of those people who meant business'. A Middleton XI, comprising two Brearleys and two Griffiths – Billy, a former England wicketkeeper who made 140 on his debut against the West Indies in 1948, and his son Mike, a future captain of Sussex

– took some beating. Playing against the Musketeers, the 16-year-old Brearley hit Freddie Brown, the former England captain, for four off the back foot before Brown gained his revenge, bowling him for 33.

Back in 1955, Brearley had made his debut for Brentham, aged 13, against South Hampstead, making 0*, and he followed this, weeks later, with 3* against Malden Wanderers, a raucous side who felt miffed that they couldn't bowl short at him. 'After his father had scored 64 valuable runs ...,' reported the local paper, 'young Michael Brearley batted like a veteran to ensure a draw for his club.'^[4]

Aside from the odd appearance over the next couple of years, he played in the Sunday team in 1958, the club's golden jubilee, and although not that productive his promise was clear to all. The secretary reported: 'Michael Brearley, not yet 18, is a batsman of the future who also bowls and keeps wicket. It has been said he will be a better player than his father.'^[5]

The comment would have amused Horace since he gave no quarter in any contest with his son. Always physically strong and immensely competitive, he would let Mike lead 20-16 at table tennis before he'd come back to win 22-20, and it was only when aged 59 that he lost to him at squash. Still top of the Brentham averages at the age of 57, Horace continued to turn out for the CLS staff well into his sixties, when his evident despair at a missed opportunity by the captain was all too apparent. His competitiveness rubbed off on his son. 'My father is a Yorkshireman ... and I think I've got something of his attitude. I like to try to win,' Brearley later informed the *Sunday Times*.^[6] 'His father approached his cricket intellectually, the sort of man who wanted to discuss all the intricacies of the game,' noted David Bloomfield. 'Michael was very much in that vogue. He was a very correct, strict player.'^[7]

After attending North Ealing Primary School, one of the best schools in the borough, with his sisters, Brearley graduated to CLS, aged ten, a 40-minute trip down the District line from Ealing Broadway.

CLS, an independent day school for nearly 900 boys between the ages of 10 and 18, was founded in 1834 by a private act of parliament following a bequest from John Carpenter, a former town clerk to the City of London, who died in 1442. His bequest was administered by the Corporation of London for the benefit of local children. When a report by the Charity Commission in 1823 revealed that the accumulated funds had greatly exceeded the educational expenses, the decision was taken to found a permanent school. Originally established at premises in Milk Street off Cheapside by the Corporation of London, the new school appealed to progressive sentiment because of its non-denominational status and its emphasis on subjects such as science and commerce, as well as more traditional ones such as classics. As its popularity soared, its pupil body including the future Liberal prime minister Herbert Asquith, it soon outgrew its site and it moved to a new one, just west of Blackfriars Bridge on the Victoria Embankment, in 1883. The imposing new building, high Victorian in style, housed the Great Hall with its stained-glass windows and impressive organ, where the school gathered every day in assembly.

Compared to its older, prestigious neighbours, Westminster, Dulwich and St Paul's, CLS was more socially diverse, with many of the suburban middle class taking advantage of its low fees and generous number of scholarships. The school contained a sizeable Jewish minority who benefited from its ethos of tolerance and diversity. The poet and novelist Sir Kingsley Amis, who was a pupil there between 1934 and 1942, wrote:

HIS FATHER'S SON

I have never in my life known a community where factions of any kind were less in evidence, where differences of class, upbringing, income group and religion counted for so little.

The academic teaching was of a standard not easily to be surpassed, but more important still was that lesson about how to regard one's fellows, a lesson not delivered but enacted.^[8]

His words still applied in the 1950s following the school's evacuation to Marlborough during the war years. The common room contained many schoolmasters of dedication and brilliance who left a lasting impression on their charges, none more so than the classicists, the Rev. C.J. Ellingham, who also taught English, and H.C. Oakley. Ellingham was a gruff muscular Christian, who inspired both Kingsley Amis and, later, the renowned literary critic John Gross with his love of poetry, while Oakley, a committed Baptist of sheer goodness, nurtured generations of Oxbridge classicists. According to Barrie Fairall, a contemporary of Brearley's, who recalls his schooldays with much pleasure, they had some marvellously kind and long-suffering teachers.

