

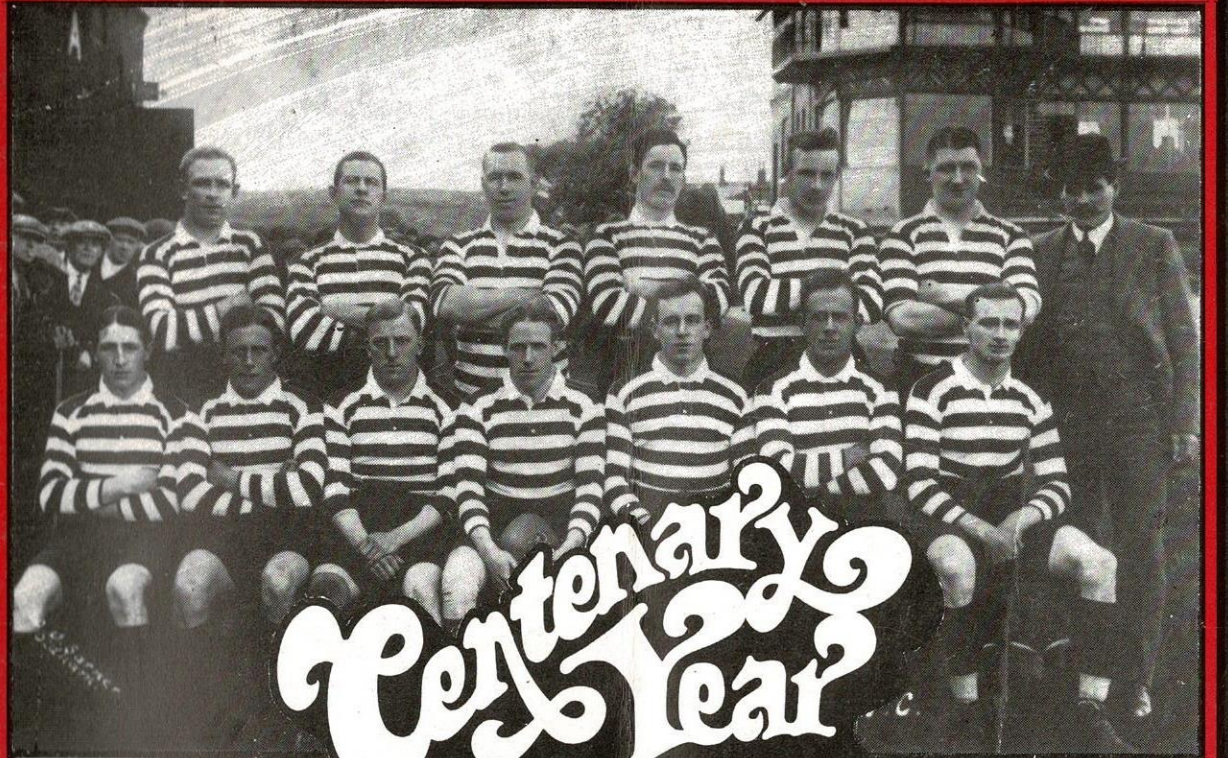


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THE CENTENARY COMMITTEE IS INDEBTED TO THE ADVERTISERS, THE OLDHAM EVENING CHRONICLE, CHIEF PHOTOGRAPHER EDWARD WOOLLEY, TOM WEBB, DON YATES, ROGER HALSTEAD, FORMER CLUB PLAYER AND OFFICIAL JIMMY PARKINSON FOR THE LOAN OF MANY OF THE OLDER PICTURES, AND MANY OTHERS WHO HAVE HELPED TO MAKE THE PUBLICATION OF THIS BROCHURE POSSIBLE.

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FOREWORD by Arthur Walker

In September of this year Oldham RLFC becomes 100 years old. It has fallen to me to write this short introduction to a centenary brochure, which the committee hope will serve as a permanent reminder of a century's activity of Rugby Football in Oldham.

To do so creates within me a feeling of awe. For my connection with Watersheddings has spanned only the last six of those 100 years and I am very mindful of the fact that not only I, as chairman, but the present committee, players, employees and indeed supporters have merely inherited, from so many generations of predecessors, all that we have come to know and love as Oldham RLFC.

We owe it to them — so many of them now passed away — not only to celebrate the club's 100th birthday in the true traditions of such a noteworthy event but to strive, each and every one of us, to see that the club's future is assured as the years pass on.

In this brochure we have endeavoured, by means of articles, photographs, lists of records, and other reminders of the past, to perpetuate for all time the memory of all that has been achieved at our great club since time immemorial.

