

FROM THE CHAIR

Whilst it seems an age since the last Newsletter I can assure members that despite having to deal with our own business and work commitments during these difficult times your board has stepped up a gear in its efforts to ensure that the current adverse economic climate has had as little effect as possible going forward. That being said, with one eye on an unsure and uncertain future financially, we realise the need to be prudent and consequently have cut our cloth accordingly.

However, the crucial role which can be played by organisations such as Rugby Oldham has been brought home to all of us recently by events not too far away from the town. Supporters Trusts have been central to the continuing survival of several football clubs over the past few years, of course, but you only have to recall what a supporters' organisation did to keep Hornets in existence in the last off-season to realise how vital a job can be done in extremis by communities of supporters acting together.

RESERVES SPONSORSHIP

Rugby Oldham is proud to announce that after its successful sponsorship of Oldham RLFC's Reserves Team in season 2008, which culminated in five reserve grade players signing professional forms, it will be renewing sponsorship for the 2009 season.

This season, as last, will see the reserve team appear in Rugby Oldham branded run-out tops as seen recently being sported by the first team. In addition, all reserve team players who have graduated through the local amateur scene will be individually sponsored by Rugby Oldham leaving those players with professional contracts available for sponsorship by companies or individuals.

Rugby Oldham believes that sponsorship in this form fulfils its mission statement to promote local talent throughout the town and to provide a pathway to the highest levels of achievement in the sport for local youth.

Rugby Oldham wishes John Hough and Leo Casey every success in their quest to develop and nurture talent for the future in the context of a winning reserve grade team.

Geoff Cooke, Community & Media Relations Officer

We have continued to support the Oldham Amateur League by introducing a new competition for 2008/9, which, this time around, involves all six local clubs. We are pleased to say that this has been a resounding success. This new and exciting competition has been aggressively promoted by weekly stand-out advertisements in the Oldham Evening Chronicle resulting in the desired effect – more people going to matches. With just a handful of games to play the eventual winner of this cracking competition is not yet certain.

We have also continued our backing for the Service Area too, supporting finals and providing trophies. Last, but not least, we have once again agreed a promotional package with the Roughyeds backing their Reserves side.

What is vital is that we continue to receive the backing of you our members. The Trust is only as strong as its membership. Please at least make the effort to attend this year's AGM which will not only give you the chance to air your views but provide vital feedback. Please also consider our secretary Ian Wilson's plea and invitation elsewhere in this Newsletter. There is absolutely no argument that we need new volunteers – current members or not - who are willing to get involved with the active operation of the Trust.

Yours sincerely,

Iain Taylor,
Chairman

U-14 TRI-TEAM

The successful 2007-08 Rugby Oldham Tri-team Challenge is being repeated this season, but this time at Under-14 level. Since Saddleworth, Higginshaw and St. Anne's are all playing at the same top level of age-group RL this season, the six regular fixtures between the three clubs constitute the '08-'09 Tri-team Challenge. There is an overall team Trophy, and another for the player of the series, determined by accumulated man-of-the-match votes at all six games. The winning team this year was Saddleworth Rangers; the player of the series will be announced in the next newsletter. The trophies will be presented at the Oldham Cup finals day on April 26th
Garry Hepworth – Service Area Board Representative

FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE

THE REAR bedroom window of No. 74 Sharples Hall Street now looks out over the roof tops of 'Old Rugby Green', a development of houses, being built on the hallowed Mecca of local rugby, Watersheddings. Three generations of our family were previously able to check the weather, spaces on the terraces and queues at the turn-stiles, before leaving to join friends for the much awaited kick off, just by glancing out of this window!

Little did anyone realise how much effort was needed, behind the scenes, to create the rush of adrenaline for crowd and players alike, as the team for the day jogged down the tunnel, onto that lush green turf...that sloped dramatically from right to left, but who cared, providing we won the toss and the match!

To get to the tunnel players walked amongst the fans, not all of whom were friendly, down steep steps that accounted for many a last minute change of studs or even to the team sheet. Players changed in 'extended' changing rooms that hadn't been designed with room for a team and two substitutes, never mind four. Match day preparations were

preceded by two nights training (plus extra for cup ties) spent on the roads, on the dirt sprint track, or on the training ground, all of which were only a candlelight away from being pitch black. Weight training involved a barbell and half a dozen weights or you could carry a colleague, or your half of a railway sleeper up and down the touchline. Science and diet played little or no part in training.

Then, training kit, washed and dried on the boiler, by "Little Jimmy" was issued on a first come, first served basis, vital in winter, if one was to avoid split seams or holes in shirts, jumpers or track suit bottoms, (never did see a top) training boots were handed down, kept alive for years after their original owners had retired by "Little Joe", (my first training boots still bore Billy Mitchell's name).

Midweek refreshments were provided by the resident, and hardworking tenant of the pavilion offering a variety of sandwiches, bowls of onions, beetroots and red cabbage, but only for players who washed and

brushed faster than the rest. Last there went hungry! Even travelling was a chore, a trip to Cumbria meant meeting at 7.20am outside Barlows Coaches and returning after midnight, sore, tired and weary.