What disturbed the tranquil waters of the common room was the arrival in 1950 of the new headmaster, Dr A.W. Barton, from King Edward VII, Sheffield, the school where Horace Brearley had previously taught. Unlike his revered predecessor, Dr F.R. Dale, a distinguished classicist and war hero, Barton was a physicist from Nottingham and his provincial roots bred in him an insecurity that he was never able to shed. His autocratic style and rigid insensitivity won him few friends among his colleagues, especially after sending home the director of music because the jacket and trousers of his suit didn't fit. Yet behind his austere exterior, he wanted the best for the boys and he set out to achieve this by appointing younger masters, raising academic standards and advancing the cause of music.

Helped by a free education available to all staff children, Brearley entered CLS in September 1952 and immediately flourished, singing in the choir, playing the clarinet in the orchestra and excelling both at work and sport. In his book, *The Art of Captaincy*, he relays his earliest memories of leadership when captaining the CLS under-12 football XI against Forest School. Awarded a penalty by the Forest referee with the score still tied at 0-0, he admitted to shirking his responsibilities of taking the penalty but having failed to persuade anyone else to take his place, he stepped up to the mark. Without any thought as to placement, he ran in and kicked the ball as hard as he could in the general direction of the goal. The ball hit the bar and bounced back but, despite knowing the rule that stipulated that after the penalty kick some other player must be the next to touch the ball, Brearley still kicked it into the net. The referee rightly disallowed the goal and CLS went on to lose 5-0. ‘Even as I write this,’ he wrote in *The Art of Captaincy*, ‘I tremble and sweat from reliving the anxiety of the awful moment as well as from embarrassment at my absolute lack of coolness, followed by misguided coolness. Captaincy material, was I? It is hard to believe.’^[9]

On a happier note he scored his first century aged 11 when scoring 120* against Forest, an achievement that won him a copy of the MCC coaching book from Rev. Ellingham. A stalwart of the under-13 XI for two years – in 1954 he excelled as a leg-break bowler taking 5-22 against Forest and 8-21 against Dulwich – he was promoted to the under-14s a year early in 1955 to give him stiffer competition.

CLS, in line with its location at the heart of the capital, boasted a rich extra-curricular life which appealed to someone of Brearley’s all-round interests. While prominent in the major sports, and participating in boxing, tennis, athletics, cross-

country and swimming at house level, he also acted and debated alongside a talented group of contemporaries: the film director Michael Apted, the philosopher Jonathan Barnes, the poet Anthony Rudolf, the actor John Shrapnel, the businessman Peter Levene (later Lord Mayor of London) and the political scientist Michael Pinto-Duschinsky.

Terry Heard, a classmate of Brearley's in the middle school, where he frequently won classics and English prizes, remembers him as one of those outstanding characters who excelled at everything but was very nice and unassuming. His view was endorsed by Barrie Fairall, later a sports journalist, who noted his photographic memory and ability to assimilate information very quickly. He recalls that one of Brearley's essays about squashing an annoying fly flat on his masterpiece was shown to his class as an example of imaginative writing.

Compared to many independent schools, field sports at CLS lacked kudos and, consequently, the captains of rugby and cricket weren't revered figures. In keeping with the character of the school, 1950s sport wasn't compulsory. On Wednesday afternoons, when games for the all-age groups were held at their playing fields at Grove Park ten miles away, boys who did not wish to participate could wander off into central London.

A natural ball player with excellent hand-eye coordination and the quickest of reactions, Brearley proved adept at Eton Fives – a form of handball in an oddly shaped court – so much so that in the opinion of his team-mate Anthony Rudolf he could have been something special had he really concentrated on the game. On one occasion he was due to play against Eton the day after the house cross-country run. The fives master, Tom Manning, didn't want him to participate, so that he would be fresh for this prestigious match, but Brearley refused to withdraw and the headmaster ruled in his favour. He duly ran and came tenth, but

paid for it the next day. Two sets up, Brearley ran out of steam and he and his partner lost 3-2.