It has been a mammoth task. Sadly, but unavoidably, we have been restricted to some extent by high production costs.

Nevertheless, we have covered to the best of our ability the full 100 years. My only regret is that, because of limitations in the size of the brochure and the vast period of time under review, there will inevitably be many personalities from the past whose names or achievements do not appear.



Arthur Walker, Chairman, Oldham RLFC

Each and every one of you will have different recollections, different memories of events and personalities.

We could not hope to cover them all. But we do hope that the memories stirred by this brochure will, in turn, help the reader to revive his own recollections of what we can justifiably claim to be a great and glorious past.

We all know that the years ahead will be strewn with hardship and difficulty as professional sport in its entirety faces up to problems of finance and changing social conditions on a scale never previously experienced.

May I conclude by expressing the heartfelt contention that if future generations of Rugby League lovers in Oldham produce half as much industry, effort, and good old Lancashire grit as their forefathers there will not be much to fear.

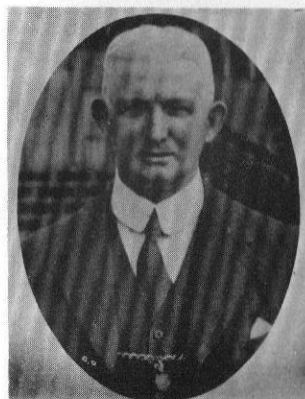
A Walker

Watersheddings, Oldham. August, 1976.

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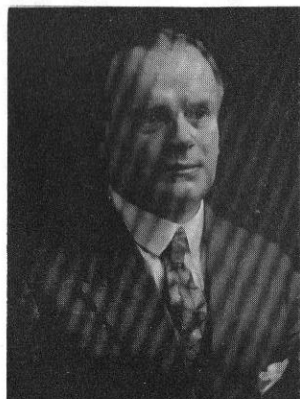
Pictures From The Early Days



Billy McCutcheon, former player and club president.



George W. Smith, the New Zealander who joined the club in 1908.



G.F. Hutchins . . . stand named after him.



Showing off the Silverware . . . the 1907-8 team

Aussie-Bound! Oldham's four Great Britain tourists of 1924. Standing: Ernie Knapman. Seated (left to right): Bob Sloman, Albert Brough, Sid Rix.



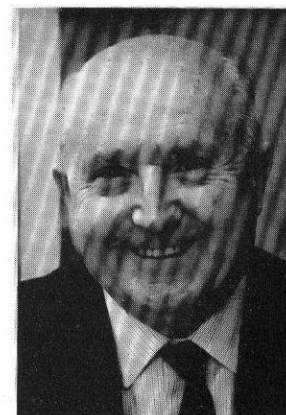
Tributes All The Way

by Fred Howarth

Chairman, Oldham RLFC Centenary Committee

I deem it a privilege and an honour to be asked to introduce this centenary brochure, on behalf of the centenary committee, to the club's many supporters past and present.

That the club has survived as a members' club for one hundred years is a tribute to the chairman, committee members, players, members and supporters for the tremendous support and loyalty they have shown to the club during its long and distinguished existence as a founder member of the Rugby League.



by Harry Womersley

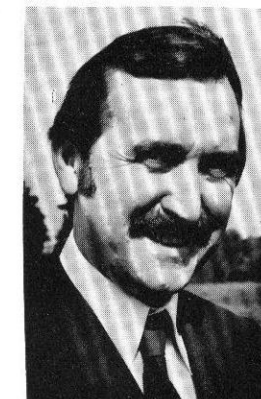
Chairman, Rugby Football League

I am privileged to write a few words to help commemorate the centenary of Oldham RLFC. As long as Rugby League has been played the name of Oldham has been associated with everything that is best in our code.

Watersheddings has often been the scene of epic battles and one can remember many great names who have worn the famous red and white jersey.

In the late 1950s the club enjoyed its halcyon days with such players as Cracknell, Davies, Pitchford, Winslade and Turner providing scintillating rugby and entertainment for fans throughout the three counties.

In conclusion may I sincerely wish everyone associated with the club a successful centenary and in the years ahead, the sort of success the club richly deserves.



by David Oxley

Secretary, Rugby Football League

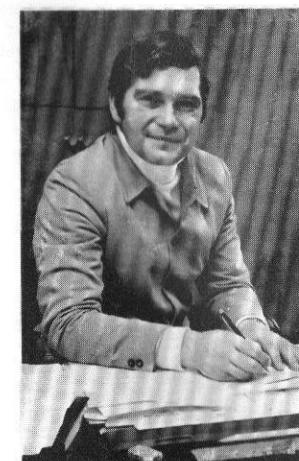
My earliest recollections of Oldham centre on that pulsating Championship final at Odsal in May, 1957. This game saw a clash between two of the mightiest packs of all time with Hull's feared Panzer pack tackling the equally redoubtable Oldham six of Jackson, Keith, Vines, Winslade, Little and Turner.

