

THE ROCHDALE DIVISION

Conversations with Star Players, Managers
and Cult Heroes of Rochdale AFC



CHRISTOPHER FITZGERALD

THE ROCHDALE DIVISION

Conversations with Star Players, Managers
and Cult Heroes of Rochdale AFC

CHRISTOPHER FITZGERALD



Contents

Introduction	7
Timeline.	13
Part I: The Managers	15
Mick Docherty	16
Graham Barrow	30
Steve Parkin	37
Paul Simpson	50
Keith Hill	60
Steve Eyre	81
John Coleman.	89
Chris Dunphy	96
Part II: The Players	105
Alan Reeves	106
Matt Gilks	116
Rickie Lambert	128
Glenn Murray	137
Will Buckley	145
Adam Le Fondre	154
Craig Dawson	166
The Others.	175
Part III: The Cult	183
Shaun Reid.	184
Steve Whitehall	196
Gary Jones	204
Paddy McCourt	212
Ian Henderson	224
Calvin Andrew	240
Epilogue.	251
Acknowledgements	255

Timeline

Key Rochdale AFC personnel in the timeframe covered by this book:

1992–2006:

Chairman: David F. Kilpatrick

Managers: Dave Sutton, Mick Docherty, Graham
Barrow, Steve Parkin, John Hollins, Paul Simpson,
Alan Buckley

Players: Shaun Reid, Alan Reeves, Steve Whitehall, Paul
Butler, Gary Jones, Paddy McCourt, Matt Gilks

2006–2018:

Chairman: Chris Dunphy

Managers: Steve Parkin, Keith Hill, Steve Eyre,
John Coleman

Players: Gary Jones, Matt Gilks, Grant Holt, Rickie
Lambert, Glenn Murray, Adam Le Fondre, Will
Buckley, Craig Dawson, Calvin Andrew, Ian Henderson

2018–2021:

Chairman: Andrew Kilpatrick

Managers: Keith Hill, Brian Barry-Murphy

Players: Ian Henderson, Calvin Andrew

Part I

The Managers

Mick Docherty

1994–1996

THE SUMMER of 1992. The formation of the FA Premier League is dominating the media headlines, but there is no such fanfare at Rochdale AFC, who are shaping up to compete in the resultant newly branded Football League Third Division. Jestingly, supporters remark that the renaming of the old Fourth Division is the only way the club could ever achieve promotion.

It isn't a joke for assistant manager Mick Docherty, however. He knows clubs such as Rochdale are now to receive less money from the league and other rights deals than previously. Key players such as Mark Leonard will need to be sold to compensate. Fellow bottom-tier stablemates Aldershot and Maidstone have already gone to the wall. Gates are dwindling.

The hope of bettering the previous season's performance, which saw the club miss out on the play-off places on the final day with 67 points (Rochdale's highest achieved under three points for a win at this point), looks remote before a ball has even been kicked in anger.

Yet Docherty, along with his enigmatic manager Dave Sutton, will seek to battle against these odds and deliver something the supporters can truly celebrate for the first time since 1969, the last and only time the club has managed to escape the dreaded 'Rochdale Division'.

With the scene set, Sutton and Docherty would be the first in a line of management teams to attempt to haul 'little old Rochdale'

from its namesake division during the Premier League era, an era of avarice and impecuniousness.

The son of Scotland international and former Manchester United manager Tommy Docherty, Mick knew his way around the game. As a player himself, he had demonstrated his ability as a full-back for Burnley, Manchester City and Sunderland, before injury brought an early halt to his career.

Throughout the 1980s he'd carved a niche as a coach or manager, with Sunderland, Hartlepool United and Hull among the clubs added to his CV, before he joined Rochdale as Sutton's number two in 1991. His first season in the post was the best Rochdale had had for years. A good many players from that time credit 'The Doc' for that.

Thirty years on, Docherty has lost none of his love for regimens, illustrated at his approval when I call him at exactly 10am, the pre-agreed time of our telephone chat. 'Very prompt, good man,' he says.

It was this discipline that first caused Sutton, himself fresh into the Rochdale hot seat, to seek Docherty out.

