

CRICKET

Focus on - Blackley

Toast to fine history

ON May 7 1869 Blackley United played away at Elland and lost by 20 runs. Later on in the summer they visited Lindwell Victoria, going down this time by 18 runs.

There is also evidence to suggest that a group of local men each chipped in 1½d per week to get the club up and running around this time.

In the early days, 'local rules' applied at Blackley's picturesque home ground.

If a ball hit the boundary it was two; if it cleared the fence it was four. And there was no pavilion as such - just a small wooden hut adjacent to where the Golden Fleece pub now stands.

And there were tennis courts too, sited adjacent to the pub.

Blackley's first recorded game took place in June 1870, while in 1880 they moved into league cricket (possibly the West Vale League).

The club still possesses a book of minutes that stretches back to the first years of the twentieth century.

The highlights? A call for a lawn-mower price list (1903); a motion in favour of a weekly 'dancing' night in the pavilion (1904); and a suggestion to the effect that a fixture against Salendine Nook be accompanied by a garden party (1906).

In 1920 Blackley joined the Huddersfield



Glory days: The Blackley side that won the 1967 Parish Cup final

Cricket Association League and reached the Lumb Cup final.

Later, during the Second World War, we are told that the cricket square was kept in neat condition by locals playing bowls on it!

Blackley's ground was put up for sale in 1946, and, with the club not having enough funds, Mr Fred Wilkinson, club president, bought it and drew up a 999-year lease.

In 1970 the club was informed that a section of the cricket ground was required for the new M62 slip road.

Work on a new pavilion began in 1976 - but was halted as high winds ripped the new roof off before it was finally completed.

However, following the disaster, work did re-start.

On the eve of the new pavilion opening, club members were devastated by the death of their popular president, Richard Wilkinson.

Today, Blackley possess a picturesque ground - and a pub on the boundary for all thirsty fielders!

The 15th in a Saturday series on Calderdale cricket clubs by Dr Peter Davies of the Cricket Heritage Project at Huddersfield University

FACT FILE

Founded: c.1869
 Ground: Lindley Road
 Local Landmark: Golden Fleece public house
 Former Grounds: Blackley Field (South Lane)
 Greatest Moment: Winning three trophies in 1986
 Local Hero: Julie Pearson - club stalwart and secretary
 Bizarre Fact: About a century ago, the print run for the club's matchday programme was 250 - quite a readership!