However, I firmly believe that not one of the 1054 senior team players who have graced the Watersheddings turf would have let the sometimes difficult backroom activities tarnish their pride in wearing the red/white hoops, blue shorts and red/white socks in front of some of the greatest, most knowledgeable, fans in this great sport of ours.

Don't let cherished memories cloud the need for progress. Who in their right minds doesn't want ample local parking, clean dry seating, tiled toilets, meeting rooms, lounge facilities and a flat, smooth playing field with uninterrupted views. I'd like to think that the next generations looking out from the bedroom window of No. 74 Boundary Park Road would always look out on a successful, well maintained facility that benefits Rugby League in Oldham.



Rugby Oldham would like to pay tribute to former Oldham RLFC three-quarter Joe Collins who died earlier this year. Joe was a big supporter of the Trust and was its very first signed-up member. He lived up here in the Saddleworth sticks sometimes calling in on his way home from work usually to drop off sheets of postage stamps for the circulation of the next Rugby Oldham Newsletter or with some other similar contribution or just for a chat.

After his playing days ended Joe remained a keen Roughyed rarely missing a game. He was a fervent believer in youth rugby and the absolute necessity in providing easy access for local lads to be able to represent their home town club. In Joe's memory I make no apologies for repeating here an article which he wrote just a few years ago for the Oldham club's match day magazine.

Brian Walker

ALL WHITE

Everything went 'ALL-WHITE' with the marketing of the famous white shirt sported on many big occasions by the Oldham club (none more so than during the late 1950's when the Roughyeds appeared in three successful Lancashire Cup finals). 115 shirts have been sold providing a healthy contribution to Trust funds.



ROUND UP

Watersheddings' Memories

The Oldham RLFC Heritage Trust is planning to market a new book **Watersheddings' Memories** in time for Christmas. That's not just rugby league but cricket (Oldham CC played there for over 40 years), tennis, crown-green bowling, baseball, women's soccer, military pageantry, gymnastics, greyhounds and much more! If any of the readers of this Newsletter have access to photographs, pamphlets, leaflets, tickets or anything else that appertain to this period (any sport, any occasion) the Heritage Trust will be glad to hear from you. Please ring 01457 875084, 0161 620 6005 or 07801 705982.

Mick Hough

A benefit event recently held in the memory of well known genial local amateur rugby league and former Great Britain international forward Mick Hough ensured that the Waterhead RLFC clubhouse was filled to overflowing. Rugby Oldham provided an especially manufactured red and white hooped 1957 Championship jersey which enticed the successful bidder to add a further £200 to the pot.

Local Youth Rugby League

Rugby Oldham has made a financial contribution to a Masters golf tournament organised in the memory of local rugby league legend Jimmy Russell the proceeds of which will go to support local youth rugby. The competition was held at Saddleworth Golf Club and played over the Easter weekend.

Standard Cup

The Standard Cup final was won this year by underdogs Waterhead who toppled the favourites Saddleworth Rangers 12-6 at Boundary Park on Good Friday morning. For those not familiar with this competition it was first contested way back in 1903, the trophy donated by the Oldham Standard News a newspaper of the period eventually acquired by the Oldham Evening Chronicle. It more often than not attracts the largest crowd of the season for any amateur rugby league match played on a national basis with one final boasting a crowd of over 8,000.

Rugby Oldham decided that it would back this season's final by sponsoring the Ben Powell Memorial Trophy awarded to the man-of-the-match and deservedly won by Waterhead's half-back Michael Diveney.

Oldham Rugby League Service Area

A feast of rugby league is on offer at Waterhead Park this coming Sunday (26th April). It's the Service Area finals day. There are four matches on offer:

Under 13's KO 10-30 am

Under 14's KO 11-45 am

Under 15's KO 1-15 pm

Under 16's KO 2-45 pm

It's your chance to cheer on the up-and-coming talent. There's nothing that kindles enthusiasm and spurs on the kids than support from the touchline. I promise that you won't be bored! By the time you read this Newsletter the result of the Under 12's final will be known as it was played last Sunday to allow those players selected to play in the NW Counties finals Trophies and individual awards for all age groups sponsored by both Rugby Oldham and the Oldham Evening Chronicle.

RUGBY OLDHAM AMATEUR CHALLENGE

Open to all the teams affiliated to the Oldham Amateur League irrespective of which league and division they participate in, the Rugby Oldham Amateur Club Challenge has been a focus of interest throughout the season.

Saddleworth Rangers established an early lead which they have never relinquished but with only a few games to go they could yet be overhauled.

In particular the newly formed Rochdale Cobras have mounted a stiff challenge to move up to second place and there have been regular changes of position as results have come in week by week.

