

# BREATHTAKING!

## Lindley Road, Blackley

By Sam Smith

Surrounded by breathtaking scenery and brimming with character, Blackley is one of the most distinctive cricketing venues in the Halifax area.

The facilities are second to none and recent improvements have further enhanced the reputation of the cricket club. The ground has witnessed massive developments over the last century, resulting in what now is a truly splendid playing arena.



When cricket was first played at Blackley the ground was that small a boundary was two runs and if a batsman cleared the wall it was four. The ground had quite a steep slope and bowling uphill was literally that!

The first ever pavilion was built at Blackley in 1901. Over the years it was extended with the addition of a scoreboard and storerooms in 1932. It was later demolished in 1978 to make way for ground extensions.

In 1946 the field was levelled with the aid of a mechanical digger. Over 5ft, most of it shale bed, was taken from the top of the field opposite the Golden Fleece pub and placed at the bottom, thus levelling the field up.

The ground came up for sale in 1948 and given that the club did not have sufficient funds to purchase it, Mr Fred Wilkinson, the then president, acquired it, giving the club a 999-year lease. In the same year the club purchased an ex-army hut which became the tea room.

1970 saw the start of the extensions to the playing area. The bank at the bottom of the field was dug out and extended by a gift of land of several feet by Webster's Brewery. A retaining wall was begun and completed in 1972.

The land on which the new pavilion is built was isolated by the construction of the M62 slip road which cut through the field. Being too small to be usable and having no means of access it seemed reasonable that it should become part of the cricket club. This was finalised in 1974 and this final extension to the playing area just about doubled the size of the original playing area.

By 1976 the old pavilion was beginning to show serious wear and tear. After close inspection it was decided that the club required a new pavilion. A building fund was set up and by September of the same year work had begun on the new structure.

However, the worst possible scenario unfolded on the morning of November 29<sup>th</sup> 1976. A freak storm destroyed the pavilion, ruining months of hard work and wiping out two-thirds of Blackley's finances.

Unable to claim sufficient compensation, the club was in disarray. A Blackley CC Disaster Appeal was launched and received overwhelming support. Thanks to the generosity and love for village cricket by the Yorkshire people, enough funds were raised to complete the new pavilion. On August 13<sup>th</sup> 1978 the new clubhouse was officially opened by Yorkshire fast bowler Tony Nicholson.

To the present day the folk at Blackley are continually striving to take the club forward. There are already plans in place to further extend the new pavilion. The team are doing well on the field and the social side is blossoming. The club is going from strength to strength and long may it continue.