

Cricket club buy freehold from council

# Paddock saved by brewery support

By DAVID LOCKWOOD

**PADDOCK** Cricket and Bowling Club have finally secured their future after more than three years of financial crisis and facing possible extinction.

The Church Street club have struck a deal with brewery giants Bass North, which has enabled them to buy the freehold for their land and buildings from Kirklees Council.

Former cricket club secretary and committee member Sue Slater, who has been involved in the three-year-long negotiations with Kirklees Council, said: "We have finally reached the turning point and hopefully

gained some stability for the club.

"We have secured a 10-year loan from the brewery with which to buy the freehold, and now the club's future is in our own hands."

As members of the Drakes Huddersfield Cricket League since 1899, Paddock were in great danger of folding up as they were faced with the ever-increasing financial demands made on them by Kirklees Council, who held the lease.

Rent levels had soared from £1,500 in 1985, £2,000 in 1992, to a possible further rise towards the £3,500 mark next season, making it of paramount importance that the club took over the freehold.

Already the committee have pruned the operation to

the bone to make the club a more viable proposition, one of the measures being to release the steward and stewardess.

"Although they had done an excellent job for us, we could not afford to maintain full-time staff, so reluctantly we had to let them go. The committee are now manning the clubhouse, and so far the situation is working well," added Mr Lightfoot.

One of the first aims is to improve facilities at Paddock, and the clubhouse has already been renovated, with money raised from members' donations, and the next step is to look at the possibility of installing showers before next season.

Although officials were reluctant to discuss the

actual financial package, the loan was sufficient to purchase the freehold, with a small reserve for added security.

The guaranteed immediate future of Paddock, who finished eleventh in Section B last season, will come as a huge relief to Drakes League officials, who were extremely concerned for the future of the club, particularly as the league has just been brought up to full strength numerically with the admission of Halifax.

League chairman Roger France said today: "I'm delighted at the news."

"I'm very pleased for the club, who should now have the impetus to go forward with confidence, and it's also come as an ideal Christmas present for the league.

"Paddock are one of the older-established and respected clubs in the league, and it would have been an absolute disaster had anything happened to threaten their survival."

The Section B club — who in their illustrious past had produced England cricketers Percy Holmes, Willie Watson and Chris Balderstone — are now on the look-out to increase their playing strength before the start of the 1995 season.



Paddock Cricket Club solicitor Malcolm Tracey (second right) is pictured showing the freehold deeds to club officials (from left) secretary Sue Slater, committee member Steve Lightfoot and Bass North Sales manager Howard Hollingworth

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