'Dave Sutton, a terrific man, who I can't speak highly enough of, approached me and asked me to be his number two,' Docherty recalls. 'I said, "I must warn you, Dave, that I am very volatile and I am very outspoken. I'm likely to say things that might upset you and upset the whole applecart." He didn't care. He said he'd seen me work on the training field at Lillleshall [National Sports Centre] and thought I'd be perfect for the job. As it turned out, we were a management team made in heaven. He was terrific as a manager because he was diplomatic and articulate, whereas I was less so – calling people out, no matter who they were and no matter what the outcome might be. Don't get me wrong, Dave wasn't a soft touch. He could fire off in the dressing room if the situation demanded it. He was a good judge of character too, and he allowed me to get on with the coaching side more or less on my own. It worked and the players responded to that.

'I wasn't given a formal contract, though. In fact, I never had one the whole time I was at Rochdale. Dave had one, but I think

the board were trying to protect themselves from having to pay out too much should things go awry. I remember the chairman, David Kilpatrick, once said to me, "As long as you do the job we ask, you don't need a contract, because you won't be sacked."

Such prudence from the late David Kilpatrick, and his firm friend Graham Morris, the club's finance director, would prove a frustration for Docherty. Yet, what the pair had achieved to keep Rochdale AFC in business, never mind in the Football League, lent much weight to their approach.

Kilpatrick first engaged with the club in 1980, in the days when league status for those finishing bottom of it was dependent on re-election by fellow members. Dale retained their place in the Fourth Division by a single vote that year. Kilpatrick certainly knew what he was getting into. The club was destitute and owed money for the stadium. Kilpatrick and Morris, together, salvaged this dire situation, thanks to Morris's own background in accountancy. Kilpatrick's own business background was a curious combination of funeral care and granite. He became Rochdale chairman in 1982, but stepped aside when comedian Tommy Cannon promised riches for the club in the mid-'80s. He stepped back in again after Cannon had left Rochdale riddled with debt, and, once more, steered the club back on to as stable a footing as could be managed. While a wealthy local businessman, Kilpatrick had nowhere near the capital possessed by the big-spending chairmen of the top division. Judiciousness was a necessity.

It was against this backdrop, and at the dawn of a new decade, that Sutton and Docherty began to deliver the first on-field hope the Rochdale supporters had experienced in what felt like an age. Despite the 1991/92 season being the best at Rochdale for more than two decades, the final-day disappointment came after a staggering collapse in form. Dale had lost five of their last six games and they took this malaise into the 1992/93 season, losing the league opener against Halifax and both legs of the League Cup against Crewe Alexandra.

'Sometimes it can take a while for that kind of disappointment to pass,' Docherty reflects. 'You see it sometimes the following

season. There can be a hangover. A self-questioning of confidence and ability. We worked it out of the players, though, and results did pick up.'

A topsy-turvy season would follow, with Dale always in the hunt for a play-off spot, but then, applying grease to their own hands just when a firm grip mattered most they finished 11th, five points adrift.

'We came up just short again,' Docherty says. 'I think we needed a boost. A player or two, but it just didn't happen. We inevitably slid backwards. It was very frustrating for Dave and I.'

A lack of resources will become a recurring theme during our conversation.

'You really need to remember what football was like back then,' Docherty continues. 'We had no training ground to speak of. We were on local parks – you know, the dog shit and the public. We were begging land off the council, or schools for their gym halls. We couldn't train at Spotland because we shared the stadium with Hornets [the town's rugby league team] and there was an agreement neither team would train, to protect the pitch as much as possible.

'We then had long journeys to places such as Torquay or Exeter to play matches. Bigger clubs could fly to games, or at the very least teams could have an overnighter. We used to go down and back up in a single day most of the time. Things like that can make a difference to a result, they truly can.'

The following summer would see the establishment or arrival of some real household names in Rochdale folklore. Centre-half Alan Reeves would cement his reputation as one of the best in the lower leagues, as would his understudy Paul Butler. Goalkeeper Martin Hodge, too, would attract praise for his brick-wall, match-winning displays. Shaun Reid would demonstrate all of the qualities that a bottom-tier midfield disrupter should have, while Mark Stuart would dazzle on the wing as Steve Whitehall rattled the back of the net with regularity.

However, after being realistic play-off challengers for the past two seasons, tensions became high as the pressure to actually deliver

grew. In fact, Docherty himself was sent from the dugout after Chester City were awarded a dubious penalty by Jeff Winter in one key game.

‘The referee wanted to make a name for himself that day,’ he recalls. ‘It was an absolutely obscene penalty decision. I ranted and raved and he sent me off. So, he achieved double the notoriety. I mean, I am volatile, but I can usually keep a lid on it if I really have to, but I really couldn’t that day. I was so incensed by a decision I thought was unfair. It’s a decision like that which can affect whether a team makes the play-offs or not. So much was riding on it.’

