

CARLISLE RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE HONORARY SECRETARY

8th JULY 2009

Ladies and Gentleman

It gives me pleasure to present my report for the season 2008 - 2009, briefly outlining the activities of the Club.

On a sad note, several Members passed away during the course of the year and this evening we remember especially, David Murray who was killed on active service in Afghanistan; Raymond Higgins who died suddenly after playing for the Hornets in a match at Warwick Road and more recently, George Perkins, a former player who died whilst on holiday in the Canary Isles. There are others too, and they, and their families remain in our thoughts.

On the playing field the Club continues to develop. The senior XV finished mid table in North 2 East; similarly the Crusaders in the "Candy" League. The Hornets finished in the upper regions of the Cumbria Shield League, with the Colts acquitting themselves well in the Northern (Saturday) Colts

League, though it has to be said that their season was one in the process of redevelopment, and the achievements of other recent seasons were not quite reached. Nevertheless, the Colts teams being the stepping-stone from junior to senior rugby, they have provided a stage for the development of a number of notable individual successes, especially during the season under review.

Ladies rugby too is going through a period of rehabilitation after the highlights of previous years. A number of players have migrated elsewhere in search of a higher standard of rugby; others have retired and many new faces have been introduced and hopefully the fortunes of the Cougars will wax, with young girls being encouraged to take up the sport at youth level, and subsequently progressing to senior rugby,

Our junior and youth section is, as ever, thriving; and it is exciting to see the large numbers of boys and girls who turn out at all age groups through from under 7 to under 16. They clearly enjoy what is on offer and it is satisfying to know that Carlisle RFC is able to play a part in their character development at a vital time of their lives, as well as providing the training, coaching and playing skills, designed to equip them to enjoy the modern game.

Carlisle had a team in the final of every competition staged by Cumbria RFU; but success was only achieved in one final. Nevertheless, the effort and commitment displayed by coaching staff, administrators, and players, to make this all happen was commendable, and on behalf of the Club I would like to express thanks for their achievements.

The English Rugby Championship has been reorganised for the 2009 – 2010 season and the senior XV will now compete in North 1 East. No not a promotion, but if the quality of rugby on offer is similar to our experiences of the last two season in the north east, then it will be worthwhile. As the reorganisation progressed, we realised at an early stage that there would still be a need for at least one team from the northwest to be subject to level transfer. Rather than wait for the transfer process to be implemented by the RFUNCC, we volunteered to remain in the north east section of level 6 rugby, recognising that the standard of rugby was probably better than that on offer in the west section where our adventures at Level 6 began three seasons back. Hopefully our judgment will not have been misplaced, and that the decision will bear fruit as the new season progresses!

Clearly, we rely largely on homespun talent and it is right that should be the case. However, it is always necessary to recognise that we may have to encourage quality “speciality” players to reinforce our squad. That, coupled

with people from elsewhere seeking a higher level of rugby, will necessitate our having to achieve the right balance of local and imported talent.

“Poaching” has become an unwelcome, and at times an unsavoury facet of our game, and the behaviour of some clubs is reprehensible. Offers of inducement that fall outside the letter and spirit of the regulations is an increasing menace to a club such as ours. I don’t necessarily blame someone for accepting what is on offer, but I do question the morality of those prepared to engage in questionable transfer activity with little regard for others. It wouldn’t be so bad if those participating in the type of conduct complained of bothered to take the trouble to properly register paid players on an RFU contract. At least then it would be relatively legitimate!

The history of the game is littered with examples of clubs overreaching their assets to retain a desired status, something that would otherwise elude them unless they made illegal payments and inducements outside the safety of a contract. At Carlisle we do not want to fall into that category and we will continue to be realistic in our approach to the provision of rugby.

I would like to thank all those who make valuable contributions to the running of the Club, whether they are officers, committee, staff, or members wanting to help with the general well being of our Club. As is

often the case in many voluntary organisations there are a few who do too much and too little is left undone by too many. The comfort of a seat on any committee should indicate a willingness to participate fully in the activities of our organisation and I would encourage all those who sit on any of our committees to take a full part in the running of the Club.

I would also like to place on record the thanks of the club for the good work of Adam and Maureen Flett in maintaining our website.

Sincere thanks too to all those who sponsor the Club and support us financially in other ways, or in kind.

Carlisle RFC is a successful organisation, and given that we continue to manage in a sensible way, there is no reason why our fortunes should not continue to improve. All the activities that we engage in require not insubstantial sums of money to ensure that they happen. Apart from the usual income streams, we need to develop the use of the clubhouse further and to do this, it is my view that the time has arrived to change the way we manage the day to day running of the facilities. It is wrong that we should continue to depend on the generosity of one or two individuals to ensure that the premises are opened, catering is arranged, that the bar is manned and other requirements catered for. This all takes time and can be

restrictive in many ways. It is probable that the opportunity will arise in the foreseeable future to reorganise the way we do it. We must move away from the voluntary approach when it comes to managing the premises. There are too many demands for us to continue to expect volunteers to give of their time for our benefit. In my opinion we need to seriously consider the appointment of a full time manager to run the commercial side of our operation and make them responsible for all the demands that come with that requirement. I am in the process of preparing a document for consideration by the General Committee, and subject to my re-election later this evening, that paper will be brought forward in the foreseeable future.

We are now running a viable business. I recognise that to date we have managed well, but as was mentioned at a recent meeting of the committee, the demands placed on a few people are becoming unrealistic, and it is wrong that we should continue to expect that level of contribution to sustain the running of the clubhouse. We must be prepared to join the 21st century, embrace change, and move forward. Taking for granted what we have is no longer an option.

Having bored you all to death, and before closing, it would be remiss of me not to say thank you to our President, John Tiffen, who is standing down

after thirteen years in office. Traditionally at Carlisle, after election as President, the individual remains in post until death. Having served us well, John has decided that the time is right for others to have the opportunity to serve as your president. A proposal to be tabled later this evening, if accepted, allows for election for a two year fixed term in the future. Thanks for your contribution John - now you will have more time to devote to match and ball sponsorship.