In addition to these great forwards, Oldham also had the wiles of Frank Pitchford and the immaculate goal kicking of Bernard Ganley to take them to a 15-14 win in as memorable game as anyone could wish to see.

The great days of the middle 50's echoed those of the period 1906-11 when Oldham appeared in five consecutive Championship finals and the four successive Challenge Cup final appearances between 1924-1927 - before my time, but, no doubt, still proudly within the ken of some who continue to be regular patrons at Watersheddings.

If these three eras are the high points in the long history of Oldham R.L.F.C. they simply exemplify what is always apparent even in less heady times that here is a club dedicated to playing hard, open, fast, attacking football in the very finest traditions of the Rugby League game.

In congratulating Oldham on attaining its centennial year, I know that this great tradition will be safeguarded and nurtured by those whose talents and energy both on the field and off will pilot the club through the next one hundred years.



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★
 FROM THE
 OLDHAM WEEKLY CHRONICLE
 (WE WERE 100 IN 1954!)
 AND FROM THE
 OLDHAM EVENING CHRONICLE
 (IT'S OUR CENTENARY IN 1980!)
 ★

How It All Began

Tom Webb Reports

Oldham football club was formed in September, 1876. I have examined every available copy of the Oldham Chronicle, Oldham Standard, and Oldham Express for the 1870s, and the first reference to the club was a small advertisement in the Oldham Evening Express for a match to be played at Glodwick on the afternoon of October 21, 1876, between Oldham F.C. and Stalybridge F.C.

The Oldham Standard report of the game was brief and to the point: "A football match was played on Saturday between the Oldham and Stalybridge clubs, and the game resulted in a victory for the latter team, who secured two goals, two tries and three touchdowns, against one try and three touchdowns scored by the Oldham club."

Confirmatory evidence is found in the *Athletic News* of December 8, 1877, which stated that about the middle of September, 1876 a meeting to form the club was held and the principal promoters were Messrs. F. Wild, J. and A.M. Fletcher, W. Chadwick and W. Buckley.

The meeting took place in the Prince Albert Hotel, Union Street West. Abraham Fletcher was one of the joint secretaries, and Fred Wild was probably the other, for he was listed as secretary for 1877-8 season and his address was given as Croft Bank Mills, Oldham. The brothers Fletcher had been members of the then defunct Altrincham club, and Abraham later became the superintendent of the Werneth Congregational Church.

Beat Lyceum side

The meeting followed a challenge match, I am given to understand, between the members of the Oldham Lyceum and Werneth Rangers. The latter was believed to have been the first football team in the town who learned their football at school. There had been one or two jocular challenges before the game and, as expected the Lyceum members lost easily. However, the game gave the necessary impetus that resulted in the formation of the Oldham Football Club.

The club secured a field at the back of the Glodwick Spinning Company's Mill and the players dressed at the Shakespeare Hotel, Glodwick. The headquarters were at the Black Swan Hotel, Bottom o' th' Moor, and the first match was on Glodwick Lows.

At the commencement of the second season the *Athletic News*, in reviewing the club, said "Oldham gave evidence of making a strong if somewhat rough club. They have been uncommonly lucky in making engagements with first-class clubs for the coming winter. Wakefield Trinity, Mirfield, Swinton, Cheetham, Rochdale Hornets and Dewsbury Athletic have all given them two dates; while home-and-return contests are to be played with Stalybridge, Rossendale, Wellington, 1st Manchester R.V., Castleton and the Zingari. For a new organisation they have done extremely well."

The operative word is "new," which gives credence to the establishment of the club in 1876, as does the Oldham Chronicle of 1901 when reviewing Oldham F.C.'s Handbook of that year. It specifically mentions the establishment in September, 1876, according to Smirk's Handbook, which was once very popular.

The club's annual dinner was held in April, 1878 when the Oldham Standard commented on the excellent progress made by the club which "was barely two years old."

Oldham left the field in the game with Bridgewater at Patricroft. This is the only occasion they have done so, according to my records. Free Wanderers played at Withington, and Cheetham at Broughton Park. Weaste (a fifteen) sent a composite team which would be neither their first nor second team, but probably a mixture of both. When a club could not produce its best players, it used this little device to save its face in case of a defeat by a lower-grade club.

