Vale Graham "Sleepy" Cowan

It is with deep regret that we advise of the passing of **Graham "Sleepy" Cowan (SeaHorse No.377).**

Sleepy passed away yesterday morning, Saturday August 4th, after a stoic battle with cancer.

The University of Newcastle Rugby Club extends our deepest sympathies to his family and friends.

Sleepy came to Uni Rugby in 1972 and went on to become a force of nature in the Newcastle Rugby community over the next near 5 decades.

Below is a summary of his significant contributions and achievements to local Rugby and particularly to our Club. These are even more extraordinary when you consider that they are honorary and volunteer roles:

- **141 Club Games** for Uni Rugby from 1972 to 1989. The 1989 game came 10 years after his second last game. See below for Sleepy's own words on his first game against Maitland and his last game against Nelson Bay
- Uni Rugby **Secretary** from 1976 to 1978 and 1989 to 1993
- Uni Rugby **Registrar** 1975 to 1978
- Awarded **Life Membership** of Uni Rugby in 1978
- **University Colour** for services to Rugby was presented in 1989

Sleepy was manager of numerous teams at Uni Rugby over the years and took up his usual position of **"far left, middle row"** in the team photos taken during the Club's golden era of success in the 1980s

Sleepy was as member of the **NHRU Board** for over 25 years and still actively driving the organisation until his passing, regularly being seen at games where he was universally welcomed and acknowledged.

Among the myriad of duties fulfilled, Sleepy held the roles of **Treasurer, Fixtures Committee Chairman** (he knew when Uni holidays fell), **Vice-President, Senior Vice President** and **Final Series Ground Manager.** He was afforded **Life Membership** of the NHRU in 1996.

A minutes silence was observed before all NHRU competition games played yesterday.

We are fortunate that we have Sleepy's own words to describe his first and last games for Uni Rugby, together with an encounter where he bit off a little more than he could chew. The extracts below come from his contribution to a book published to mark the Clubs 40th anniversary in 1994.

The full article can be read **HERE**.

Having started with the club in 1972 after returning from UNSW where I had played with the likes of Dick De Tozser and Merv Goronszy. My introduction to rugby that year was for the first game to be played at something called Lorn Park against a team that did not appear to like students. After having played a full game in second grade as hooker, I suddnely found myself on in First Grade after 15 minutes in the sceond row. A good way to start with a new club.

I did make an appearance in 1989 in fourth grade at Nelson Bay when nobody else was stupid enough to play hooker. The referee on that occasion was an even more elderly gentleman in Tommy Towers, who could not keep the smile off his face as he bent over to pick up the ball, late in the second half, so I could throw it into the lineout - who said Rugby was not a gentleman's game.

I later asked my second rower, Mark Sage, an ex Waratah Player, who jumped at number two why he had not helped me in my discussion. I was then informed that I had taken on a State Amateur Boxing Champion - that explained why he hit and I missed!

Anyway, winners are grinners and the losers can please themselves. Winners feel no pain, especially after a drink or two.

Graham (Sleepy) Cowan

Sleepy was without doubt a winner, and it is comforting to know that he now feels no pain.

Funeral details are still being finalised, however the *provisional* arrangements are being set for **Monday, 13th August 2018 at 12 noon.** Pettigrew Family Funerals will conduct the service at **Wests Newcastle City** (corner Union and King Streets. Former Newcastle Workers Club). Confirmed details will be supplied by Sleepy's great mate and fellow decorated SeaHorse, Andrew Walker.

Attendees are encouraged to wear Uni Rugby Club ties, Colours and Blues.