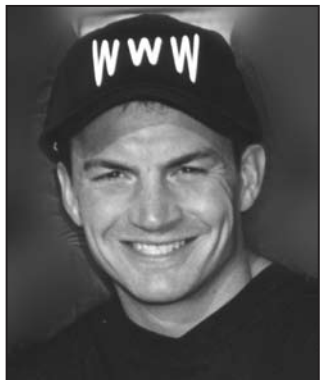


title fight in which each protagonist was accompanied in his corner by his own father. Joe was accompanied by his father, Enzo, and Richie by his father, Len. After ten closely-fought rounds the fight was stopped and a beaten Richie declared later that “Calzaghe is the best fighter I have ever fought”. The following year he retired from the sport citing a persistent back injury.

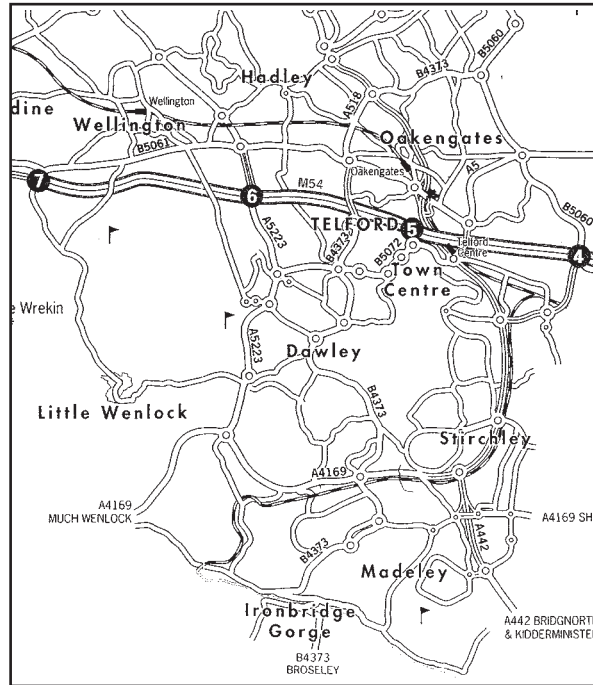
Since leaving boxing Richie has developed a successful media career in which he has acted as body double for Brad Pitt in a fight scene in Guy Ritchie’s *Snatch* and trained Matthew Marden for his role as Eddie ‘Golden Boy’ Simpson in the film *Shiner*. Alongside this he has forged a career in sports journalism and become a boxing commentator much in-demand for both the breadth of his knowledge and a refreshing sense of humour.

However, he has never forgotten his roots and the importance of the encouragement he received as a youngster. In 2010 he founded his own charity *Fight For Change* which promotes boxing and other fitness-related activities as a positive pathway for young people living in our most deprived inner city areas. He is also consultant coach to the British Amateur Boxing Association coaching the Olympic Squad.

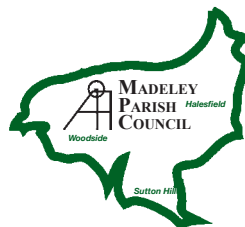


He is married, with three children, and has remained a life-long supporter of West Bromwich Albion Football Club.

How to get to Madeley

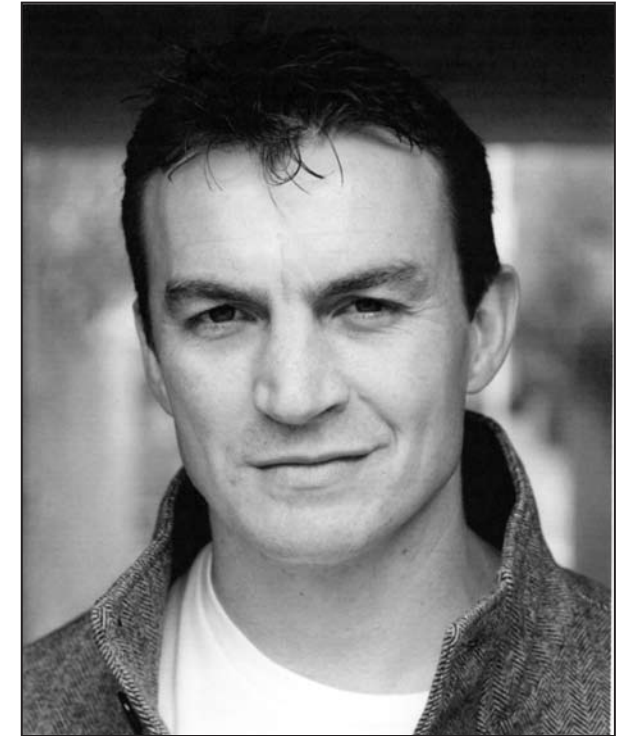


Compiled by Sandy Pledger with the assistance of the Woodhall family and members of the Madeley History Group