The second-team played twelve games, of which six were won, five lost and one drawn. Five goals, 28 tries and 43 touchdowns were scored by the team, and 6 goals, 18 tries and 26 touchdowns were conceded.

After Oldham F.C.'s remarkable run in the second half of the previous season, when they won seven out of eight games (the last five being consecutive wins), their programme for their second season, 1877-8, was greatly improved, and they were opposed by three Yorkshire teams.

Cont. page 10.

★ D. R. PEDDER ★

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The first game of the season was between the First XV and the Next XX. Such clashes were quite a normal procedure in those days for rugby, or even cricket teams, but the custom has long fallen into disuse on the rugby field though it survived in the cricket sphere for many years. As if to justify their selection the First XV won by three goals, five tries, one touch down, one touch-in-goal and three dead balls to one touchdown, one dead ball and one touch-in-goal. The proceeds of this game (£22) were handed to the Madras Famine Relief Fund.

Against Trinity

The season officially opened on October 6, 1877 and on that day Oldham played Wakefield Trinity away while the Second XV played The Rest who numbered 24. Thus we have over fifty names to hand of the people who comprised the playing membership of the club in its second year. These probably include many of the actual founders of the club.

In the first team were T. Seville and J.K. Holroyd, backs; W.G. Lloyd and J. Schofield, three-quarters; C. Doody and W. Chadwick, half-backs; A.M. Fletcher (captain), J.H. Mellor, J.H. Mallalieu, G. Travis, H. Fletcher, J.B. Cook, J.B. Rye, P.S. Scott and J. Fletcher, forwards. Many years were to elapse before the introduction of the four three-quarters system (it was introduced over a dozen years later by the Hartlepool Rovers and then by the Durham County side before it came into favour).

The second fifteen were represented by T. Taylor and J.R. Stott, backs; E. Kempsey and J. Saville, three-quarters; F. Wild and G. Mellor, halves. J.Y. Shaw, A. Hirst, J. Ogden, H. Sykes, J.C. Beard, A. Matthews, D. Jones, C. Barlow and W. Moore, forwards. The Next 24 were H. Silverwood and J. Wynne, backs; B. Beard (captain) and W. Richardson, three-quarters; J. Holroyd, C. Holroyd and F. Chadwick, half-backs; and J. Hegginsbotham, J. Robinson, S. Richardson, W.B. Yates, J.H. Stansfield, John Hegginsbotham, J. Waterhouse, C. Field, J.L. Whitehead, F. Caussidiere, A. Ashton, J.W. Mellor, J.R. Bentley, J. Chadwick, T.C. Staples, J. Chadwick, and J. Brierley, presumably all forwards.

The second team won by two goals and seven tries to one try, so that, in spite of there being almost forty players on the field at once, it was still possible to penetrate defences. Two other players not already mentioned scored for the first team during the season, and these were Howarth and Davies. A.M. Fletcher was selected for the Improbables against the Probables in a Lancashire County trial.

Football was developing in the town, and the club played Twenty of the District, and these were drawn from Royton, Oldham Rangers, Oldham Hornets, Glodwick, and the 31st Local Rifle Volunteers, who each provided four players.

December 8 was the only occasion on which Oldham failed to turn out without a full team. In the game with Rochdale Hornets, the Hornets' umpire refused to allow four tries by Oldham, and, in spite of such difficulty, the team emerged winners of the home encounter.

The Wasps were tops

J.H. Mallalieu came to Oldham from the Broughton Wasps, a team which later amalgamated with Wellington to become the Broughton club (not the Rangers). The Wasps, and later Broughton, were famed for their open play, and on many occasions they brought as many as six Lancashire County players for their clashes with Oldham. The club disintegrated about the time

of the Northern Union's inception, but in the seventies it was a great honour to have their name on the fixture list.

A game with Broughton Wasps resulted in a defeat, but no details are available. In the home encounters with Cheetham and Wakefield Trinity there was a disputed try claimed by Wakefield and a disputed goal by Cheetham and Oldham claimed a try against Cheetham.

According to the annual report Oldham played twenty-three games, of which twelve were won, six lost and five drawn. Oldham scored 16 goals, 44 tries and 83 minors and conceded 4 goals, 7 tries and 42 minors. The figures do not quite agree with the addition of the above summary, but there was a midweek game with Manchester Medicals and an Oldham side, which might have confused the figures, plus the Broughton game.

The second team played 17 games, winning 14 and losing 3, with a score of 15 goals, 38 tries and 100 minor points against one goal, 6 tries and 19 minors.

