

FROM THE CHAIR

Prompted by postings on the Total RL Fans Forum's website, initiated by a fan posting as 'Home of the Tubular Bandage', representatives of Rugby Oldham together with independent supporters attended meetings with Christopher Hamilton and other club representatives in June and July 2015.

At that time we were led to believe that Mr. Hamilton wished to co-operate with Rugby Oldham and others and that he would welcome sharing ownership 'up to 100%', to quote his own words. We took this to mean that he was willing to surrender some, if not all, control of Oldham RLFC (1997) Ltd.

In view of this Rugby Oldham said it would need to undertake a process of 'due diligence' to ascertain the financial strength and viability of the club. Mr. Hamilton said that this was 'a given' (again quoting his exact response). Since Mr. Hamilton suggested that any participation or takeover should be in place in time for the commencement of the 2016 season, he proposed that a 'timeline and framework for discussions' was the appropriate next step, and indeed his responsibility, in order to move things forward. An article in the Oldham Chron. at that time fully confirmed that this was indeed the club's position.

Despite repeated requests by Rugby Oldham, this process has still not been taken any further, and no detailed negotiations have since been entered into. Even into the new year the Secretary of Rugby Oldham has made repeated requests to meet and several precise dates have been suggested even within the last fortnight. These have sadly elicited no response.

On the back of Oldham Roughyeds' magnificent Challenge Cup victory at Hull KR, Mr. Hamilton has recently been quoted in the press and on radio and television as hoping this success would attract new fans, sponsors and investors.

Sadly, after over ten years of positive activity to support rugby league at all levels in Oldham, the lack of any sort of response to our efforts to get a dialogue going make the Board of Rugby Oldham bitterly disappointed to be shunned and treated as disrespectfully as it seems to have been, especially at a time when all at the club could be so positive.

The 2015 promotion, and results of the team so far this season, have been outstanding, and the coaches, players and backroom staff deserve huge praise and support. However, Rugby Oldham is seriously concerned that the long-term prospects of the club are being harmed by the apparent refusal of the current management to enter into serious talks, with us or with other interested parties, about improving the governance of the club by widening the range of those involved.

At the time of the proffered involvement in ownership in the club in summer 2015, I as Chair of the Trust also discussed possibilities with Oldham Athletic, Supporters Direct, an anonymous investor and the RFL. Simon Corney was happy to speak with us and Supporters Direct were ready to offer whatever support and guidance might be necessary, having previously had equivalent input into changes in management at Rochdale Hornets, Swinton Lions and Hunslet Hawks. The potential investor, I should add, talked in terms of a very significant £100k investment. The RFL, unfortunately, was a different kettle of fish. Letters to their John Dutton and Karen Moorhouse went unanswered, and a promised phone call from the latter at the time never transpired.

One wonders whether the RFL, like Oldham RLFC, have any real interest in any form of Supporters Trust participation in administering professional rugby in Oldham.

The conclusion reached by the Board of Rugby Oldham, therefore, is that for the foreseeable future there does not seem to be a prospect of co-operation to develop a strong relationship for the benefit of professional RL in the town.

NEVERTHELESS, WE WOULD ASSURE OUR MEMBERS THAT RUGBY OLDHAM WILL CONTINUE THE WORK THAT IT DOES IN OLDHAM, AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE ON STANDBY TO PICK UP THE PIECES IF AND WHEN THINGS WERE TO GO WRONG.

Regards,

Geoff Cooke, Chairman

STANDARD CUP FINAL 2016

On a sunny Good Friday the 2016 Oldham Standard Challenge Cup was played out before a good sized crowd between Saddleworth Rangers and Rochdale Mayfield on Oldham Rugby Union's Manor Park. Mayfield were playing in their fifth consecutive final and Rangers their seventh in the last nine seasons.

Both Kevin O'Rourke's Napier Windows and Rugby Oldham once again illustrated their support for amateur rugby league in and around the town by sponsoring the game and man-of-the-match respectively.

