

BLACKLEY CRICKET CLUB



(Permission was given to quote from the pamphlet prepared in 1978 for the opening of the new pavilion and from other documents).

The first record of cricket in Blackley was on 7th May 1869 when Blackley United played Elland at the Elland Club and scored 15 to Elland's 35. At that time the season was much longer, starting in April and going through to mid-October. 1870 saw the first home game (against Lindley United) on the then Blackley home ground at the top of South Lane, known at the time as Blackley Field. Members of the team included three Dysons, a Garside and a Berry – these names still had links with the Club in 1978. The first available committee minutes recorded are dated 21.4.1903.

Before the end of the nineteenth century the Club had moved to its present location when Blackley Field was sold for building land and the row of houses were built at the top of South Lane.

The new field was owned by the Ainley family of the Wappy Spring Brewery. It sloped quite steeply and 'bowling uphill' was a literal description of what faced cricketers. Being smaller than the average pitch, adjustments were called for in scoring, a 'boundary' counted as 2 runs and a hit over the wall as 4.

Around 1880, Blackley joined League Cricket. It is not certain which League but, over the years, there has been both a First and Second team. Moments of glory included winning the Lumb Cup in 1936 and the second team being Division Two Champions in 1967. In 1987 they were promoted into the First Division and were finalists in the Parish Cup. The Club was initially without a pavilion but had a changing hut in the bottom corner of the field by *The Golden Fleece*. Blackley later joined the Huddersfield Cricket Association around the

time of the First World War, though this was not actually mentioned in the minutes of the Club until 1921. In the absence of players serving in the Forces during both the First and Second World Wars, bowls were played on the pitch. It was not until 1954 that the Club joined the Halifax Cricket League, where they still remain.

Tennis was played in the bottom *Golden Fleece* corner of the field and the nets had to be moved for cricket matches and so a more convenient strategy had to be effected and eventually the tennis courts were moved to the area which is now Blackley New Road and the slip road to the M62. In this area the existing houses were demolished for the Motorway Project and the former total of 55 houses in the village was considerably reduced. It was recorded at the time that many of the population of Blackley were older, retired people.

There were always wide and varied social events at the Club – socials, bowling suppers, concerts, dances and other activities either hosted on site or in venues like Blackley Baptist Sunday School. Social events still continue as a main adjunct to the matches played. Over the years there have been strong links with the Baptist Church; the Club President was a member there and the Club grounds were made available to members of the church for events and matches. The Ministers of the church were earlier often listed as Vice-Presidents of the Club and served on the committee.

In 1901 a brick pavilion was built and later, in 1932, it was extended to include a Score Box and storeroom. It remained thus till 1978 when the new pavilion was completed. After the Second World War, there was an energetic period of alterations. In 1946, the field was leveled and over five feet, mostly shale, was removed from the top of the field opposite *The Golden Fleece* and infilled at the bottom. The Ground had been made available for sale in 1946 and the then President, Mr. F. Wilkinson, who had links with both the Brickworks and Blackley Church had acquired the land from Mrs. B. Sutcliffe. After presenting the deeds to the Club on 22nd June 1946, he spoke and recalled that he and other school friends, mainly aged 8 to 10, had some seventy years previously formed a Club there and paid 1½d. weekly. He also described how the land was previously leveled and of the extent of that task. Mr. Wilkinson provided the land on a 999 year lease. He remained a very active President for many years and, in 1951, described Blackley as "the most progressive Club in the League".

1970 saw extensions to the playing area. The bank at the bottom of the field was dug out and extended by several feet, following the gift of this land by Websters Brewery. A retaining wall was begun and completed by 1972 and was heightened and reinforced by netting. At the other end, the M62 sliproad cut through the field and negotiations were entered into in 1974 so that the

small amount of land which was then made otherwise unusable became part of the Cricket Club. This final extension to the Club almost doubled the size of the original playing area. In 1978, the Club purchased an ex-Army hut which became the 'tea-room' and was erected on an area of allotments which had remained uncultivated during the post-Second World War period.

Blackley Cricket Club has always been involved with the community and had hosted many functions for men, women and children. Early in the 20th century, local firms were used to provide catering supplies, an example of this is milk purchased from Ambler's Farm, now *Blackley House*. Local groups were used as part of the entertainment programme and a minute of 1st June 1934 refers to an offer from Kew Hill Methodist Sunday School "to give their operetta" to raise Club funds. During the First World war, (Minute 6.9.1916), it was heartening to read "that all soldiers connected with the top of the hill shall have a parcel"; the War affected many local families; casualties are recorded in Blackley Baptist Church.

News from the 1978 Club booklet of the Opening of the pavilion commented of the past time, "in their heyday Blackley lads were a boisterous bunch, throwing sods over the cricket field wall at the inhabitants of Kew Hill as they walked to the match"; luckily, in this respect, times have changed !

At the present time, the outset of the 21st century, Blackley Cricket Club continues to maintain its outward-looking and progressive policy. It now has three open-age teams and boys' teams (under 12s, under 15s and under 17s). Practice times are on Saturday mornings and matches can be Saturday, Sunday or mid-week. In 2001, the First Team was promoted to the First Division, after winning the Second Division Championship. Also the Ladies Team, which had not fielded a side for some years, started to consider fixtures and continue to do so in 2003. It is interesting to note that in the 1960s there had been several local Ladies players who attended Blackley Church when the link there was particularly strong. In 2002, the Sunday side (Third Team) won the Courier Cup and the Second Team was promoted to Section 'C'. In this same year, the under 17s team made an excellent showing in winning the Collinson Cup and the League, in fact this was the fourth consecutive year that they had been League Champions. The Club has now 140 members and continues its range of social activities for all age groups. One is certainly assured of a warm welcome.