

# **“WHEN I FIRST WENT UP TO BLACKLEY, I THOUGHT - WHAT A FANTASTIC GROUND!”**

## **Profile of David Peel by Sam Smith**

After serving his apprenticeship playing on the “council grounds” of the Dewsbury League, David Peel viewed a move to the Halifax League as a step up on the cricketing ladder. Top-order batsman David, who lives in Dewsbury, had turned out for White Hart for 10 seasons, encountering some “not very pretty” pitches and wickets where it would be an under-statement to say that “the ball bounced irregularly”.



**The Sands Lane municipal ground, Dewsbury**

“Once you go into those hills and see the clubs of the Halifax League – you say wow!” said David, who retired last year as Blackley club chairman after a decade in the post. “When I first went up to Blackley, I thought - what a fantastic ground! You look down that valley and think what a great place to play cricket. It’s just as breathtaking today as when I first came.”

David’s first club in the Halifax League was RAFA (Royal Air Force Association) but in 1989 he moved to Blackley as vice-captain of the Second XI. Four years later he was made captain. He recalled: “I loved playing in the second team – it was about the right standard for me. I was quite successful - scored a lot of runs

and was captain for 10 years. I usually opened the innings or batted at three or four. I never had any worries about not playing in the first team.”

One of the highlights of his playing career was an opening stand with Australian Gary Mounier of 235 against Triangle – a club record that still stands today. When the partnership was broken, David was on 119 not out and Gary dismissed for 116.

As second-team captain, David was on the club committee and when chairman Bob Holroyd retired he was asked to succeed him. He readily took on the challenge with the aim of making Blackley “an important club in the Halifax League.”

“One of our first targets was to get the club on a sound financial basis,” he said. “We had never had money in the bank and always lived a bit hand-to-mouth. We had a plan and we got the ball rolling and thanks to the efforts of many people we made it happen.”

David paid tribute to the work of treasurer Steve Williams and secretary Julie Pearson in helping Blackley achieve the coveted Clubmark status – which has been the key to cash grants and the development of junior cricket at Lindley Road. In fact, it was David and Steve who started a junior team at the club – they both encouraged their nephews (two each) to join a new Blackley Under-11s side, which went on to win five league titles on the trot, being Under-11, Under-12, Under-13, Under-15 and Under-17 champions.

A knee injury and arthritis in his hands forced David to retire from playing cricket 10 years ago. He said: “It hurt! I was captain and at the end of the season I had to say – right I’ve had enough.”

David is still involved with the club as a social member and second-team umpire. He admits he would become an officer of the club again if he was needed but not as chairman, adding: “That’s a job for someone younger – with plenty of new ideas.”