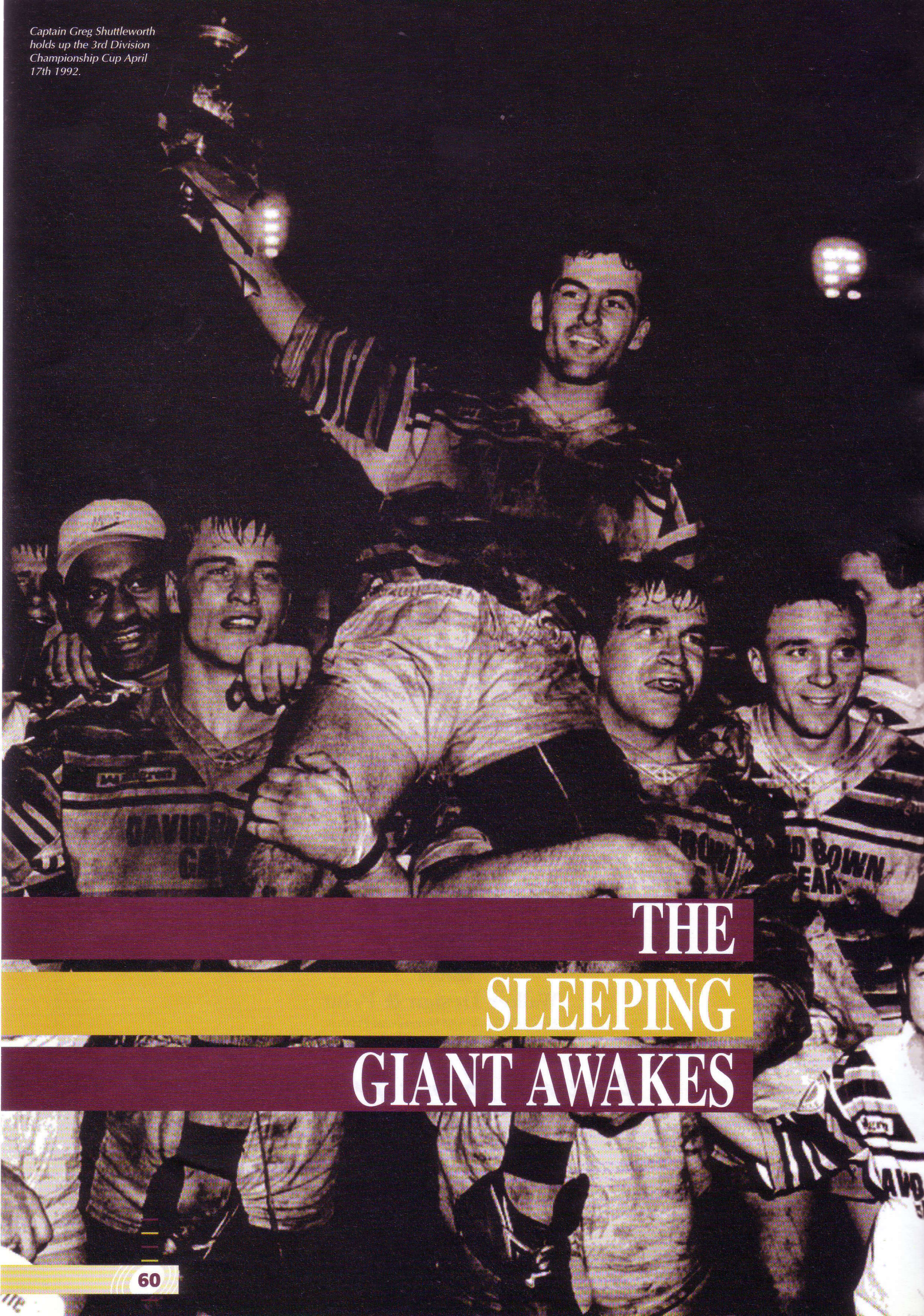


Captain Greg Shuttleworth holds up the 3rd Division Championship Cup April 17th 1992.



THE

SLEEPING

GIANT AWAKES

THE 3RD DIVISION CHAMPIONSHIP.