Playing first pair with Robert Thatcher in 1958-59, they reached the semi-final of the Public Schools Eton Fives Championship, CLS's best-ever result, before losing 3-1 to the eventual winners Aldenham. 'One of the best players we have had. If he lacked anything it was real crispness,' declared *The City of London School Magazine* as it assessed his contribution to CLS fives.^[10]

At cricket, Brearley's promise was such that, aged barely 14, he made his debut for the 1st XI, beginning a five-year stint in the team, which, even allowing for the relatively low profile of cricket at CLS, was some achievement.

Batting at number seven, he made 18* in his first match against Emanuel and followed up with 18 against St Dunstan's College in his next innings. Runs became harder after that, his last eight innings yielding a mere 37 runs, and against the Staff he was stumped for 5 off his father. 'A promising bat with a sound defence and correct technique,' recorded *The City of London School Magazine*. 'He must learn to hit the loose ball harder.'^[11]

Promoted to opener the following year, he became the ballast of the CLS team, his 73* against MCC being the highlight. 'Most encouraging was the batting of Brearley, who scored over 400 runs at the age of 15,' noted *Wisden*.^[12]

He maintained his progress in 1958, with half-centuries against the Frogs, a prominent wandering club, and the Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' School, although his liking for the pull led to his downfall on several occasions. A useful leg-break bowler, he took 17 wickets, including 5-35 against Chigwell, and had the satisfaction of dismissing his father for 80 in the Staff match, but as he grew, he could no longer spin or control the ball, so he took up wicketkeeping instead.

On inheriting the captaincy in 1959, Brearley really came into his own in a year in which CLS only lost one school match. His progress was helped by the hiring of Reg Routledge, the former Middlesex all-rounder, as coach. He got him to move his top hand behind the bat and drag the bat down with it, as well as constantly telling him, 'Let the ball come to you.' After beginning with 26 and 5 he then showed his class with 83 against Forest, 77 against Merchants Taylors', 103* against the Forty Club, 126 against Eltham, 107 against the Old Citizens, 111* against Chigwell, 79* against Bancroft's and 111 against the Staff.

In those days it was a school tradition that anyone who scored a century for the school, a fairly rare occurrence, was given a cricket bat by the headmaster. John McGeorge recalls an assembly presided over by the second master Cyril Nobbs, who, after making reference to another Brearley century, commented wryly, 'That will cost the headmaster another bat.' In actual fact, according to the novelist Julian Barnes, several years his junior, Brearley gallantly declined to claim more than one bat a season, no doubt on the advice of his father.

Even though the CLS circuit wasn't that strong, Brearley's average of 84.58 for 1959 was remarkable. Only once before had a City batsman scored two centuries in one season, let alone four, and no one had ever scored 1,000 runs. While *The City of London School Magazine* suggested he should lean into his off-drive, instead of getting most of the power from his arms, it commended him for his excellent defence, his reliable wicketkeeping and his intelligent captaincy. Used to discussing tactics with his father since the age of eight, Brearley, according to Lionel Knight, then a member of the 2nd XI, had a transformative effect at both encouraging teams and individuals. He recalls playing under an unenterprising captain in the 2nd XI whose overriding aim was

not to lose and Brearley, playing on the adjoining pitch, suggested to this captain that he could win the match. His words changed everything since Brearley was the one person whom the 2nd XI captain would listen to.

He was also an impressive ambassador for his team. Barrie Lloyd, who twice played for the Frogs against CLS when Brearley was captain, recalls him as a charming young man, testimony to a father whom Lloyd found both warm and encouraging as he strove to establish himself in club cricket.

During the winter of 1958-59, Brearley had attended nets at Lord's and had come under the supervision of the former Middlesex leg-spinner Jim Sims, a genial, humorous man inclined to utter platitudes out of the side of his mouth. 'Michael,' he would say, 'a straight ball has a certain quality about it. If you miss it you've 'ad it.'