For a long period Higginshaw languished at the foot of the table but improved form since Christmas has lifted them above Hollinwood who at one stage had been performing quite well. St. Annes and Waterhead have changed places regularly and it remains the case as the season reaches its climax that one or two good results could yet produce a surprise outcome. For example a 50-0 win for any team is worth 11 points on the table and, quite obviously, that has a significant effect on the composition of the table.

MAN-OF-STEEL AWARD

After every amateur game played throughout the season each side nominates the man-of-the-match for the opposition. Local builder's merchants Jos. Parr have come up with a £500 cash prize for the player with the most nominations taking account of every game played which is included in the Rugby Oldham Amateur Challenge league table. At the business end of the season out in front by a country mile is Higginshaw's utility star David Sweeney, with a massive 10 nominations. Closest competitors are Oldham St Annes' Danny Kay and Waterhead's Andrew Cheetham with five apiece. The prize will be presented at the Oldham Amateur League's dinner to be held at Shaw Rd. Conservative Club on the 8th of May as will the Rugby Oldham Amateur Challenge Cup.

Geoff Cooke, Community & Media Relations Officer

| Rugby Oldham Amateur Club Challenge | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|----|----|---|----|------------|-----|-----|-----|------|
| Team | P | W | D | L | L (u12) | ABP | DBP | Tot | % |
| Saddleworth Rangers | 19 | 10 | - | 9 | 8 | 26 | 36 | 100 | 5.3% |
| Rochdale Cobras | 16 | 10 | - | 6 | 2 | 26 | 11 | 69 | 4.3% |
| Waterhead | 20 | 7 | 1 | 12 | 5 | 32 | 18 | 78 | 3.9% |
| Higginshaw | 21 | 6 | 2 | 13 | 4 | 19 | 33 | 78 | 3.7% |
| St Annes | 20 | 6 | 1 | 12 | 4 | 27 | 15 | 66 | 3.3% |
| Hollinwood | 17 | 4 | - | 13 | 4 | 21 | 15 | 52 | 3.1% |

ABP = Attacking Bonus Points
DBP = Defensive Bonus Points

Table after games on 11/04/09

NB: Table has been adjusted to account for 3 games awarded 18-0 to Rochdale Cobras for non-fulfilment of fixture by opposition

RALLYING CALL

Trust members will receive with this Newsletter the details of Rugby Oldham's forthcoming AGM. We hope as many of you as possible are able to attend it, since it is the only formal occasion each year when we have a chance to get together and to share ideas, as well, of course, as to question what your elected board has been doing over the past twelve months.

As you know, the essence of organisations such as ours is that they are open and transparent in what they do, and rely entirely on the work of volunteer members. People join supporters trusts because they have a common interest in the club involved, and in many cases want to get involved actively in furthering its health.

We were originally founded to pursue the goal of generating a ground dedicated to rugby league in the town, and although the pursuit of that target is currently in the hands of the club's owners, its long-term achievement does of course remain a fundamental objective of the Trust. In the meantime, however, we have been concentrating our efforts in other directions, whether that be in attempting to raise the profile of the town's amateur clubs, in supporting the fantastic efforts of those involved with the Oldham Service Area, in helping to finance the club's provision of a Reserves side as a stepping stone for talented and ambitious young players from the town, or in attempting to support the club in its aim of introducing a scholarship scheme in the town.

There is always a danger, though, that voluntary organisations such as ours can run out of a bit of steam because they do not regularly attract new blood, both in their membership and in those who take on active roles. So this is both a plea and an invitation. We need new volunteers who are willing to get involved with the active operation of the Trust.

It is not that those of us currently working on and with the Trust's board want to end our involvement ; we are just as committed as we have always been. But we do feel that it is important to get some more people active too, with their own new ideas for the future development of Rugby Oldham.

The precise roles that people take on is very flexible, and very much dependent on the particular interests of the different active members involved. For example, there is currently a need for someone with financial expertise to take on a role in that area, and there is also a clear role for anyone interested in liaising more actively than we currently do with our parent body, Supporters Direct. There is a need, too, to become more proactive in seeking to expand our membership. So if you have a bit of time and a desire to get more involved with the Trust, please do not hesitate to get in touch. You will be guaranteed a warm welcome by those currently involved!

Ian Wilson, Trust Secretary



In the last edition of the Newsletter we mentioned that the stand out red-and-white-hooped Oldham shirts had been spotted far and wide – seen on TV out in New Zealand being worn by a member of the England cricket team's barmy-army, snapped in Toronto worn by an Oldham fan out there on holiday and again spotted on TV this time worn by a mud-splattered Roughyeds' fan at the Glastonbury Festival. We asked readers if Oldham's trade mark colours had been spotted in any other 'unexpected' locations. Here then are two more – worn by fan Geoff Mills with the infamous River Kwai Bridge as the background on the left and by Geoff and Marjory Cooke casting an envious eye over the New Zealand bound RL World Cup out in Australia on the right. And what about the 'All White'? Pictured above in the centre is Aucklander Roc Brady sporting his XXL in his home city.

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