A fine 36-7 win at Nottingham in the Yorkshire Cup followed by a hard-fought 22-18 away win at the newly-formed Scarborough Pirates saw Fartown kick-off the 1991/1992 season in confident mood. So the Fartowners among the 2117 crowd that turned up for their first home game of the season were buoyant following the excellent start to the campaign. However, Batley hadn't read the script, and ended up taking the spoils 20-19. On reflection this one result probably cost coaches Blacker and Jarvis their jobs, as criticism was levelled from some quarters at some of their tactical substitutions in the game. Brendan White and Captain Greg Shuttleworth were installed as acting coaches for the visit of Ryedale York to Fartown for the 1st round proper of the Yorkshire Cup.

At the interval Fartown were trailing 10-0, and in all honesty looked very ordinary. Legend of Rugby League Alex Murphy was a guest at the game and at the request of the Fartown directors delivered a half-time pep talk to the team "just play basic rugby" he told them, and it must have done the trick as Fartown scored 28 points without reply to win the match 28-10 and put the Fartowners into the second round for the first time in seven years.

The Fartown board were now desperate to appoint Mr Murphy as their next coach but Keighley were also interested in his services. Alex promised them an answer by the middle of the week. Hopes soared as Murphy turned down Keighley's offer but Fartown still had an important match against Bramley to concentrate on that weekend. Fartown managed to grind out another away win 14-9 to lift them to a mid-table position. Another plus was the return to the side of Wally Gibson after his spell down-under. So the worst kept secret in Rugby League saw Alex Murphy sign a three-year deal with the Fartowners a few days before the important Yorkshire cup quarter-final tie against Wakefield Trinity. Terry Flanagan was appointed assistant coach soon after and this was seen as another excellent coup for the club as Terry was held in high regard, being viewed by many as a possible future Great Britain coach.

There was a real buzz amongst the rugby league public of Huddersfield that week with the talk being of a new dawning for the Claret & Gold of Huddersfield.

However, Murphy was left in no doubt as to the enormity of the task ahead as Wakefield steamrolled Fartown 52-9. Fartown certainly gave it their all, but question marks were raised about their fitness as Wakefield piled on the points in the last quarter of the game. One plus point was the attendance of 4,799 - the largest at Fartown for 11 years.

Title hopefuls Doncaster were the next visitors to Fartown. An excellent display by the home side saw Doncaster lose their 100% record by 14-0, ex-basketball player Jason Fogerty on his Rugby League debut putting in a storming performance. Pacey three-quarter Stuart Cocker reported back for training after his close season spell in Australia, and went straight into the team for the away game at Whitehaven. A brilliant first-half display saw Fartown run in five tries and put the game beyond the Cumbrian's reach. Fartown running out victors by 36-18 and maintaining their 100% away form. The Fartowners moved into 2nd place in the table with a rather indifferent display against lowly Highfield at Fartown by 32-16.

Murphy's first major signing was the highly rated kiwi stand-off Jason Gilbert, who was pressed straight into the side to face Batley at Mount Pleasant. It was a case of as you were, however with Batley running out the victors by 28-12 and completing the double over Fartown. Kiwi prop Arnold Lomax, who had flown over from New Zealand at short notice was drafted into the pack for the visit of Trafford Borough. Fartown set about their task ruthlessly winning 70-0, their largest margin of victory for 43 years. The win reportedly cost the club around £4,000 in wages with the new £1 a point winning margin incentive, plus £50 a man for nilling the opposition.

The first double of the season came against Doncaster by 25 - 16 and the talk on the terraces was now definitely of promotion. The second double came the following week

against Bramley 21-6, this result moving them into 3rd place in the table behind leaders Hunslet and 2nd placed Dewsbury.

Huddersfield then became the first English R.L. club to sign an Eastern block player in November when Hungarian Bela Varga was taken on trials, the 29 year old RU winger arriving on Fartowns doorstep, penniless and without boots. However by mid December he was gone after only a couple of A team games.

November 17th's Regal Trophy clash at Fartown against St Helens would be a good indicator of the progress being made at the club. Although they were to end up losing 32-10 they never gave up, and it said something for the team performance that Wally Gibson received the man-of-the-match award.

