

139 NOT OUT!

History of Blackley CC by Sam Smith

Blackley, an organisation steeped in tradition, is fast approaching an impressive 140 years as a recognised cricket club. The Lindley Road outfit have encountered some tough obstacles in that time but have battled through to achieve considerable success.

The first record of a match was on 7th May 1869 when Blackley played Elland away and lost by 20 runs. 1870 saw the first home game (against Lindley United) on the then Blackley home ground at the top of South Lane, known at the time as Blackley Field. Sometime before the end of the century the club moved to its present location when Blackley Field was sold for building land and the row of houses were built at the top of South Lane.

The new field was owned by the Ainley family of the Wappy Spring Brewery. It sloped quite steeply and 'bowling uphill' was a literal description of what faced the bowlers. Being smaller than the average pitch, adjustments were called for in scoring: a boundary counted as 2 runs and a hit over the wall as 4. The club was initially without a pavilion as such but had a small wooden hut adjacent to where the Golden Fleece now stands.

Around 1880 Blackley started playing league cricket, but which league remains a mystery; rumour has it that there was a West Vale League and this included several of the present-day Halifax League clubs. But this is all speculation as records of the Elland newspaper which was said to contain this information are lost.



The old pavilion, 1910

Blackley progressed steadily as the club moved into the early twentieth century, erecting a brick pavilion in 1901 and then joining the Huddersfield Association in 1920. The first piece of silverware arrived in 1936 when Blackley 1st XI triumphed over Rowley Hill to lift the Lumb

Cup. Blackley remained members of the Association until 1954 when they joined the Halifax Cricket League.

The mid-to-late twentieth century saw Blackley make huge strides as a club both on and off the field. The first team finished champions of the Halifax League Division 2 in 1967 and reached the final of the Parish Cup in 1977.



Lumb Cup Winners, 1936

The year 1978 was a landmark in the club's history. It witnessed the unveiling of a new £20,000 pavilion. However, the club suffered major setbacks on the way -in 1976 the half-built building was destroyed by a freak storm. The club were left with no money to finish the building work, so great credit must be given to the people of Blackley who raised the money to ensure the new pavilion would be completed.

On the pitch Blackley continued to achieve substantial success. 1987 was arguably the greatest ever year for the club, as the first team won the Lindley Moor Trophy and the second team brought home the Crossley Shield and the Division Two title.

The first team regained the Lindley Moor Trophy in 1990 and in 2001 they gained promotion to the First Division, after winning the Second Division championship.

In the early years of the twenty-first century, Blackley stand as an outward-looking and progressive club in many spheres. It seems only a matter of time before both 1st and 2nd teams will be playing their cricket in the top divisions. If the upward spiral continues, as it has done so impressively over the last 140 years, then the sky is the limit for this ambitious West Yorkshire club.