Mayfield's coach and talisman Matt Calland was shown the red card early on. Rangers boosted by this ran out 20-18 winners in arguably the most exciting final in the last few years.

The man-of-the-match selected by former Oldham and Lancashire forward Ray Clark was Saddleworth's centre-threequarter Josh Brown.



Geoff Cooke, Rugby Oldham Chairman, presents the man-of-the-match trophy to Josh Brown

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Opposite are a number of forthcoming events that have been brought to our attention, some of which might be of interest to our members.

They are free to attend and we'd encourage anyone with an interest in Rugby League to get involved.

OLDHAM RUGBY LEAGUE HERITAGE TRUST

Video Conversion Project.

Earlier this year the Oldham Rugby League Heritage Trust had an appeal printed in the Oldham Chronicle asking if anyone had old video tapes of Oldham matches that the Trust might borrow to have digitised and therefore protected from degradation for all time. The appeal was a success in so much as more than 30 matches, not already in our possession, were added to the Trust archive.

We now have in excess of 400 Oldham matches that are stored electronically. Mostly these are from the period from 1984 to 2001 when video tapes were most common. We would be most interested to acquire and convert anymore that might be out there, so if you think you might have something of interest please contact the trust as follows:

e-mail: oldhamrl1895@gmail.com

or phone: 01457 875084

01457 810197



FREE RUGBY LEAGUE EVENTS AT HERITAGE QUAY 2016

League Legends in Conversation

Tuesday 10 May 7.00-9.30pm

Join legendary greats from rugby league days gone by for a funny, frank and fascinating talk about how the game was played. Appearing will be Terry Flanagan, and two other special guests.

Celebrating the Indomitables

Saturday 2 July 12.00-4.00pm

In the summer of 1946, one of the greatest British teams of all time went on tour down under. We'll be sharing the story of their incredible journey

Beef, Brains, Brawn and Muscle: What makes a rugby player?

Tuesday 12 July 7.00-9.00pm

What does it take to be a modern rugby league player and how has that changed over the past 100 years? With the help of Dr Kevin Till, (Leeds Beckett) we're going to find out by exploring how diet, training and the game itself shapes players.

Rugby League History day: Four Nations

Saturday 26 November 10.00am-4.00pm

Our annual celebration of rugby league's rich history will focus on the Four Nations and the traditions, rivalries and stories from over 100 years of fierce competition.

Plus **Family Fun Fridays** in July, August, September & October - all with a rugby theme

For more information please visit www.heritagequay.org/events



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RUGBY OLDHAM AMATEUR CLUB CHALLENGE

Rugby Oldham Amateur Club Challenge									
Team	P	W	D	L	L (u12)	ABP	DBP	Tot	%
Fitton Hill	18	7	-	11	3	35	13	72	4.0%
Waterhead	20	5	-	15	4	32	11	62	3.1%
Hollinwood	16	4	1	11	5	23	7	49	3.1%
Saddleworth	26	2	-	24	7	31	7	51	2.0%
St Annes	18	1	-	17	3	22	4	32	1.8%
Higginshaw	4	-	-	4	-	3	-	3	0.8%

ABP = Attacking Bonus Points
DBP = Defensive Bonus Points

The amateur game in Oldham suffered a season to forget in 2014/15 with relegation for Saddleworth Rangers and Oldham St. Annes while Higginshaw were unable to complete their season by virtue of a shortage of players. As a result Fitton Hill Bulldogs were the local side with the best playing record over the season enabling the club to put its name on the Rugby Oldham Challenge Trophy for the first time.