Strange happenings in club's third season

The third season of Oldham F.C. was remarkable for a run of four draws. As two of the games included disputes about tries, there is a possibility that under present-day conditions these games would not rank as draws.

The season opened with the traditional First XV v. the Next Twenty players, but this degenerated, owing to late arrivals into a First Fourteen v. The Next Seventeen for a period. As the First won by five goals and twelve tries, not to mention five minors, it was a complete vindication of the selection committee.

The first game resulted in a great win over Rossendale, and this was followed by the run of draws. Dewsbury and Oldham each had a disputed try, and I think that the Yorkshire side had the best of the disputed draw. Manchester also had a disputed try which the Oldham umpire refused to give. Manchester also had ten touchdowns to Oldham's one.

The Manchester club was the senior club in Lancashire and in fact, until the other clubs in the county revolted, it controlled all the Lancashire County fixtures. Their ground was very short in the season under review, and the boards behind the try-line were so near that the club had perforce to count all minors as touchdowns.

Ground difficulty

Cheetham Hill were the third team to tie and the fourth game was with Bradford United. This Yorkshire side was a composite club consisting of players from Caledonians, Rifles, Manningham, Albions, Bowling and Brierley, and the ground was outside the town, which made it difficult for clubs to reach it in reasonable time for the stipulated time of kick-off.

Wins over Wakefield Trinity, Broughton, Swinton, Manchester Rangers and Rossendale were offset by a defeat by Manchester Free Wanderers, who were about the best team in Lancashire. Swinton were a power in the land and Oldham's victory over them put the club in the top rank.

Prior to February 8, Oldham had no games for eight weeks on account of frost, a tour arranged for Westmorland, with games at Windermere and Ambleside having to be abandoned.

On the resumption of play, Swinton were visited and the lack of match practice resulted in Oldham being soundly defeated. The first goal to be scored against our club was by Swinton in February in this

match and it is, in fact, the only one I can trace during the season.

For the third year in succession, the club ended the season with a string of victories over Free Wanderers, Dewsbury, Castleton, Birch, Cheetham Hill and the rest of the Oldham clubs.

THE GAME WITH BIRCH WAS REMARKABLE FOR ITS ENDING. THE BIRCH FORWARDS SWEPT THE BALL OVER THE OLDHAM LINE, BUT FLETCHER TOUCHED DOWN TO SAVE THE SITUATION. BIRCH CLAIMED A TRY BUT OLDHAM REFUSED TO PART WITH THE BALL FOR THE KICK AT GOAL. BIRCH PERSISTED IN THEIR CLAIM BUT OLDHAM TOOK THE BALL AWAY. SO BIRCH LEFT THE FIELD AND OLDHAM CLAIMED VICTORY BY ONE TRY TO NIL.

J.B. Rye brought honour to the club by his appearance for Lancashire in the county game with Cheshire. J.E. Jones, one of the founder members of the club, was the leading spirit in the establishment of the Middleton club.

During the close season the club held a floral and art exhibition at the town hall when a great display of painting attracted considerable attention, especially as the Oldham artists, Potter, Hague, Bottomley and Heywood had many pictures on show. Proceeds were in aid of ground improvement, and Joseph Burgess the Oldham writer and poet (grandfather of Mr. Fineberg, M.P. for one of the Bradford constituencies) wrote a parody on the "Charge of the Light Brigade" in an effort to encourage support.

In season 1897-8 Oldham Football Club won the championship of the Lancashire Senior Competition, which corresponded with the Lancashire County League and which was a feature of our game for some sixty years. After the trophy had been won the Oldham team and the Oldham 'A' team toured the town in wagonettes and were led by the Oldham Rifle Band on their triumphal journey. Over 80,000 people lined the streets on this occasion!

The mainstays of the team at this time were R.L. Thomas, full back, T. Martin, S. Lees (captain), I.P. Taylor, J. Hurst and S. Williams, three-quarters; A. Lees and J.R. Lawton, halfbacks; G. Frater, E.W. Telfer, J. Lees, H. Ellis, H. Broome, F.W. Davies, R. Porter, E. Bonser, J. Moffatt, and J. Merrill, forwards. Hurst 23, Lawton 18, Martin 18, Taylor 10, Davies 9, and Edwards 7, were the leading try scorers with S. Lees landing 36 out of the 50 goals scored during the season.

It was during this season that Crompton F.C., which was then a semi-senior Northern Union club, closed down after playing Millom on January 26, 1898. Oldham had beaten the local rivals 14-0 at Crompton and 12-0 at Watersheddings, both matches taking place

during September, in 14 meetings between the clubs Crompton had lost each time although running the major club to a couple of points on two or three occasions. It is pleasing to note that some Crompton junior schools have taken up Rugby League football and are in full membership of the Oldham Schools' Rugby Football League.