Sadly, the quality of the squad still didn’t translate into a play-off position. Once again, Dale were there or thereabouts for much of the season, but ultimately finished ninth, this time four points adrift.

‘We had so many good players that season,’ Docherty laments. ‘Again, the pattern of a good start gave way to indifference. It’s at this point you need to inject something new into the side – even better players. We didn’t get the opportunity to do so, and so we just couldn’t push on.’

The 1994/95 season would prove to be a pivotal one for Rochdale – and for Docherty himself. It would see the end of Dale’s mini resurgence as promotion contenders and firmly reacquaint them with the bottom half of the division. It would also see Docherty take managerial office for himself.

There was little foreshadowing of what was to come. Rochdale did lose star goalkeeper Hodge to Plymouth in the summer, but saw off a Manchester United XI 3-2 in pre-season, beating a side containing a host of future first-team stars such as Gary Neville and David Beckham.

‘I remember we actually played two games against Man United in consecutive pre-seasons,’ Docherty says. ‘One was for the public at Spotland and the other was behind closed doors at The Cliff. I think there was a bit of bother with the latter one because Eric Cantona played while he was banned and I don’t think he should have. We played well in both games and I remember we took confidence from them into the new season. We were dominant with the group we had.’

The season began with Rochdale defeating arch rivals Bury at Gigg Lane. Then, a 4-1 demolition of Chesterfield, followed by an away point at Gillingham and a home win against Lincoln, focused minds once again on a promotion campaign.

Then came a 3-1 home defeat to Hereford, but the poor performance that day was not what sticks in the mind. It was the news that Alan Reeves had played his last game for the club, having signed for Premier League Wimbledon. The reported fee was £200,000. Vital money for the Rochdale coffers, no doubt, but the sale also proved a tangible marker for the team's decline on the pitch.

'I tried to use the sale of Alan Reeves to motivate the other players,' Docherty says. 'You know, telling them they could land a big move if they attained the same standard? Work hard and you will earn better wages and a better life for you and your family, that kind of thing. He was a massive loss to the team, though, with no shadow of a doubt. We were a player or two away from pushing on, in my opinion. Me and Dave knew what was needed, but we weren't given it.'

Some heavy defeats would follow – 6-2 at Barnet sticks in the mind – and Dale would struggle to effectively replace departed goalkeeper Hodge. Chris Clarke had stepped up to some acclaim but then suffered a nasty head injury, which led to reserve stopper Neil Dunford being thrown into the fray, before the infamous Matt Dickins joined on loan from Blackburn.

'Dicko was actually a good goalkeeper,' Docherty says. 'Problem is, goalies make mistakes. Even now, you watch the top goalies and you think, "How the fuck has he let that in?" If a goalie makes a mistake, it usually costs the team a goal. There is no hiding place for them. Dicko seemed to have a run like that. He got a lot of stick, but he was a good goalie, genuinely.'

The board finally lost patience with manager Sutton following a 1-0 defeat to bottom side Hartlepool in November. Despite delivering some of the club's most competitive seasons in a very long time, Dale fans were not completely vexed by his departure. Sutton had been perceived as having regular digs at supporters and his stock

at the bank of goodwill was low. Docherty filled the position on a caretaker basis initially, and steered the side into the next round of the Auto Windscreens Shield and took four points from the next two league games.

'I asked Dave to be more forthright in the boardroom,' Docherty says. 'We had a good side but, more importantly, we had the makings of a *really* good side – certainly good enough to get out of Division Three and possibly the next division. If we had done that, then Dave becomes a manager with two promotions on his CV and me likewise as a first-team coach. We get a better life together. For that to happen, I told him he needed to become more dominant in the boardroom to get us what we needed. I think he tried that and, in doing so, he rubbed people up the wrong way and got sacked. I was astonished. As soon as he got the sack, I was leaving too. I was walking out the door with him. He says, "No, I want you to stay on." Out of courtesy and respect for him, I did as he asked. I inherited the same problems he had, though. The board, in my opinion, were not forward-looking. Despite what they said publicly, I think they were happy to stay in the division and enjoy the odd cup run, but anything more? No. We were always confident of taking the club forward, Dave and I. Our mantra to the board was always, "Don't sell the centre-halves and don't sell Reidy because they are the backbone of the side," and yet they got rid of all three eventually.'

