

## OxVox Performance Review for the year to September 30 2006

The main aim of this review is to summarise the activities of OxVox, the Oxford United Supporters Trust, for the year to 30 September 2006, for presentation at the fourth AGM of the trust on January 11 2007.

The review also covers events associated with the trust for the period to date following the end of the financial year (i.e. between September 30 2006 and 8 January 2007), and comments on the coming months.

### Committee

Following AGM/4 in March 2006 the OxVox Board (referred to here as the committee) contained the following nine members: Martin Brodetsky, Neil Carter, Chris Davis, Graham Hilsdon, Trevor Lambert, Paul Lowe, Tim Rosser, Stan Taylor and Ray Whittaker. Since AGM/4 Paul Lowe has resigned due to lack of time but has remained as a co-optee, and Stan Taylor resigned due to illness.

The current committee roles are: Martin Brodetsky - Vice Chair, Neil Carter – Treasurer, Chris Davis – Secretary, Graham Hilsdon - Stadium facilities rep., Trevor Lambert – Chair, Tim Rosser - Commercial rep., Ray Whittaker - Membership secretary.

The small committee size of seven has been very stretched this year in running the trust, and we look forward to adding new members following the election at AGM/5.

### Matchday desk

The trust has bought a folding table, chairs and tabletop stand. The club provides storage for these, and gives the trust a regular pre-match location in the Exhibition Bar alongside the club shop. Members wishing to help staff the desk on a rota basis should see one of the committee.

### Projects

**Calendar:** A Milk Cup Final 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemorative calendar was produced for 2006 featuring pictures of the great day kindly provided by Steve Daniels. It proved very successful and two print runs were sold out.

**Collection:** The trust organised a collection for the family of Matt Gadsby who died playing for Hinckley United; supporters generously donated over £1100.

**Flag:** The trust set up a bank account for the giant flag fund and collected £2500, including a donation of £250 from Nick Merry on behalf of OUFC, and one of £350 from Mark Scarlett.

**Banner:** The trust designed and produced a 4m by 2m banner for use at matches and OxVox events.

### Sponsorships and commercial

The trust became a shareholder in OUFC. This is of symbolic importance only (our holding is four shares in over 100,000!); however beyond its symbolism, the holding entitles the trust to attend future Club AGMs as of right. We also have set aside a modest amount of money for future share acquisitions, which we anticipate would be bought (at nominal rates only) from any small shareholders willing to sell.

The trust's first foray into player sponsorship was not notably successful, as we sponsored loan goalkeeper Andrea Guatelli last season.

More positively, we have become the sponsors of the Under 9s team for this season, which requires us to raise some £1500 by season end.

One new source of income with the Under 9s sponsorship in mind is our online shop at [www.buy.at/oxvox](http://www.buy.at/oxvox) which earns us commission on each sale. The shop is a portal to many online retailers such as Amazon,

HMV, Marks and Spencer and was set up prior to Christmas 2006 in an attempt to benefit from seasonal purchases. Please use it when buying online, to benefit the trust.

In Anti-Racism in Football week in October 2005 we made a small sponsorship donation to a refugees' football tournament.

Internet provider Customnet discontinued their arrangement to advertise on our website.

Changes to update the image of the trust have included a new logo, a redesign of the appearance of the website, a higher profile through regular advertising in the matchday programme, and the reinstatement of the matchday desk following the takeover.

## **Press releases**

The trust released eight press statements during the year. Brief details were as follows.

| <b>Date</b>   | <b>Title</b>                                   | <b>Purpose</b>  |
|---------------|--|---|
| December 2005 | Time to invest                                 | To encourage player investment by F Kassam during the transfer window             |
| February 2006 | Enough is enough                               | To address various issues regarding the running of the club by F Kassam           |
| February 2006 | Supporters look to a United future             | To rally supporters and promote the OxVox AGM                                     |
| March 2006    | Open Letter raises more questions than answers | To respond to the appointment of Brendan Cross and Bill Smith and related matters |
| March 2006    | OxVox turn up the heat                         | Pressure for F Kassam to sell OUFC  |
| April 2006    | Time to pull together                          | Rallying cry following the takeover   |
| May 2006      | Comments on ticket pricing for 2006-7          | Self-explanatory  |
| October 2006  | OxVox takes on youth sponsorship role          | Announcement of Under 9s sponsorship  |

## **Meetings and events**

### ***Committee meetings:***

The trust committee continues to meet on a monthly basis which is now standardized to the second Monday of the month. Periodically we issue a specific invitation to members wishing to raise issues to attend, however any member wishing to attend any meeting can do so by prior arrangement. All meetings are minuted on the OxVox website.

### ***Football club meetings:***

Following the takeover meetings are being held with the club on a more regular basis and to date four have been held, most recently on 13 November 2006. The Chairman has attended three of the four meetings. All meetings are minuted on the OxVox website.

### ***Members meetings:***

Two have been held during the period

- 1) On March 24 2006 a meeting was held 24 hours after the takeover was announced. We had anticipated a large attendance; however when news of the takeover came through unsurprisingly the attendance slumped. Associated with the meeting, we were in the advanced stages of planning a protest march which was shelved when the news broke of the takeover.
- 2) On 19 September 2006 Kelvin Thomas, Mick Brown and Peter Corbett from the Club attended a meeting in which wide ranging questions were answered about the new regime at the Club.

Minutes of both meetings are posted on our website and printed copies are available on request.

#### **AGM/4:**

AGM/4 was held on March 2 2006 and is minuted separately.

#### **Events**

**Football competition:** On 13 August 2006 the trust organized its first men's football competition in which six 7-a-side teams competed. The OUFC side which won will be defending their trophy in what we hope will become an annual event and a precursor to other similar events.

