

## Focus on Blackley Cricket Club 1963



Blackley members and players are justly proud of their attractive ground high above Elland, and there are few more pleasant settings for cricket on a sunny day.

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# A very charming outpost of the Halifax League

**T**HIS is a most appropriate moment to turn the spotlight on Blackley Cricket Club. Last Saturday, in what secretary Ernest Ambler described as "the finest match we shall see up here for years," Blackley got their revenge on Triangle—something for which they had waited eight years.

To set the scene, we must go back to 1955 when, in only their second season in the Halifax League, Blackley reached the semi-final of the Parish Cup. The score? Blackley 105, Triangle 194 for three. Triangle went on to win the trophy.

This was probably the club's best achievement since joining the league and, with the memory of the defeat still present, the stage was set for a fascinating game when Triangle, runaway Second Division leaders, visited Blackley last weekend.

Thanks to a fine century from Trevor Priestley and a little help from most members of the side, Blackley made 212. The tension mounted as Triangle's John Patrick also got a hundred and the score swept past the 200 mark with only seven wickets down.

Then, Patrick was bowled by Ronnie Cleal, who also got the last man two runs later and Blackley were home by six runs. Cleal had three for 36 and Priestley took three for 46.

Mr. Ambler commented: "I don't think we shall see another match like that for a long time. It was tremendously exciting and not a soul left the ground before it was over. It was sweet revenge for that defeat in the Parish Cup semi-final."

## Consistent

How can Blackley, a charming village high above Elland with a population of no more than 150, manage to raise a team to compete in the Halifax League? The answer is, of course, that they cannot.

Only one regular first-team player, Derek Boyne, comes from the village. The rest are from Huddersfield and Elland districts.

For instance, opening batsman Trevor Priestley, who has had a fine season this time, comes from Fartown (near the Rugby League ground), while the very consistent Reg Williams comes from Lindley Moor Road, which is just outside the village of Blackley.

Peter Morton comes from Elland, Terry Leach from Holywell Green and Roy Chappell also from Elland. Ronnie Cleal, whose wife is a Blackley girl and whose mother-in-law,

Mrs. Bertha Sutcliffe, is president of the flourishing ladies' section, is from Birchcliffe.

David Thornton and Harry Aspinall are from nearby Ainley Top and Birchcliffe respectively, while Sheard Sykes is from Dalton (Huddersfield), the first batsman, Star bowler and skipper, and Wolfenden, is from Ainley Top.

## Nothing great

There are some of the Blackley villagers in the second team, and Mr. Ambler has hopes that some of them will make the first team grade.

A decade ago, Blackley left the Huddersfield Association and, after two applications, were elected to the Halifax League. "We wanted to play on better grounds and we wanted better umpiring. We have got both in the Halifax League," commented Mr. Ambler.

Blackley, Mr. Ambler admits, have never "struck anything great" in the Halifax League. The second team won the Division Two title a couple of seasons back, but the teams have usually finished half way up the league.

They can, however, be proud of their ground. In the sort of weather we have experienced over the last few days, there are few more pleasant places than Blackley cricket ground. This is a reputation which the players and members guard jealously.

Blackley are fortunate in having had the services of such a loyal secretary as Mr. Ambler. He has held the office for almost 30 years, and has done a good deal of work for the club in his professional capacity as an electrician.

## A present

Recently, electric heating has been installed in the dressing rooms and the tea room. Blackley members regard their tea room as second only to the one at Mason Green in the Halifax League, and this is something which outsiders corroborate.

They own their own ground. It was presented to them after the war by the late Mr. Fred

Wilkinson, of the nearby Samuel Wilkinson and Sons, clay product manufacturers. Mr. Wilkinson also gave the club an annual donation of £50.

Blackley were fortunate in this respect, and they were also fortunate when they asked Samuel Webster and Sons Ltd. for permission to develop the land at the rear of the nearby inn, which bordered the cricket ground. Websters made them a present of the land.

The ladies' section raises around £25 a year for the club, and they manage to make both ends meet. They have excellent facilities for visitors and the average attendance is around the 50 mark, which is reasonable considering the size of Blackley.

One of Blackley's chief failings on the cricket field has been a lack of consistency in the batting. This was emphasised this week when they were put out for less than 40 by Stainland, after topping the 200 mark last Saturday.

## No regrets

"Our bowlers have been good enough. Brian Wolfenden has topped the averages for the last three seasons, but, apart from Reg Williams, who has been with us for several years, there has been no real consistency in the batting," commented Mr. Ambler.

Reg Williams won the first team batting prize last year, while Harry Aspinall had three prizes—second team batting and first and second team fielding.

"I wish we had someone like John Patrick, of Triangle. He scored a wonderful century against us in very quick time. He is a run machine and although we won, Patrick gave a fine exhibition," said Mr. Ambler.

There are certainly no regrets about joining the Halifax League at Blackley. "We have been very happy with both the cricket and the management," was the secretary's comment.

And, no one who has been to this charming outpost of the Halifax League will deny that the league is anything but better off for such a pleasant environment.