



Dudley Kingswinford

Rugby Football Club



Accredited Club



A Brief History of DK.

DK has a long and interesting history going back to 1920. It is important that we record and publish this story. It is only when we know where we have come from that we can fully appreciate where we are!

We are lucky at DK because we have a keen, accomplished and indeed a published historian and retired Engineer in Bob McMaster.

Bob has huge archives of facts and images of DK going all the way back to its inception in 1920. He has produced articles for the Black Country Bugle and has provided a wealth of information for our website.

If you have any information regarding this article that we might be able to include please contact admin@dk-rfc.co.uk

Please take the time to read them and enjoy!

“People without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture are like a tree without roots.”

A Black Country Rugby Legend Remembered

Since 2008, Dudley Kingswinford Rugby Football Club has organised annual reunions for members who, in their earlier years, had played rugby at the club's former ground at Penzer Street, Kingswinford.

At this year's annual reunion, held on 18th April 2018, members' memories of the Penzer Street days were once again revisited.



Fig 1: The Penzer Street Reunion 2018

However, this year's reunion was somewhat different to previous years since the primary subject of discussion revolved around former member, **Cliff Watson** (1940-2018) whose achievements on the field of play at home and internationally are legendary.

Here is Cliff's story....

We live in an age where there is complete interaction between rugby's dual codes, Union and League, with players changing codes with impunity. In 1959, Cliff decided to 'cross the great divide' and in future would be playing rugby league for St Helens and would now be paid for his endeavours. Shock, horror! How could he do such a thing? The Rugby Union edict at that time meant that he was to be ostracised after relinquishing his amateur status. Not only would he never again be allowed to play for a Union club, but neither would he be granted access to any Union premises, including that of his old club, not even to enjoy a pint with his old mates. He became a persona non-grata. Difficult to believe in our enlightened era.



Fig 2: Cliff Watson

Although born in London in 1940, Cliff and his family moved to Fisher Street, Dudley after the family's house was destroyed in a bombing raid in the Second World War. His education was at Roseland Secondary Modern School.

Cliff was a player who achieved every honour the game had to offer. The fact that he had to leave Rugby Union and go to Rugby League was possibly due to his personal circumstances at the time. He was a big, strong, young man who needed a job. In 1952, Harold Chambers and Luing Preedy, former Presidents of Dudley-Kingswinford rugby club, attended a meeting with the Dudley Schools Association which revealed much encouragement of Rugby football and as a result, a circular was sent to all head teachers in the Borough. In response, in 1953, two lads from the Roseland School reported to the club; a lad named John Gallis, later to become a life member of the club, and a strapping fourteen-year-old, Cliff Watson. After being tried in several positions in the forwards, he finally settled as a prop. His basic learning must have been very good and in a very few years he made the First XV and by 1959, at the age of nineteen, he had played for the combined counties side of Worcester & Hereford R.F.U.



F Fry, D Hughes, R McMaster, D Roberts, J Gibbons, C Watson, R Connett, R Shuck, K Watson, R Taylor, A Bradley, E Mason, R Davies, J Pardoe, J Mucklow, A Friend, W Waldron

Fig 3: Cliff Watson in the DK 1st XV 1959/60 (Standing 6th from left)

Unfortunately for Rugby Union, Midlands Rugby and Dudley Kingswinford in particular, Cliff saw an advertisement placed by the Rugby League club St Helens, offering employment and the opportunity to play Rugby League, and to be paid for the privilege! It was reported that Cliff received an initial payment of £750 to be followed by a similar amount after six first team appearances. Presumably, the club were more than happy with the lad from Dudley as he went on to make a total of three hundred and seventy-three appearances for them.

His progress was rapid and just eighteen months after joining St Helens, Cliff played prop in the 1961 Rugby League Cup Final at Wembley as the club defeated Wigan in front of ninety-five thousand spectators.



Fig 4: Cliff Watson holding the Champion Challenge Cup



Fig 5: Cliff Watson holding the Champion Challenge Cup

He again went to Wembley five years later, same opponents, same result. Cliff was a permanent fixture in the side over the next ten seasons, becoming known for his physical, tough and all-round fearless style of play. He was voted in the club's top seventeen players over their one-hundred-and-twenty-year history.

Cliff became an England player, receiving his first cap in 1963 against Australia and over the next seven years played in thirty-four internationals playing in both the 1968 and 1970 World Cup tournaments.