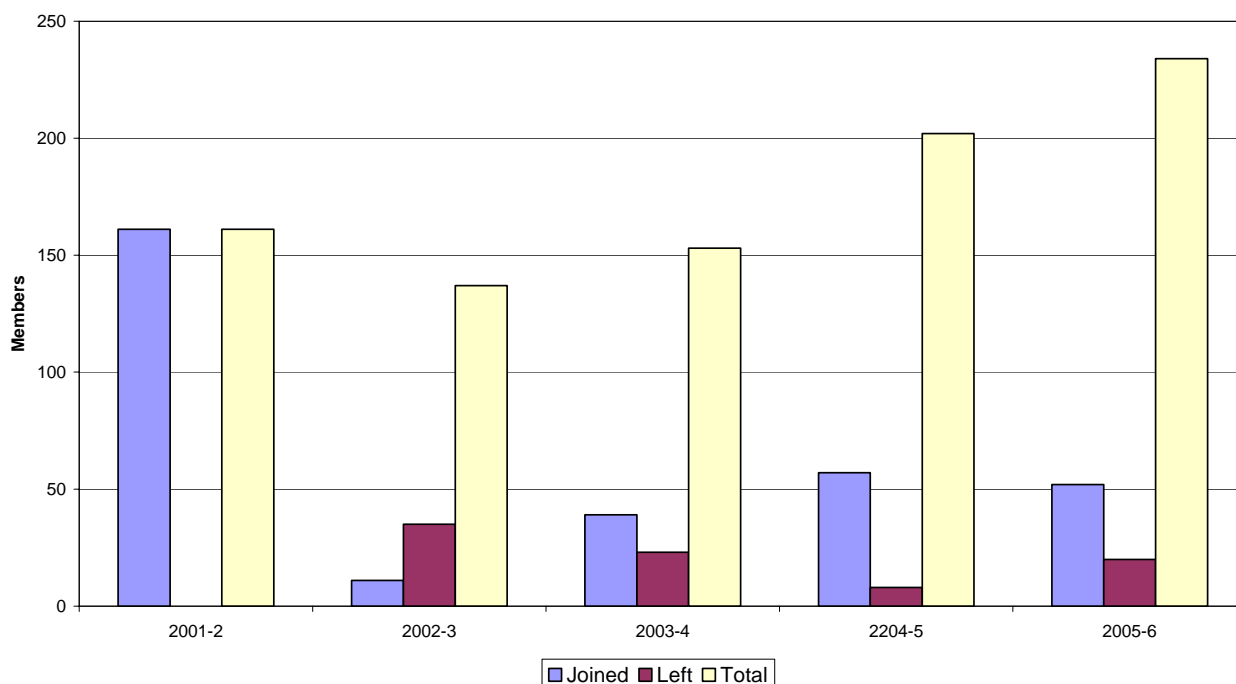
**Fun Day:** On 6 July 2006 the trust had a stand at the Club's Fun Day and we featured a children's drawing competition which proved popular.

#### **Membership**

Discounted multi-year memberships were introduced, initially on a five-for-four basis and now on the basis of three years for the price of two.

The figure below shows the growth in membership over the five years since the formation of the trust. The figure excludes 32 members from the total joining in 2003-4 who joined on a casual basis for 6 months in March 2004 who did not renew when their membership expired in September 2004.

**OxVox Membership, 2002-2006**



The accounts show 211 shareholders; the figure shows a current total of 234 members, which includes juniors who do not hold a share.

#### **Retrospective and outlook**

This has been a momentous year for Oxford United. When we met at the last OxVox AGM on March 2 2006 the club was in a state of turmoil following a fans forum and the after-AGM discussion focused on the prospects of a takeover. At the time it was difficult for the committee to comment on the rumours as we had been in touch intermittently with Nick Merry and did not feel it was helpful to fuel speculation. We organized a meeting of a group of 20 or so supporters, including trust members and committee members, with Brendan Cross prior to the Bristol Rovers match. We believe the discussion that evening, which was rather heated,

served to convince Brendan Cross and Bill Smith that their planned tenure was unworkable, while outside in the stadium the demonstrations in support of a takeover made the same point.

There have been two major disappointments following the takeover. The first, of course, is that in Jim Smith's early weeks of management the Club was narrowly unable to avoid relegation, falling on the final day of the season against Leyton Orient. The second is that the deal went through for the stadium alone, even after a pledge by the outgoing chairman at a fans forum a month previously that he would not separate the ownership of club and stadium.

On the positive side, it has been encouraging to see the excellent start made by the new squad to the challenge of the first season in the Conference. We hope that the loss of form in recent weeks will be temporary and that the team can go on to regain its place in the Football League at the first attempt. Equally invigorating have been the positive changes seen at the Club, including the acquisition of a training ground, the recruitment of additional training, scouting and coaching personnel, and the general restoration of the necessary infrastructure to run a professional football club.

We welcome the improved communication generally, and specifically with the trust by means of a reinstatement of regular meetings. We have found the new owners to be willing to listen and to work together with supporters, and prepared to work to create a positive atmosphere within the club and a strong marketing presence outside. The trust would however like to see a return of fans forums held twice a season as a simple means of enabling all to have their say and to question those running the club and managing the team. There is also room for greater clarity about the ownership of the club, the prospects for stadium ownership, and the long terms plans should the stadium be acquired.

This has been a very busy year for the trust in a climate of uncertainty. We believe a substantial amount has been achieved in a difficult situation with a small committee. The challenge for next year is to enable the trust to grow further in numbers and in significance in the life of the Club. Taking on a sponsorship will help as it provides a focus for many activities. New members on the committee, as well as helping to share the work around, will provide new impetus and ideas. We will also seek new ways of involving our members.