That summer Brearley opened the batting for the Middlesex Young Amateurs, striking gold in their final match against Surrey at The Oval. Batting first, Middlesex struggled early on against their giant opening bowler Richard Jefferson, fresh from a highly successful season at Winchester where he'd taken 56 wickets. With the ball moving all over the place, Brearley was fortunate to avoid facing Jefferson before the latter broke the heel of his boot, forcing him to leave the field for the rest of the morning while he went shopping for another pair of size 12s. By the time he returned after lunch, Brearley had reached his century. He was finally out for 115, lbw to Jefferson.

With his captaincy of cricket, his high profile in the school and the esteem in which he was held, Brearley appeared a strong candidate to be head of school. Rumours to that effect circulated after he was made a prefect halfway through his penultimate year, but he had to be content with being senior prefect and head of Carpenter House. It has been suggested that the headmaster

didn't appoint him to avoid accusations of favouritism, given Horace's position in the common room, but this is to speculate.

Contrary to its progressive ethos in matters of religious toleration, voluntary games and the absence of fagging, CLS had a more repressive side. Not only was the Combined Cadet Force compulsory – Brearley was in the Naval Section and passed Advanced Naval Proficiency – the powers of the prefect body were considerable, not least the power to beat. Compared to some prefects who flaunted their authority to excess, Brearley was very self-effacing, staunchly resisting any form of bullying. He was also a model diplomat. When his good friend John McGeorge flouted school rules by eating a sandwich in the classroom, Brearley said to him, 'John, you are putting me in a very difficult situation,' a conundrum which McGeorge readily accepted. He thought Brearley a natural leader since success in no way turned his head. It was a view endorsed by Anthony Rudolf. Brearley commanded respect, he recalled, because he was friendly, intelligent and unassuming, while *The City of London School Magazine* noted that he led Carpenter House 'with an enthusiasm that prompted even the youngest boys to follow his example'.^[13]

Given his outstanding intellect, his choice of subjects for the sixth form wasn't entirely straightforward. Shunning maths which both his parents had specialised in, he opted for classics 'largely because I was good at it, it was well taught, and it seemed the respectable thing to do'.^[14] It proved an apt choice because under the tutelage of the head of classics, Dennis Moore, and Stanley Ward, he won both the Latin and Greek Verse Prizes in 1959, in addition to the Sir James Shaw Classical Prize, and elected to sit the Cambridge entrance exam.

Once he'd set his sights on Cambridge, Horace asked Colin Ranger, a young biology master, if he would give some time to

take Mike through the evidence and principles of evolution, since the evolution of species was one of the topics covered in the Oxbridge General Paper. So Brearley went to Ranger on a one-to-one basis in the biology library for an hour or so on a couple of Wednesday afternoons. 'It goes without saying that he was assiduous in his work, made use of the literature in the library and came prepared,' recalled Ranger. 'MB was much reported in the staff room with interest and pleasure, partly because his father was on the staff but mostly because he was a pleasing character who generated a presence, something to do with leadership qualities I would venture.'^[15]

His efforts reaped their reward with a minor scholarship at St John's College, Cambridge, part of his roll of honour in his final year: winner of Dr Conquest's Gold Medal for the best overall academic achievement, winner of A Special Prize for all-round service to the School Games, winner of the Classical Association (London) Greek Reading Prize, first pair in the fives team and 1st XV rugby colours. 'His first-class handling and deceptive side step made him a formidable three-quarters in attack,' commented *The City of London School Magazine*. 'However, here he was handicapped by a certain lack of speed. He was strong in defence and his touch kicking was very good.'^[16]

He also became a leading thespian. Each year the school play was exquisitely produced by the debonair Geoffrey Clark, who managed to make all kinds of boys exceed their capacity. Martin Neary, later Organist and Master of the Choristers at Westminster Abbey, remembers a reluctant Brearley being given a small walking-on part and being coaxed into something more positive than might have been expected. After previous minor parts in *Androcles and the Lion* and *Henry V*, he performed as one of the citizens in scenes from *Julius Caesar* before the renowned actress Dame Edith Evans on Beaufoy and Mortimer Prize

