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Information about interviewee:

Age: 91	Occupation: Former Cricketer and International Umpire
Gender: Male	Region: Barnsley, West Yorkshire
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R = Respondent/Interviewee (if more than one respondent, use R1, R2, etc.)
I = Interviewer

I: I'm Gemma Bearly recording an interview on the 20th of September, on behalf of The Yorkshire Cricket Foundation.

Hi, would you mind just introducing yourself please?

R: My name is Harold...Bird. Harold Dennis Bird actually. But of course with being bird, I get called "Dickie", and "Dickie" is, I've had it since, they gave me the nickname "Dickie" when I was at school and it's carried all through my life. And people have said "Do you mind being called Dickie?" and I said "No because you can't forget a name like that".

R&I: (Laughter)

I: Brilliant, and so we are here today to talk about...

R: Oh sorry! I'm a former Test Cricket Umpire, and I played County Cricket for Yorkshire and Leicestershire.

I: Wonderful, Thank you. And you're here to talk to me today about the ground at Park Avenue in Bradford, and I believe that you have a lot of fond memories of there, so I just wondered, what your earliest memory of the Park Avenue ground was?

R: Well of course, my earliest memories of Bradford Park Avenue was when I signed for Yorkshire, when I was 16 years of age. Of course, I went to the Yorkshire Nets, when I was invited to the Yorkshire Nets for practices when I was about 16, and I played for Barnsley in the Yorkshire League, cricket, and of course, you perform well in the league, then you get invited to the Yorkshire Nets.

And I got invited to the Yorkshire nets, and they must have seen something, they took me on and I was at Yorkshire, so I have got some happy memories of Bradford as a youngster, practicing there, we used to practice at Bradford Park Avenue, and we used to practice in the evenings in the winter, January and February, and March, Yorkshire County Cricket Club, and I used to travel from Barnsley.

I'd get the bus from Barnsley to Bradford, and then a tram, Oh.. I don't know whether it was a tram or a bus up to Park Avenue, and they were happy days, that's where I was as a youngster, I have some happy memories, practicing with Yorkshire, at Bradford Park Avenue.

I: And were there any memorable moments playing there? In any matches?

R: Playing there, of course I've got my, the one what stands out, is that I scored 191 not out for Yorkshire against Glamorgan, and why it was so special to me, 191 not out, Glamorgan had 6 players in their side, they were all international players, played for England. I'll just name a few, Alan Watkins, who was a great all round cricketer for Glamorgan, Gilbert Parkhouse, for Glamorgan, both England players. The there was Peter Walker, he was an England player and so many, and they were a very, very good County side. And to get 191 not out against them on a wicket was doing all sorts of things at Bradford Park Avenue, it was a great achievement. And I was very, very thrilled with it, but... I was dropped the next match!

(laughter) 191 not out for Yorkshire and dropped the next match! But Yorkshire was such a great side, and I was in and out of the side of course, and that was one or two memories of Bradford Park avenue.

Also I enjoyed Umpiring there, of course, and as I have said, I enjoyed it as a player there, playing there.

I: Brilliant, and that match that you have just spoken about, could you tell me a little bit more about that day? About how old you where? And how you felt playing?

R: Well, I think that I was 24 years of age, and in those days we hadn't cars, we used to travel, we hadn't cars, we used to travel on buses and trains and trams and all sorts. And those were... and what was special to me was that I enjoyed playing at Bradford Park Avenue and also I enjoyed Umpiring there, and it only seems like yesterday, but its a... long, long time ago.

I: And would you tell me a little more about the umpiring that you did at the ground?

R: The umpiring what I did at Park Avenue was of course all Yorkshire matches in the County Championship. They were all Yorkshire matches that I did there and of course I played there when I got through into the First Team at Yorkshire. And that's the few memories that I have at Bradford Park Avenue.

I: And do you have any memories of special games that you saw there? Not games you were playing in, that you were a spectator or umpiring in? Any that you would like to mention?

R: I was umpiring County Matches, I can't remember which they were, but apart from playing at Bradford Park Avenue, I umpired quite a few County Matches. Which, I can't really remember which matches they were, but there is one match that I can remember stands out, Yorkshire V Surrey. That's one match I remember, and they were happy days. Best days of my life I think.

That period, when I was at Yorkshire and playing at Bradford Park Avenue, and at Headingley, played at all the out grounds in Yorkshire in those days, Harrogate, Sheffield, Bramall Lane, Sheffield, and all of course...Scarborough of course, and Middlesbrough, we played at all the out grounds. But they don't play anymore at Bradford Park Avenue, which is a shame, it's a shame, a great shame, because I think that there are a lot of Asians that live in Bradford Park Avenue, and they enjoy their Cricket. And they know their Cricket, they know the game, and it would be nice to play a lot more, play matches at Bradford Park Avenue, for the Asian population.