There was much speculation at this time as to whether or not Docherty would land the job permanently. Rumours flourished that the Rochdale board had approached a host of names, including Sammy McIlroy, who was guiding Macclesfield Town to certain promotion to the Football League from the Conference, now the National League. Whatever the outcome of those conversations, the board saw fit to name Docherty permanent gaffer in the new year.

'I was aware the board were talking to other people,' Docherty says. 'It was difficult in that situation but I was keen to do as well as I could to prove my worth to anyone else who might come in. When I got the job permanently, I just carried on with what I had been doing. I already had a bond with these players as I was their

coach. I was inclusive – whether they were in the team, on the bench or injured. They were all important to me. I still didn't get a bloody contract, though.'

Hindsight now may infer what happened next was a dead cat bounce, but Docherty's permanent appointment coincided with an upturn in form. Dale remained unbeaten during the next four league games and made the Northern Final of the Auto Windscreens Shield, where they met league leaders Carlisle over two legs for a chance to play at Wembley. These games are still talked about by supporters to this day. The first leg, at Brunton Park, took place amid a monsoon. Dale captain Andy Thackeray won the toss and elected to play into the howling gale. Trailing 3-0 at half-time, the decision looked a poor one. Worse, the wind dropped in the second half and Dale headed home on the back of a 4-1 defeat.

The return leg required Dale to win by three clear goals. The odds were against them.

'It was an opportunity to get some silverware on the counter,' says Docherty. 'A real opportunity for the club to attain something. Yes, the competition is a minor one, but it would still have been an achievement. When we went to Carlisle, I know conditions were horrendous, but I don't think we turned up on the night. We got them back to our place with a mountain to climb but we couldn't quite climb it. We put in a magnificent display, one of Reidy's best games for us, and we won 2-1. It wasn't enough, though. We were all disappointed and I think that led to a downturn in our league form because, after that, there was a feeling the season was over.'

This did indeed prove to be the final highlight of the 1994/95 season. Dale limped to a 15th-placed finish and Docherty was faced with preparing for his first, and only, full season in charge.

He managed to finally solve his goalkeeping dilemma with the permanent signing of Ian Gray in the summer, but had to contend with the loss of his combative midfielder Shaun Reid, who moved to Bury for a tribunal-set fee of £15,000.

'Shaun Reid was a proper player,' Docherty says. 'He was one of them where you just looked in each other's eyes and knew what

the other was thinking without the need to speak. You just knew what you were going to get from him and that was 100 per cent commitment.

‘I was absolutely ripping when he went to Bury. I actually tried to buy Shaun back later in the season. I asked the chairman for ten grand as that would have got him. The chairman wouldn’t give it to me. I says, “Listen, Mr Chairman, he will get us into the play-offs, he will get us promoted and he will repay that ten grand many times over in doing so.” But he wouldn’t do it. Other than Ian, I didn’t get in any of the players I wanted that summer. It was then I knew I was batting against thunder in this job.’

Docherty’s internal misgivings aside, Rochdale opened the season with a 3-3 draw against Cardiff City, beat Second Division York City in the League Cup first leg and saw off Darlington in their first away fixture.

‘I went with the squad I had, which, to be fair, still had terrific players in it. Paul Butler, Jason Peake, Mark Stuart, Steve Whitehall. That was a solid base. I had to motivate them, convince them, that we could be successful.’

Hopes were high when Rochdale visited Bootham Crescent to face York in the second leg of the League Cup with a 2-1 advantage, but the visiting side were trounced 5-1 after taking the match to extra time.

‘It was the first time that season that I saw the players doubt themselves,’ Docherty remembers. ‘It didn’t help that York went on to draw Manchester United in the next round. That caused a few mutters at boardroom level. Although I am told that it doesn’t work like that and we would have, in fact, drawn Leicester had we won. Regardless, the result cost the club much-needed revenue.’

There appeared to be no cup hangover as Dale smashed Hartlepool 4-0 via a hat-trick from teenage sensation Jamie Taylor on the Saturday when returning to league business, the start of a run that – with a few setbacks aside – made Rochdale look like free-scoring promotion contenders once again. They dispatched Exeter City 4-2, while Docherty also takes the plaudits for overseeing an

end to Rochdale's 75-year wait to win a game of football in London, Barnet being the recipients of a 4-0 hiding.