In the following season, 1898-9, Oldham were under the leadership of James Ashton, president and Councillor, J. C. Buckley as secretary, Arthur Lees had the honour of receiving the Northern Union Challenge Cup at Fallowfield at the end of the season when Hunslet were beaten in the final by 19-9. The passage to the final had been fairly easy in spite of the standing of the clubs who provided the opposition.

Goals were beaten 63-0 at home, Warrington were conquered in the second round by 14-0 which would be regarded as an easy victory in those days, and Bradford were vanquished at Park Avenue in the third round by 23-3. Widnes appeared at Watersheddings in the fourth round only to retire defeated by 20-0 and Leigh were walloped 16-2 in the semi-final at Broughton. Hunslet's three goals and a try in the final exceeded the number of points scored against Oldham in the five previous rounds.

S. Williams with 39 tries, T. Davies 28 tries, T. Martin 19 tries, J. Lawton 15 tries, A. Lees 10 tries and T. Fletcher 10 tries all reached double figures with S. Lees 23 goals and G. Frater 21 goals dominating the goal scoring.

During the close season Councillor Buckley resigned as secretary and from over 80 applicants George Kilner of Brighouse, a journalist with the Brighouse Echo and the Brighouse News was chosen. He served from 1899-1900.

Joe Ferguson played his first game for Oldham against Morecambe on September 2, 1899. He was still with us, as a player, until the close of the 1922-3 season. He was an international captaining England and played for both Cumberland his native county and Lancashire, his adopted one. He was selected to go on the first tour of Australia but declined. He made more appearances in the Oldham colours than any other player in the history of the club.

An innovation was the appointment of Jack Richards of Hollinwood as trainer of Oldham Football Club. He was a famous athlete and won two Sheffield Handicaps. He had trained Oldham County the first professional soccer club in the town and he was employed by Messrs. Platt Brothers.

J.R. Lawton had the honour of captaining the Lancashire side and won the County Championship of that season, 1899-1900.

Oldham F.C. was well and truly on the way.

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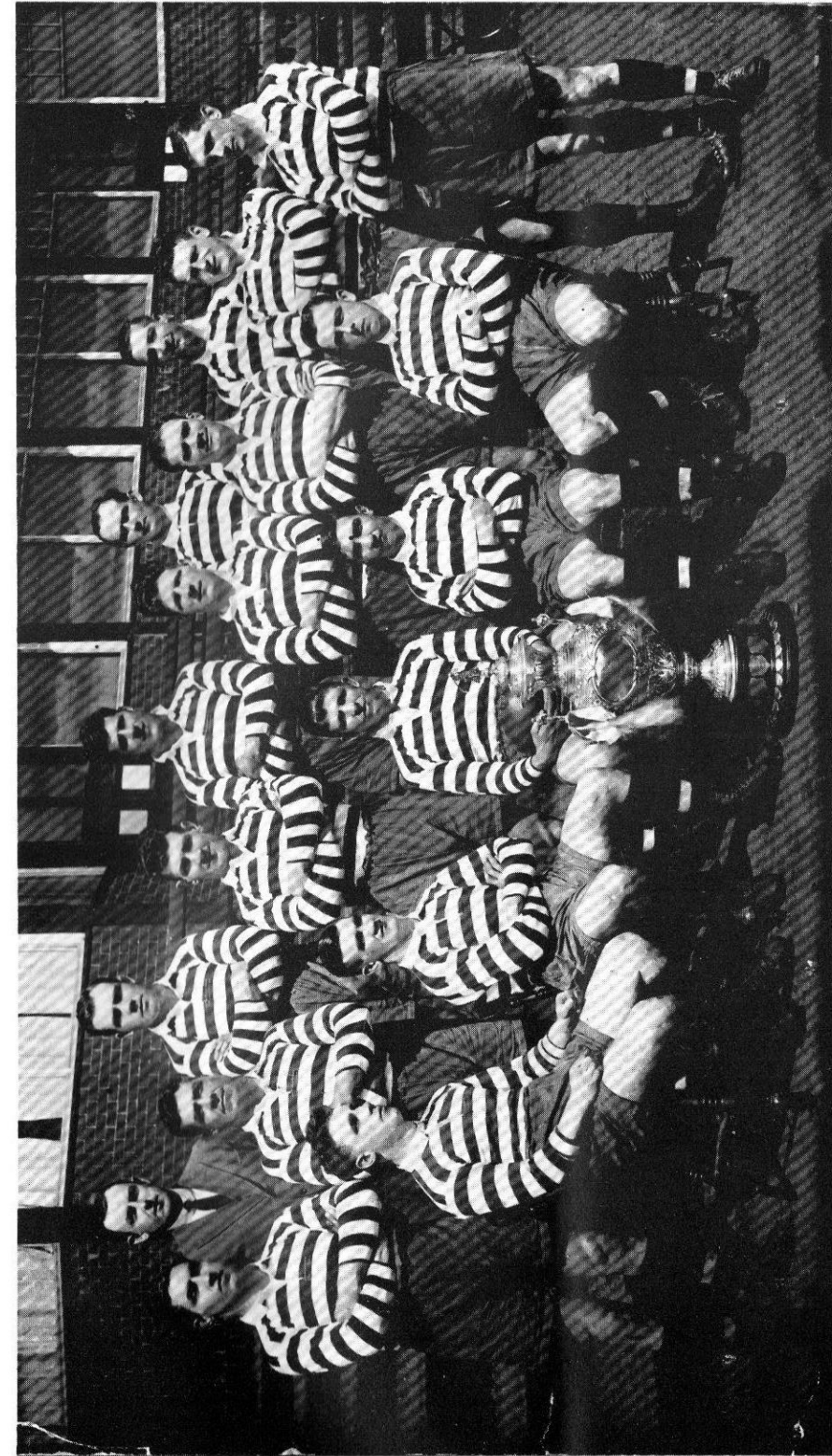
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Oldham R.L. Team to win R.L. Challenge Cup 1927
Back Row: C. Marsden (Trainer) A. Brough, S. Rix, H.J. Comm, E. Foote. Second Row: A.J. Higgs, R. Marlor, J.M. Scaife, J. Read, A. Baker, F.W. Ashworth,
T.E. Holliday. Seated: I. Jeremiah, R. Jones, R. Sloman (captain), G. Hesketh, A. Johnson.