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Parish People No. 6



Richie Woodhall

April 2011

Richie Woodhall

Super middleweight boxer Richie Woodhall was born in Polesworth (Warwickshire) on 17th April 1968 to a keen sporting family. When Richie was two years old the family moved to Telford where they have remained ever since. Richie was brought up on Woodside in Madeley Parish and began boxing there, at a local club, at the age of seven inspired by watching the great Muhammed Ali. He attended the Abraham Darby School and had his first fight aged just eleven. He went on to participate in 110 contests of which 43 were internationals in which he represented his country.

As an amateur he won a Bronze Medal at the 1988 Seoul (S. Korea) Olympics after losing in the semi-final to Roy Jones of the USA. At the 1990 Commonwealth Games in Auckland (NZ) he took the Gold Medal. At both events he boxed at light / middleweight.

After the Commonwealth Games 22 year-old Richie turned professional, giving up his fulltime, landscape gardening job of the previous three years, to join London-based **National Promotions** where he was managed by the highly-respected Micky Duff.

As a professional he fought eight contests without defeat before pitching for the vacant Commonwealth Middleweight title and knocking out the Australian champion in the first round. After defending the title successfully, four times, he fought for the European title against the tough Italian Silvio Branco and was crowned Middleweight Champion of Europe after knocking out his opponent in the ninth round.

After two successful defences of this title he was undefeated in 21 contests. By this time he had also gained the Commonwealth title and had been given a number one ranking by the **World Boxing Council**. This meant he was now a mandatory challenger for the World Title but had to wait a frustrating 20 months before being given the opportunity to fight the current champion, Washington's Keith Holmes who was managed by the infamous Don King. Three weeks before the contest he chipped his right elbow, dislodging cartilage, in a freak accident in the gym. He was advised to pull out of the fight but, when Mickey Duff pointed out that it could be another year before he was given a second opportunity, he underwent a quick operation to remove the floating bone and cartilage and went forward for the biggest fight of his life.

In Maryland County, Washington he faced an extremely hostile environment and, in the 12th and final round, the match was stopped with just 28 seconds left on the clock. A devastated Richie had undergone his first defeat and failed in his attempt on the World Championship.

He returned to the UK to face further surgery as a result of damage sustained by the already weak elbow during the contest. After this second operation surgeons advised that he should retire as he had lost 5% extension of his arm and would never throw a straight right hand punch again without suffering agonising pain. However, the will to win was still strong in him and, against doctors' orders, he returned to the gym. There he realised that, with a slight change in style, he should be able to continue fighting as, although straight punching was no longer possible, he suffered no pain if he delivered

his right as a bent arm punch, especially as a right hook.

A rigorous ten-month training programme followed during which time his contract with Micky Duff expired and he accepted a more lucrative offer from Frank Warren's **Sports Network Europe**. A move from Middleweight (11 stone 6 lb) to Super Middleweight (12 stone) also followed and, after one victory with the Warren stable he secured a second title shot against WBC king "Sugar Boy" Malinga of South Africa.

The contest took place in his hometown of Telford at the local ice rink in March 1998 and, against all the odds – having been advised to retire some fifteen months earlier, Richie beat the reigning world champion over twelve rounds in front of a packed home crowd which roared him on to victory. It was his greatest sporting moment.

He defended the title successfully twice but, after a contract dispute with Frank Warren, he was kept out of the ring for eight months after which he lost his title on points to Markus Beyer of Germany in October 1999. After one more victory, in a bid to get back on the world stage, he ventured a shot at good friend and WBO king Joe Calzaghe.

This contest, which took place on 16th December 2000, made history as the first all-British