'The best away performance of this side during my whole time at the club, was that,' Docherty testifies.

The goals kept coming. Paul Moulden, who had been at the club on trial, scored a hat-trick as Dale beat Darlington 5-2 in the Auto Windscreens Shield and they followed this up with a terrific 5-3 FA Cup win against Rotherham United, who at the time were in the division above.

'We were very capable going forward,' Docherty enthuses, seemingly pleased to be reminded of some phenomenal scorelines. 'My dad used to say, when he was manager at Manchester United, "If they score three, we'll score four." I adopted that approach. I told the players, we might lose two goals, but I knew they could get three or four. So, I said to them, "As long as we win the game, that's what matters." Well, I know it might be exciting for the supporters, but it gave me the jitters during the games themselves. When I played at Burnley, Man City and Sunderland, we always had attacking players with flair, who could turn a chance into a goal. I always used to work on that theme at Rochdale. Players such as Mark Stuart, Jason Peake and Steve Whitehall really bought into that.'

Then the wheels fell off. Inexplicably. Dale simply stopped their free-scoring ways. Results became patchy as a consequence.

'We wanted to get better by buying better players,' Docherty says. 'We had to buy players who not only made us better but gave us the chance to sell them on for more money, so we could buy even better players. It was an idea pitched to the board but I was never given the opportunity. I think that was the crux of the matter. If you have a squad of 17 or 18 players and they are all fit, you have a chance of attaining something because you work together day in and day out. You create a bond. But players would be sold or players would get injured and we never got the means to adequately replace them. You aren't going to get success that way.'

'Around this time, we lost Mark Stuart to injury. That was a big one. He fractured his jaw against Rotherham. I had to call Darren

Ryan into the first team, but he wasn't reliable. We would then lose players for smaller periods – Jason Peake for a couple, Ian Gray had to be rested as he had an operation in the summer – things like that. We would play games with what I would call half a team or I'd have to play players out of position.'

Rochdale had fallen to eighth in the league after the Christmas period but did manage to scrape past Darlington to set up an FA Cup third round tie with Liverpool at Anfield. It was a grand day out for this writer, who was only 15 years old in January 1996. However, after taking my seat in the historic stadium, awe gave way to dismay. A hat-trick from Stan Collymore, a first Reds goal for Jason McAteer and Ian Rush overtaking Denis Law's FA Cup scoring record made sure the day was all about Liverpool. Docherty's team on the afternoon, after a sprightly start, failed to make any kind of impact on a 7-0 scoreline.

'Initially, I was excited by the draw,' Docherty says. 'It was an opportunity for the players to show what they had against the best there was at the time. A chance to strut their stuff in among the Premier League celebrities. It was also an opportunity for the club to earn a lot of money. We earned £115,000 that day, I was told. After the game, we were in the boardroom at Anfield and former Liverpool manager Bob Paisley, one of the most bejewelled managers in the world, comes up to me and says, "Michael, it's not the world's worst disaster. You played well, especially in the first half." He was right in a fashion. Up until 40 minutes, we were only 1-0 down. We then lost two goals in quick succession to go in at half-time 3-0 down. That's game over against a team like Liverpool. At 1-0 we had a chance of sneaking something, but not 3-0. What do you say at half-time? All I could say was, "Go out and enjoy the second half." Inside, I was praying we didn't concede double figures.

'I remember Butty [Paul Butler], after the game, just shaking his head in the dressing room. He says, "Fucking hell, are they quick or are they quick? One minute they're there, the next minute they've gone." I says, "That's the top level, Paul, and that's what you have to aspire to." I knew this because I'd played there. I was fortunate

enough to have played against George Best and Jimmy Greaves. It's a different ball game at the top level. Butty went on to play at that level, of course, but that game opened his eyes, I'm sure of that. It opened all of their eyes.

'There were 7,000 Rochdale fans there that day, too, and I was so grateful for the support they gave us. I just wish we could have given them more to cheer about. I also wish that many of them came to more of our regular games. What a difference that would have made to the club.'

The experience left Docherty feeling low, however.

'I remember I went home that night, went to the pub and got absolutely leathered,' he says, frankly. 'People kept coming up to me, saying, "Never mind, you'll be all right." And I was like, "Oh fuck off." That's how I felt. I was so desolate, it was untrue. I was disappointed for the players more than myself. I wanted them to make their mark that day. I was disappointed we didn't score, because we did have chances in the first half. I had to go into the club on Monday and be OK, for the players, you know? I had to stick on a smile. It was hard. I think I gave them a belated Christmas party to try to get morale back up.'