Between The Wars

by Tom Webb

The season 1920-1921 was remarkable for the retirement of Joseph Platt as treasurer after 40 years. Bill McCutcheon lost his place as vice-president after 8 years but topped the poll for the club committee. T. Taylor was president and George Holden treasurer.

Reg Farrar signed in October and finished the season as leading try scorer with 17, followed by E. Thomas (15) and Rod Marlor (13). Joe Ferguson's 19 goals put him at the top of the goal scorers. Billy Hall, with 40, made most appearances.

The first world war played havoc with the Northern Union and its clubs. Oldham used 56 players in its 32 first team matches in 1915-16. Some of the old timers, Tom Fletcher, George W. Smith, Tom Sellars and George Tyson, came out of retirement to help the club. Tom Fletcher was 42, Joe Ferguson 39, and George Smith, 43 and others were getting long in the tooth. A season later the club called upon 66 players, including 10 New Zealanders from the military camp at Chadderton Hall Park. In 1917-18 the club opted out of the game owing to the difficulties caused by the war but resumed playing on New Year's Eve, 1918. The supporters were happy to see the club reach the final of the Lancashire Cup.

Joe Ferguson had a benefit in 1919-20 after playing 21 years for the club and his reward was £601. George Holden gave up the presidency and became treasurer in place of Joseph Platt, who had watched the club finances for over 20 years. Alf Wood dropped out of the team and Reg Farrar joined it. The Lancashire Cup was won.

Farrar, in 1921-22, set up the club try-scoring record with 49 and he also headed the goal scorers with 34. Knapman, who had also joined the club in the previous season, and Maurice Tighe blossomed out as goal kickers. The club lost the Lancashire Cup final and the final of the Northern League championship play-off. Herman Hilton was a popular captain.

In 1922-23 season Joe Ferguson played his last game for the Oldham first team and a few days later, in April, 1923, played for the "A" team in the play-off for the Lancashire Senior Competition medals before hanging up his boots. He had played for the club since September, 1899 — truly a magnificent record.

Oldham reached the Challenge Cup final in 1924 only to lose 21-4 to Wigan at the Athletic Grounds, Rochdale. The attendance was 41,831 with receipts of £3,712. Albert Brough joined the club from Barrow, George Hesketh came from Wigan, Joe Corsi from Rochdale Hornets, Ambrose Baker from Neath, South Wales, Woodward from Bath, and Brown from Pontypool. Brough kicked 64 goals and scored 25 tries, Corsi scored 30 tries and Hesketh registered 20 goals and 7 tries. The club finished second in the Lancashire League and was knocked out of the top four play-off in the semi-final.