Another entry in the Fartown record books was made the following week as they recorded their biggest ever away victory by 78-4 against Trafford Borough, a record that had stood since 1948 when they beat Yorkshire Amateurs 61-0. Then to cap off an excellent week they were named as Stones Bitter 3rd Division team of the month for November. Dewsbury were the visitors to Fortress Fartown that weekend and were duly dispatched 13-4 in front of 3,262 spectators, the biggest league attendance at Fartown for 13 years. The 15th December saw Fartown go top of Division 3 for the first time that season after a promotion winning performance at Highfield 46-12. A midweek 58-12 victory against the touring Russian club Moscow Magicians gave the players an easy run out in this East V West friendly. The 5th double of the season came against Scarborough Pirates on the 29th December by 36-9 and saw the Fartowners holding on to top spot. It looked as though 1992 would be a Happy New Year for the Claret & Gold.

Fartown's first competitive run out in 1992 was away at Belle Vue in the preliminary round of the Challenge Cup against Wakefield Trinity. What a difference a few months can make casting your mind back to the earlier match between the two local rivals. Fartown set off like a house on fire and went 8-0 up inside as many minutes, but a couple of sin-bin offences either side of half-time swung the game in Trinity's favour which they eventually won by a flattering 32-18.

Fartown broke their transfer record once again in January paying Doncaster £20,000 for young second row forward Garry Coulter, son of Fartown A Team coach, Les. Coulter was in the squad to travel to Elland Road to face Hunslet, who up to this match had a 100% home record, so on paper anyway this was going to be one of the Fartowners toughest games of the season. This was probably the game that decided the destiny of the Championship. In a match that was ill-tempered at times Fartown ran out winners by 30-6, much to the jubilation of the 1,500 or so travelling supporters.

A nine try romp at home against Chorley saw Fartown maintaining their push for the championship (eventually winning by 46-8). On the following Wednesday, Fartown were back on top, winning despite a dreadful display, 26-9 at Chorley, recording their 7th double of the season. Nottingham were hammered 78-0 in what turned out to be a fifteen try exhibition match at Fartown. This result put Fartown 2 points clear at the top of the table.

Alex Murphy had predicted that the away game at Barrow could be Fartown's toughest match of the season, and so it proved, Fartown going down 12-10. However a superior points difference over Bramley kept them on top of the table.



Championship jitters saw Fartown squander an 18-2 first half lead against Keighley, to scrape through 18-14. But in the return fixture at Lawkholme Lane they silenced the doubters with a 30-6 champagne display, Brimah Kebbie scoring one of the tries of the season with a length of the field effort.

A solid no-frills display at Fartown was enough to take the points against Whitehaven by 24-6. Then an 82-0 away win at Nottingham re-wrote the record books for the second time that season. The 15 try walkover against "The Outlaws" also saw Simon Kenworthy kick his 200th goal for the club.

Two points from the next home game against Barrow would be enough to clinch promotion to Division 2. Fartown really turned on the style to run out winners by 42-10. Bramley's defeat that day meant that Fartown would have to lose their remaining two fixtures by 176 points not to be crowned champions.

It never looked on the cards though, in the last away league fixture of the season against Dewsbury, Fartown controlled the game from the start to finish running out victors by 15-6, winning the first ever 3rd Division Championship.

The final league fixture arrived on Good Friday the 17th April against Hunslet. With the Championship already being in the bag meant that there was no pressure to win, but of

course everyone wanted to finish off the season with a flourish.

As it happened the game turned out to be a bit of a dour affair, Hunslet obviously wanted revenge after Fartown had demolished their unbeaten home record back in January, Fartown eventually won 30-20, and when the final hooter sounded, that was that, top of the pile with 46 points, another win to savour and unbeaten at home since that day in September against The Gallant Youths.

The party then got into full flow with fireworks and the presentation of the Championship Trophy. Fartown had been a long time in the wilderness but at last, they were on the way back. Murphy had worked his magic once again.

All that was left then were the Premiership Play-Offs, four days later the boys from South Leeds were back at Fartown, losing this time by 13-6.

The Premiership Trophy now looked a distinct possibility, Fartown captain Greg Shuttleworth saying that they feared no one in the competition. So a trip to the capital next to face London Crusaders, and in what turned out to be a bruising encounter the unthinkable happened, we lost by 14-4. But it was 2nd Division rugby next year and if the sleeping giant wasn't awake just yet, he was out of his bed and rubbing his eyes.