Fig 6: Cliff Watson playing for Great Britain v Australia

He captained the St Helens Club for two seasons and achieved what is surely the ultimate honour when in 1968 he captained his country in the game against Wales. He went on to represent Great Britain in thirty tests, touring Australia three times. Cliff holds the dubious record of being the only British player to have been sent off twice against Australia! Pertinently, he is widely regarded as one of the best Great Britain 'frontrowers' ever.

Cliff finished his playing days in Australia with Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks and finally with Wollongong Wolves before retiring in 1974. He remained in Australia and lived near Sydney.



Fig 7: Cliff Watson playing for Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks

Sadly, Cliff passed away on 2nd May 2018

He will be forever remembered at DK, Bob had replica shirts made of St Helens and Great Britain and a Shirt from Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks mounted and they now adorn the wall at DK as a fitting tribute to a true Black Country Legend.



Fig 8: Bob McMaster and John Gallis with Cliff Watson's Nephew David Ward unveiling the replica shirts of St Helens, Great Britain and Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks at the DK Penzer Street Reunion 2018

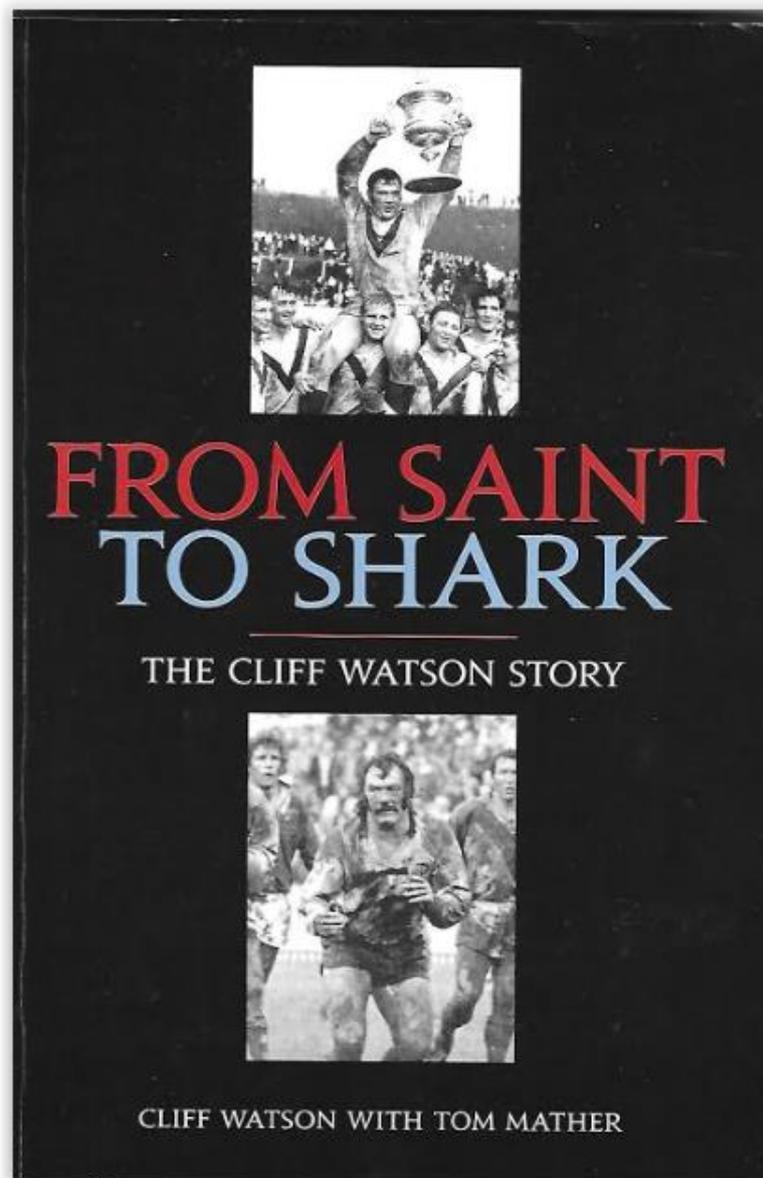


Fig 9. The Cliff Watson Story

If any rugby enthusiast wishes to delve deeper into Cliff's rugby career then 'The Cliff Watson Story', published by Vertical Editions of Skipton, Yorkshire, may be of interest. The publication was originally published as an ebook by Tom Mather in 2015. Furthermore, if you want to watch Cliff in action in the 1973 Grand Final click on the link below.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3cuZvv4s9_4