It would give them a chance to see Yorkshire play Cricket, and the sooner we get back at Bradford Park Avenue, the better, because it would be ideal, so that y'know, so that the Asian population could watch cricket. And they love their cricket, they understand the game, and they are very good and have some very good players. What should be playing probably for Yorkshire, and I think that the sooner we get it back, some cricket back to Bradford Park Avenue the better.

I: And what do you think it is about that ground in particular that is so special or memorable for you?

R: Well it was so memorable, because they, it's good for them, there's a lot of membership at Yorkshire County Cricket Club in Bradford and it would be very, very good for the members to see the County Cricket at Bradford Park Avenue. And it would be so nice for them, and as I say, the sooner we get Cricket back at Park Avenue, Bradford, the better.

I: And can you tell me a bit more about as a player being out in the ground, how it looked and how it felt for you?

R: Well when the ground were full, it were a magnificent view because it were like a bull ring, and of course they played, they played football and cricket at Bradford Park Avenue. It was in the Football League! And they'd some fine players, Len Shackleton, who was a great player, who played there and y'know it was just like a bull ring, football, then there was the sand and then the cricket. So they were both together. Football and Cricket. At Bradford, and there where some, as I say, playing sport there at Bradford Park Avenue was at the top.

And I.. sort of remember about the ground, was of course the football ground and the cricket ground, the cricket ground was like a bull ring, you could see the members in the members enclosure, and the committee and the board members, they were like, if I can explain, at the top, behind the bowlers arm, where they had the committee rooms and the dining rooms and everything.

I: And did you ever watch the football at Bradford Park Avenue?

R: Yeah, I watched the occasional match, because I enjoyed football, of course I'm a Barnsley supporter, through and through, and when we played at Bradford Park Avenue, Barnsley, I should say that I am a Season Ticket holder at Barnsley, and have been for 80 odd years. That's a long time to support a football club isn't it? And I enjoyed it when we played, because Barnsley played, in those days, at Bradford, Bradford Park Avenue. And we took a lot of supporters with us from Barnsley, and they were happy days. Happy days, I've seen some good football matches there, and good players.

I've mentioned Len Shackleton, who was, well, a fine player. Played for England, a great player. And he could play Cricket, he was interested in Cricket, and he could play Cricket. He was a useful Cricketer, useful Cricketer. And they all played Cricket for Bradford, at Bradford Park Avenue in the Bradford League, Cricket, Bradford League, which is a very, very strong league. That Bradford League, and Yorkshire League are the two strongest leagues in the Country. And so, there was always some sport on at Bradford Park Avenue. And it's been, as I say, sadly missed. And the sooner we can get it back, there, to there the better.

I: And is there anything else about the ground, such as the changing rooms, or anything that you used to do after a match that you remember specifically about that ground?

R: Well, it's a long, long time ago. I remember that there was Bowling Greens there, and there was a bar, there was bars there of course. Where people could have a drink, and the dining rooms where, we, the players used to have their lunches and their teas and the dressing room was always good, plenty of room in the dressing rooms. And could come down the members enclosure from the dressing rooms, from the pavilion, down the members enclosure, as I said it was like a bull ring, and you walked down through the gate onto the field.

I: When was the last time that you went to the Park Avenue Ground?

R: The last time I went, it was, they had a big event on the field. There was a big field there what used to be the playing area and the pavilion and all that which is not there of course, it might be there, they might be building it all now I don't know. But the last time I was there, they had an event there, there was all the Asian people, invited me to go along as a guest, and I went along and I talked to all the youngsters there, there was lots of youngsters there that day and it was a good day.

We had a nice lunch and a few drinks, and it was very good. And what was very good about it was so many youngsters from the Bradford area were there that day and that's what I... I'm all for the youngsters. All for the youngsters. I encourage the youngsters, and I think that they do that now at Bradford Park Avenue, which is tremendous! Tremendous! It can only be good for the game, for the future, as I said earlier, there's so many good youngsters in the Asian population what will come through, I'm sure, come through and play for Yorkshire one day. And that will be great for the game.

I: Yeah, that would be amazing to see wouldn't it?

R: Yeah.

I: And just going back to when you were younger, when you first started playing Cricket, how did you get into that? Were you always a Cricket fan? Or was it important in your family?

R: Well I played at school, I was captain of my school here in Barnsley, Raley Secondary Modern School, which was a fine school. My close friend at school in those days, was a chap called Tommy Taylor, who went on... Tommy and I played together at school, I played with him together at school, inside right and he was centre-forward at school. He went on to play for Barnsley at football, and from there he went to Manchester United, he played for England.

He scored... I think he scored, his record...I'm not sure on this, he played 18 times for his country and scored 19 goals. And he lost his life in the Munich Air Disaster, when all the Manchester United babes went down in that air crash. Which was very, very sad. And I lost a good friend there, he was a great player, as I said played for England and we used to...We were very close friends at school.