Fitton Hill drive the ball in



Dale Lowe in action

RUGBY OLDHAM JUNIOR CLUB CHALLENGE

Rugby Oldham Junior Club Challenge									
Team	P	W	D	L	L (u12)	ABP	DBP	Tot	%
Waterhead	54	44	1	9	5	152	100	391	7.2%
Higginshaw	18	16	-	2	-	38	38	124	6.9%
St Annes	54	28	2	24	10	81	73	252	4.7%
Saddleworth	58	31	2	25	11	87	74	269	4.6%

ABP = Attacking Bonus Points
DBP = Defensive Bonus Points

The 2015 Rugby Oldham Challenge Trophy was hotly contested with each of the clubs boasting some success. It is obviously difficult to maintain positive results across each of three levels (U13, U14, U15) and it is to the credit of our three leading clubs that they are able to achieve such high standards.

Meanwhile Higginshaw boasted a top quality U15 side which enjoyed 16 victories in 18 fixtures. However, Waterhead's strength in depth across the age ranges saw them secure the trophy after a season of outstanding results.



Waterhead prove victorious

MAN OF STEEL

The Jos. Parr (Alco Ltd.) sponsored competition was as closely contested as ever. Based on Man of the Match Awards made by the opposition in club league fixtures the overall winner is the player receiving most nominations in the course of the season.

Dale Lowe once again proved victorious, having also won previously back in 2013

NOTES FROM THE SECRETARY

Kevin Sinfield accepted an invitation to become an honorary life member of the Trust last year, after he had been made an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours in 2014, and in the week that he has announced his final retirement, we are pleased to give some publicity to his recently published book, "My League Years in Words and Pictures", published by Great Northern Books Ltd. Members are sure to find it a good read.

Members will recall that the Trust became an associate member of the All Party Parliamentary Rugby League Group last year, and the group has been very active this year, in particular in lobbying the BBC for greater and better coverage of the game. The recent publicity, on both radio and TV channels of the national broadcaster, that the club earned as a result of the marvellous victory at Hull KR was just one spin-off of their efforts, as was the fact that the draw that pitted us with Warrington in the sixth round was made live on BBC radio 4.

Representatives of the Trust have continued this year to attend meetings of our parent body, Supporters Direct, which, although it has always been primarily a football-based organisation, nevertheless has a significant role too in supporting and developing supporter-involvement in rugby league. One such recent meeting was held at the home ground of FC United ; how envious we were on viewing the fantastic facilities that the fans have, with considerable assistance, of course, been able to develop there!

It has been decided this year to hold the AGM on a weekday evening, in the town centre, in the hope that this might attract more members to attend than has recently been the case on a Sunday before a match. Given the current position with regard to discussions – or, rather, non-discussions – with the professional club, despite all our efforts, as outlined elsewhere in this Newsletter by the Chairman, there is much to consider with regard to the future direction that the Trust should take, and it would be good to see a large number of you there to express your views.

NOTICE OF AGM

Notice of Annual General Meeting, Wednesday June 1, 2016.

The Trust's AGM will be held at the Royal Oak, commencing at 8pm, with the following

AGENDA :

- 1 Welcome and introductions
- 2 Minutes of 2015 AGM
- 3 Board membership
- 4 Financial and Membership summary
- 5 Approval of accounts for year ending 31.12.15.
- 6 Proposal to replace audit by review of accounts for year ending Dec 31, 2016
- 7 Report on Trust activities
- 8 AOB

Although the first part of the meeting involves conducting the business normally required at an AGM, there will be plenty of opportunity under items 7 and 8 for a broader consideration of the Trust's current activities and position.

Representatives of the Trust's elected board will update members on what has been done in their name over the past year, and members will be cordially invited both to question them and to express their own views, and indeed to give their own suggestions as to the future direction in which they believe the Trust should attempt to progress in the future.

Ian Wilson, Trust Secretary

OLDHAM EVENING
Chronicle



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Falcon Business Centre
Victoria Street, Chadderton
Oldham OL9 9HJ
Office Tel: 0161 878 8308
Fac: 0161 878 7019
Website: www.frelswood.com