

Fartown Project Interviews

Interviewee: Keith Whittaker

1. What was the first game you saw at Fartown?

1975 – He attended with his granddad. He saw Hampshire, Kent, Derbyshire and Leicestershire (*sic. Warwickshire*) play there in the John Player League. Yorkshire played there regularly for 40 years.

2. What was the last game you saw at Fartown?

1982, the last one-day game to be played at Fartown (*v. Worcestershire*)

3. What is your fondest memory of the ground?

Seeing all of the large crowds, especially for the first-class games. These could be as large as 15-20 000. He used to help with the sidescreens and the covers. As this used to be on the cinder track surrounding the ground he would often come home black!

4. What was the greatest match you saw or were involved in at the ground?

When Geoffrey Boycott scored 128, his highest Sunday League Score (*sic. Boycott scored 104 n.o. against Northamptonshire in 1974, his highest score being 146*).

5. What was the greatest player you saw or played with at the ground?

Geoffrey Boycott. There was an amusing anecdote about him losing his contact lens and being forced to “Retire Hurt” due to his lack of correct vision. During the tea interval many people were on the pitch looking for it but they were ultimately unsuccessful. Keith also gave a special mention about Alan Knott, the famous wicketkeeper, he saw playing for Kent and also he remembered South African Eddie Barlow coaching one of the visiting teams (*Derbyshire*)

6. What was the best thing about the ground?

The best thing about the ground was the great local access. Keith also regards the ground to have had a batting wicket.

7. What would you have changed about the ground?

Nothing, Keith used to love the ground. He blames the fact that Yorkshire don't use it any more on the Committee decision.

8. Could you try and describe the atmosphere at the ground during one of the big games?

Keith points to the fact that the game attracted, keen, occasional supporters that lead to a very exciting and electric atmosphere. The crowd was predominantly male but there was a definite "day out" atmosphere created by a very local crowd.

9. What positive impacts do you think the ground had on the local area and community?

Not sure what impact it had on the local area or what percentage of the crowd was a "walk up" crowd. The matches seemed to attract really genuine cricket supporters.

10. What do you feel when you see the ground now?

Very disappointed reaction. Keith is sure the ground will never be restored, especially considering the modern standards and criteria for safety. He was sure there were even plans at one stage to take the memorial to Hurst to Headingley as part of the new regeneration of the ground.

Trivia:

What was the strangest match or occurrence you experienced at the ground?

The incident involving Boycott's contact lens. Keith also recalls seeing a couple of Rugby games at the adjoining ground in his youth.