

BLACKLEY CC

HOME SWEET HOME



In July 2001, Yorkshire under-13s took on Cheshire under-13s at Blackley. One online reporter described the venue as *'small and neat...an Emmerdale setting and a family-run club'*. No doubt officials at the Club would be pleased with this verdict.



The cricket ground - notoriously chilly according to some seasoned cricket-watchers - is situated on the southern fringes of Elland, and is one of those sporting venues that you can spot from all around.



For those in the vicinity of the Junction 23-24 stretch of the M62, BCC's headquarters is easy to locate. From Outlane CC's motorway-adjacent ground, it is easy to pick it out in the distance - it's the patch of green with all those little white men scurrying around.

Actually, from Outlane, Blackley looks a long way away. But when you saunter down Kew Hill, and then drop down onto Lindley Road, it seems to be a lot closer. For the record, O.C.C. to B.C.C. is a gentle 15-minute stroll.



The view from Outlane C.C. to Blackley C.C.

On arrival, one is greeted by a tidy sporting arena with much character: the Golden Fleece in the bottom corner of the field (surely the winner of the 'Closest Pub in Yorkshire to a Cricket Field' award?), the handsome white changing rooms, and the bungalow-like clubhouse, complete with new front gate and delightful garden. The views are also stirring, especially southwards, and upwards, towards the M62.



After a freak storm destroyed the old pavilion at 8.30am on 29 November 1976, a B.C.C. 'Disaster Appeal' was launched (apparently, one local pensioner saved up £5 over five weeks and donated it to the Club!).



On 13 August 1978 the new clubhouse was officially opened by Yorkshire fast bowler Tony Nicholson and dedicated to the memory of Richard M. Wilkinson, President of the Club between 1974 and 1978. The booklet produced to accompany the big event included this statement from the Club: ***'Because of the generosity and the love for village cricket that is so much part of Yorkshire life this pavilion stands...as a symbol of that generosity and sentiment...A new pavilion at Blackley that will span at least the next 100 years.'***



Two other tributes were included in the brochure. From R.M. Wilson, Club president: ***'When I became President of Blackley Cricket Club in 1974 I expressed my concern regarding the rapidly deteriorating condition of the old tea room. It was clear in my mind that unless something was done quickly, our Cricket Club would die with the village.'***



And from Roy Smith, Halifax League president: ***'Many remember the difficulties you [at Blackley CC] had to overcome at the start, but quickly these were put aside and your new venture began. Your new pavilion is a credit to you all. I hope your ground never gets surrounded by houses, as cricket grounds do more for the local community and the environment than planners realise.'***



Today, the clubhouse is particularly welcoming. The bar greets all visitors; the catering area is at the far end (the tea ladies can rustle up a very nice ham salad for the visiting spectator at very short notice); and the changing areas beyond that.



The rest of the building is dominated by framed photos and memorabilia. There's a portrait of Fred Wilkinson, the man who donated the ground to the Club in 1946, and two team photos from 1924 (1st XI and 2nd XI). Due prominence is also given to the Blackley elevens who won the Lumb Cup in 1936 and the Armitage Shield in 1948.



A second view from Outlane C.C. to Blackley C.C.

The Club noticeboard displays a recent league report on ground facilities ('A good set-up' is the overall verdict, though it is noted the playing surface can at times be infected by 'moss') and a nice touch: a 'Duck Award' and a 'Junior Duck Award' presented annually to the Club batsmen with the most zeros to their name (and if you want to find out more about the 'winning' players, you can consult their none-too-illustrious form charts - pinned up on the wall by the tea bar).



Today, Blackley's headquarters have their own unique appeal. One cricket-watcher says: ***'It's one of those grounds that you feel is representative of working-class Yorkshire. It's also a good ground for facilities and being close to the game.'***

