

## **Cheltenham Rugby Festival**

Backed by the Co-op and the Rugby League Foundation the second Cheltenham Rugby Festival was a great success. The blue riband event, the All Golds Cup for men, was won by the Royal Navy who over-powered the highly successful University Of Gloucestershire by 24 – 0 in the final.

The victory also ensured the Navy's qualification for the Carnegie Floodlit nines at Headingley Carnegie Stadium on Wednesday August 26th next where they will meet the Northern Rail Nines winners and their old foes the British Army, who they overcame in the semi final at Cheltenham. Success in their Carnegie group will ensure a showdown with the holders Super League's Huddersfield Giants.

The William "Massa" Johnston Award for the player of the tournament was won by Cornishman Johnny Platt of the Royal Navy and was selected by Cheltenham based Air Vice Marshall Chris Davison MBE, Director of the RAF Sports Board. The trophies were presented by the Air Vice Marshall and the Mayor of Cheltenham, Councillor Robin MacDonald.

The inaugural Golden Fern Cup for women was won by the British Army who accounted for England Students in the final. The Empress Award for the player of the tournament was selected by Pat Crawshaw, Chair of the RFL's National Female Steering Group and Sue Wilson, Vice Chair of the Gloucestershire Federation of WIs and was won by Brieger Williams of the Cheltenham Ladies.

The 1908 Cups for Gloucestershire Schools were won by St Peters of Gloucester (year 9) who beat Archway School of Stroud in the final and Tewkesbury School (year 8) who overcame Beaufort School of Gloucester. The Arthur Smith Awards went to Harry Preece of St Peters (year 9) and Spencer Hamilton of Beaufort School (year 8)

The 1908 Cup trophies were presented by Martin Roddy MBE and Martin Horwood, MP for Cheltenham.

On hand throughout the day were Celtic Crusaders players Mark Lennon and Matty Smith who brought along their mascot Colyn the Crusader. A very welcome guest was former Rugby League great Lesley Vainikolo.

Quotes :-

Johnny Platt "It was a well organised and brilliant day"

Air Vice Marshall Chris Davison "A wonderful event for the development of the sport nationally. It was played in a fantastic spirit with respect shown for opposition and match officials alike"

Pat Crawshaw "It is to be hoped that the Golden Fern Cup becomes an integral future part of the calendar for the women's game."

Sue Wilson “The WI ethos is to encourage women to work together as a team, try new things and thus build up their confidence. This competition encompasses all those attributes”.

Briege Williams “Cheltenham Ladies enjoyed their first Rugby League tournament. It went really well and we are already looking forward to next year”

Harry Preece “We defended well and we deserved to win but Archway put up a great fight” .

Spencer Hamilton “ We had an enjoyable day and the last thing we expected was to reach the final”

Dan Garbutt, Competition Manager for schools sport in Gloucestershire who spear-headed the 1908 Cup, “The Festival was tremendous both from a personal and a professional point of view. My role is based very much on building partnerships and to be able to bring schools to an event of this standards and to put our name to it makes reputations and as a result our efforts in every other area become so much easier.”