Day, and played Horatio alongside John Shrapnel's Hamlet and Michael Apted's Claudius in *Hamlet*. 'Brearley was very steady and dignified in speech and bearing contrasting nicely with the volatile Prince,' remarked *The City of London School Magazine*; 'he gave the noble concluding lines very firmly.'^[17] He then participated in a sixth-form modern dress performance of *The Frogs* by the Ancient Greek playwright Aristophanes in the theatre of the Guildhall School of Music. 'J.M. Brearley as Dionysius sustained his difficult and exacting part well, in the double character of the unheroic god of wine and the patron of drama.'^[18]

Overshadowing all his accomplishments was his success on the cricket field. 'City of London will be captained again by J.M. Brearley, a batsman with quite a phenomenal record behind him,' commented *The Times* in their preview of his final season. 'It is a tall order to have to build a side round one man, but Brearley is the only full colour left.'^[19] After a quiet start with one fifty in his first seven innings, he returned to form with 99 against the Frogs, 109* against Chigwell, 60 against Haberdashers' 95* against the Staff and 89* against Bancroft's, the next top score being 9. Robin Sengupta, later a good friend, recalls bowling chinamen for Haberdashers' when Brearley was dispatching his team to all parts, and appealing loudly for lbw out of sheer desperation. 'It was a rank bad appeal because he was quite a distance down the wicket. I felt bad about it and apologised to Mike at the end of the over. His response left me stunned. He said, "Don't worry about it." But then went on to say, "You would have had to worry if I had been given out."

'That for me embodied everything Mike was ... competitive, yet witty and with a double dose of intelligence.'^[20]

'Although he was not quite so prolific as in the previous season, his batting developed in maturity and power,' wrote

The City of London School Magazine. ‘Shots off the back foot went through the covers for fours instead of ones, while his on-driving became, at times, very aggressive. A neat and effective wicketkeeper. A first-class captain with a thorough knowledge of the game and a keen appraisal of the tactical situation.’^[21]

‘Brearley in his final year averaged 68 for 615 runs,’ wrote the *Evening News*’s cricket correspondent E.M. Wellings in *Wisden*. ‘He spent five years in the school team, and his complete aggregate was 2,651 runs with an average of 53. Brearley headed the averages in the last four years. The importance of his batting in 1960 was shown by the fact that the second average was merely 17, 51 below Brearley’s mark.’^[22]

He continued his summer in prolific form for the Old Citizens, the alumni cricket club for CLS. ‘Michael Brearley has, of course, been a great asset when he has been able to play,’ commented their journal *The Gazette*. ‘In his first eight innings he has scored 556 runs, including three centuries, and averaged over ninety.’^[23] He also captained the Middlesex Young Amateurs, scored several half-centuries for Middlesex 2nd XI, and played for both the Southern Schools against the Rest and the Public Schools against the Combined Services at Lord’s. In both matches he kept wicket and opened with Edward Craig, a prodigious run scorer at Charterhouse who exceeded Peter May’s aggregate and average there, making 0 and 34 in the first match and 2 and 46 in the second.

For all Brearley’s accomplishments at CLS, he remained a grounded, self-effacing individual. The headmaster, Dr Barton, at his final speech day in November 1964, looking back at his 14 years in charge there, cited Brearley’s career at school and university as one of the highlights. ‘With all his remarkable achievements he remains a modest young man, one of the most remarkable ever produced by Oxford and Cambridge.’^[24]

Others drew a similar picture, but while mentioning the high esteem in which he was held, they stress there was no adulation, since it wasn't that kind of school.

For several years after leaving, Brearley remained in contact with the school, playing fives and cricket for the Old Citizens. Thereafter, despite attending the annual dinner of the 1960 Society, comprising all the prefects of that year, he has had little to do with the school till more recent times, perhaps a reflection of his mildly anti-elitist outlook manifest throughout his career.