

DINNERS, DANCES AND BONFIRE NIGHTS!

Blackley CC Social Events by Sam Smith

Social events at Blackley have an importance way beyond a good night out. They are key to fostering the admirable team spirit that runs through the club and also provide valuable income to continue the development of cricket at Lindley Road.

Treasurer Steve Williams is the first to admit that without this flourishing social life Blackley would have remained a very small club and could not have made the progress it has over the past three decades.



“The social side helps to create the friendly atmosphere at the club,” said Steve. “Players do more than just play cricket together – it means they are not just teammates but good friends and they get to know each other better. It also involves their families more in the club, which is good.

“From a financial point of view we could not manage without the social events. The money raised has enabled us not only to pay our way but to make progress. We are now better off than we have ever been in the history of the club and we can now afford to plan an extension to the pavilion.”

When Steve studies the balance sheet, he probably says “cheers” to the beer drinkers at the club. The bar is an important earner for the club week in, week out, all year round – but particularly in the summer months.

“We rely on the players staying for a drink on Saturday nights after the game and also practice night,” said Steve, “This year there will be the added bonus of the

Twenty20 midweek competition. We wouldn't have the same income if the players were all tee-totallers."

The biggest single fundraiser is the annual pre-season Sportsman's Dinner which is held at Elland Cricket Club. "We sell about 200 tickets and aim to make a couple of thousand pounds," said Steve. This year, as usual, it is taking place in April with a double-bill of speakers - former Liverpool Football Club star Alan Kennedy and, from the cricketing world, the ex-England Test player Geoff Miller, who is currently a senior selector for the national side. "We're expecting another sell-out," added Steve.

Other annual social events include an early season race night, a July trip to a racecourse, an end-of-season presentation dinner, a bonfire night run in conjunction with a local church, a two-day trip to London in December, and a Christmas bash and New Year's Eve party.

This year the club is planning to push the boat out with a grand dinner-dance to mark the end of the season. The event would be one of the biggest in the club's history with a large marquee being erected at the Lindley Road ground, a live band and 400 guests.

"We also organise a number of small social events like quiz nights," said Steve. "We have social events for the junior players. For instance, we have a junior signing-on night in April which is a chance for the players and their parents to get together.

"Even the annual chore of pre-season maintenance on the ground - we try to turn that into an occasion where everyone joins in on the same day, although I don't think it will ever become the number-one event on the social calendar."