Despite the delayed festivities, things failed to improve in the league and, once again, after a promising start, Dale had fallen to 15th.

'We just couldn't unlock teams anymore,' Docherty laments. 'We didn't seem to know what to do in the opposition half. I tried to remedy it. I tried to get another forward in. I spoke to three different players but, as always, it came down to money. I eventually got Dave Lancaster in on loan, and he did all right, but the team, as a whole, just wasn't firing. I lost Ian Gray for the rest of the season, too, so got Kevin Pilkington in on loan from Man United. The poor lad cost us a few goals and I had to send him back early. Sir Alex wasn't happy with that. He hasn't spoken to me since.'

Docherty brought goalkeeper Lance Key in on loan from Sheffield Wednesday instead, but the curse continued. Perhaps the most memorable game of the season's run-in, at home to

Wigan Athletic, perfectly highlighted Dale's transition from a potent attacking force to a toothless, almost comical, outfit. From Key's air shot at Peake's back-pass to Whitehall's two missed penalties, the 2-0 defeat was enough to turn the terraces against the manager.

'At no point did I tell the players I thought it was over,' Docherty says. 'But, as each game went by, we got further away from the play-offs and closer to staying in the bottom half. I just enforced on them not to switch off, even if there was nothing left to play for. They had an end-of-season holiday booked together – a reward for getting to the FA Cup third round. They also had a job to do for me first, though. I remember Hereford, last game of the season. They beat us and made the play-offs. That was us back in November. It should have been us then, but instead we finished 15th.'

The board of directors, who had been vocal supporters of Docherty during the season, were not impressed by the post-Christmas slump and relieved the manager of his post.

'I'd gone away to the Lake District for some head space,' he says. 'I remember the club PA phoned me and asked if I was going to be in that week and, if I was, could I attend a board meeting. I knew something was up then. I came home and went along to the ground and they were all there, the directors, shaking my hand, knowing they were going to fire me. They mentioned different things. An interview I'd given to a local paper about the lack of money at the club. They said it was too pessimistic. They mentioned a lack of potential signings, saying I should have done more scouting. They questioned the players I'd opted to retain and those I chose to release. Things like that, things that were my business – the manager's business. They said I should have taken money in December when I was offered it. The money I was offered wouldn't have got us players as good as we already had, so what was the point? I had asked for some of the Liverpool money, but was told it was used to pay off an overdraft and other expenses. I disagreed with them, but what could I do? I didn't even have a contract. I think I got three weeks' wages and that was it.'

‘As far as I know, the objective each season was “do the best you can”. That’s what we did, Dave and I. I travelled up and down the country to watch the opposition. I’d work two hours in the morning training the players and then I’d jump in the car and drive to Northampton, say, or Carlisle, and watch a game there. That was the only way to gather the data you needed back then. We worked hours and hours and hours. It was no doddle. Now, you switch on a computer and it’s all there for you. I’d be out of the equation right away nowadays, as you need to be IT-literate. They all talk in numbers now. I’m old-school. I have all this in my notebook, not a computer. The average person earns in a year only a fraction of what players earn in a week these days. It’s obscene and I’m happy I had my time when I did. Yes, the carrot is there for untold riches if they become the best player they can, and motivation is always to be applauded, but they get it all far too early now.’

While Docherty’s tenure was spent with pent-up frustration at the perceived prudence of chairman Kilpatrick and Morris, despite how things turned out, he has no regrets about taking on the Rochdale posts he held.

‘I had six years at Rochdale,’ he says. ‘Four with Dave and two on my own. It was a wonderful time and it was spent with a lot of wonderful people. I wish I could have given them more. Truthfully, though, I felt I gave the club as much as I could with the tools at my disposal. It wasn’t enough. I think I was a lot more outwardly pragmatic at the time, but, looking back now, I can see the bigger picture. The job cost me my marriage. The board of directors were terrific in basic terms, but they had no ambition, in my opinion. Whether that was down to finances or fear of the unknown is a question I don’t know the answer to, but I do suspect they didn’t want to push the boat out financially because of the small gate receipts coming in. It was a risk they didn’t want to take. If they had, and Dave and I brought them promotion, would the gates have gone up to justify the spending? I think they would have, but they opted for little old Rochdale to stay in the “Rochdale Division”.’