We played together for Raley Secondary Modern School, Barnsley boys and we went down to Barnsley Football club, we were signed both of us together, at Barnsley Football Club and we played in what they called "The Northern Intermediate League" in those days and they were very happy days, and of course I decided to stick to Cricket because I played for the Barnsley Cricket in the Yorkshire League.

I started when I left school, and I played the next few years for Barnsley Cricket club and in the summer and in Football I was at Barnsley Football club. Played in the Northern Intermediate League, which is what it was called in those days and they were happy, happy days. And same as I just said, I lost a great friend in Tommy Taylor in that air disaster at Munich, when the full side was lost. Great players, great players. And those were my early days

I: And could you tell me a little bit more about your career? And how you went from playing to being an Umpire?

R: I went from... Well of course I played for Yorkshire, I was at Yorkshire in the 1950's, of course I played in the 1959 Championship side at Yorkshire, when we won the Championship, they were happy days, as I said the best days of my life. We had a great side at Yorkshire, we won the Championship in 1959, I was there from '55,'56,'57,'58,'59 and I went to Leicestershire in 1960. And played for Leicestershire, I was there quite a few years, I played for Leicestershire and then from Leicestershire I went into Umpiring. I coached a bit at Plymouth College Public School and I played professionally at Payton, just a few years and then I went into Umpiring.

I went into Umpiring and I was on the First Class List, I applied to go on the Umpires First Class List. I wrote to Lords and I was accepted in 1970...Oh sorry in 1971, I was accepted onto the

First Class County List, and I must have had a good year because the year after, the second year, I got onto the Test Match Panel. And I was on the Test Match Panel for 20 odd years, 26 years. Which is a long time, and they worked it out, people, if I was around today, because there is so much Cricket around today, there's more Cricket than there ever was, there's more test matches and one day internationals than ever. People worked it out, if I was coming today and I did 20 odd years as a test Umpire I'd have done 500 tests!

Because there is so much Cricket you see, but that's how I got onto the First Class Umpires list, and by 18 months I was on the Test Match Panel. And on the Test Match Panel for 20 odd years... 26 years, which is a long time.

I: It is! And how are you still involved in Cricket today?

R: I was President at Yorkshire of course, in... I think it was 1959-1960 when we won the Championship. We won the Championship back to back, Championships. That was a marvelous occasion and Yorkshire had a great side. Which I hope that, I hope that they can, I think with these youngsters that they have got now, they have got some fine young players. If Yorkshire are patient with them, if the Yorkshire Board are patient with these young kids that are around now, I think in 3 years time they will win the Championship every year.

I honestly think, see that happened to us in 1959, when we won the Championship. Ronnie Bennett was captain, he brought all the youngsters in and they signed, and they sacked 4 great players at Yorkshire. They played us youngsters and they sacked 4 great players, Willy Watson, Johnny Wardle, Bob Appleyard and Frank Lawson, all great players. And they brought these youngsters in, and for the first 2 years we finished near the bottom of course, but in 1959 with all these youngsters that came through, the board had patience with them, y'know and they came through and in '59 we won the Championship. And from '59 onwards, into the '60s, Yorkshire won the Championship every year.

So they were great times, and some great players at Yorkshire, great side. So if Yorkshire has patience, if Yorkshires board in Yorkshire, I think they will go up now from the Second Division into the First Division, and Yorkshire in time, with patience with these youngsters, cos they have got some fine young players there at Headingley, at Yorkshire, I'll tell you now, fine young players. In a few years time they will win the Championship nearly every year.

Bring these youngsters through.

I: Yeah, fantastic. So just returning to the Park Avenue Ground for a moment, are there any other stories or memories that you would like to share about there?

R: No, I think that we have covered everything.

I: Yeah...

R: On the ground, we have covered everything. In fact, Yorkshire used to practice there pre-season at Headingley and at Bradford Park Avenue.

I: Can you tell me a bit more about that?

R: And Sheffield Bramall Lane, at Sheffield as well. So the... But we used to practice in the winter, January and February at Bradford Park Avenue in the evenings. And I used to go, and in those days we used to work in the day and then I would catch 2 buses to Bradford Park Avenue to practice in the evenings. In January and February, 6 inches of snow, but they were happy days and we enjoyed it. We enjoyed those days.

I: Yeah...

R: That's about, more or less, you've covered or I've covered. Or all I can think about anyway, about Bradford Park Avenue.

I: Well thank you very much...

R: But it's been sadly missed, and same as I have said, as soon as we get it back at Bradford Park Avenue the better. So there's lots of Asians there, youngsters, who can play Cricket and they get the opportunity, if they could practice now at Bradford Park Avenue, and they could practice there... the youngsters. I think that we would get 1 or 2 good players from the Asian population who would play for Yorkshire, and would play for England... Yeah.

I: Brilliant, thank you so much for that.