Billy Hall played his last game for the club in 1924-25. He had signed for Oldham in 1913. The Lancashire Cup was won, St. Helens Recs. going down by 10-0. In the last match of the season the Challenge Cup was won.

Jack Read was signed from Gloucester in 1925-26. During his career with Oldham he played in 475 games. The only man to make more first-team appearances was Joe Ferguson who topped 600 first team outings. Herman Hilton played his last game this season. He made his debut in 1913-14.

The club won the Challenge Cup for the last time, in its glorious period of four consecutive cup finals, in 1926-27 when Swinton were the victims by 26-7 at Wigan. The membership soared to 4,563 the highest number on record. Brough, with 49 goals and 10 tries was deposed as leading scorer, A. Johnson taking over with 27 goals and 23 tries. Read, with 46 tries, made most appearances and next in line with 42 was Johnson while Higgs and Hesketh both made 40. Bob Sloman was first-team captain.

Although membership was still very high, 4,493, the club had a loss of £1,344 in 1927-28. Johnson was again top scorer with 70 goals and 19 tries. Sloman was still captain and W.H. Greaves was in his second and last year as president. E. Thomas (Maesteg) was one of the forwards. He, like Freddie Ashworth, Percy Carter, Emlyn Watkins and Bryn Day, was a forward who eventually became a committee man of the club.

The industrial depression was beginning and membership slipped to 4,283 in 1928-29. Jack Oster took over as leading try scorer with 16, Johnson and Farrar each getting a dozen. Johnson's 38 goals were one more than the number kicked by Tommy Rees, signed from London Welsh R.U. Brough made his last appearance and Hesketh was virtually out of the game as he only played once in the following season. Sloman ended his career as club captain, returning to Devonshire. He had donned first-team jerseys on 270 occasions.

S.J. Stephens was signed in 1929-30 when Sid Rix was captain. He took over as captain a season later and skippered Oldham for three seasons. L. Williams from Treorchy, South Wales, H. Entwistle from Swinton, J. Houghton from Leigh, S. Bardsley of the local Salem Hornets and J.P. McNally of Furness R.U. were also signed, but Reg Farrar was struck off the books.

Tommy Rees kicked 58 goals with Rix (18), Oster (14) and E. Thomas (13) being the only players to reach double figures in the try scoring list. Membership slumped to 3,308.

George W. Smith was appointed trainer-manager for 1932-33 with Stephens still retaining the first team captaincy. G.F. Hutchins succeeded R. Thompson as president. The top gate was for the first round Challenge Cup-tie with Rochdale Hornets, 16,760 with takings of £1,061.

Genial Jim Parkinson was the president in 1933-34 and W.T. Thomas took over the captaincy. The membership of 2,250 were thrilled when Oldham won the Lancashire Cup, defeating Widnes, Broughton Rangers, Wigan and St. Helens Recs. in the process. Sadler gained international honours and Hodgson and Bardsley gained county representation.

Norman Pugh signed from Swansea, Jimmy Heywood from Salford (formerly Derker), E.E. Bates from Leicester, Marsh from Old Salfordians, R. Cattlin from Clarksfield Continuation, Edgar Brooks from Watersheddings and Naylor from Buslingthorpe Vale, Leeds.

W. Greenall took over the captaincy in 1936-37 and G.F. Hutchins the presidency. Tommy Rees scored 85 goals, and Macrae with 10, was the only try scorer to reach double figures.

Freddie Ashworth was club captain in 1937-38 his benefit year. His benefit game was between Oldham and G.F. Hutchins' international team, which Oldham lost 41-31.

The last normal football season before the second world war, 1938-39 saw Jimmy Parkinson once again in the presidential chair and Jack Read in charge on the field. Tommy Rees left for Broughton Rangers.

Edgar Brooks represented England against France at St. Helens. Stott (22), Downy (18) and Griffiths (16) topped the goal-kicking chart while Turner (12) and F. Hall (11) were leading try scorers.

Edgar Brooks played for the "Shadow" tourists and had the 1940 tour of Australia and New Zealand taken place he would have been an automatic selection for the touring party. He also played for Lancashire against Yorkshire.

From 1940-41, war-time football became more and more disorganised. Only Brooks gained honours in the very few representative games to be played. Many guest players helped to complete 13 players in many games, otherwise the club would have been unable to continue. A pool, based on the Rugby League Cup, brought in some valuable revenue. By 1944-45 only 265 members still remained. Percy Carter, F.S. Holt,

F. Mills and A. Quinn topped the voting for the committee. Other members were S. Bubb, A. Cordwell, C. Hall and A. Thornton. G.F. Hutchins was president, T. Beswick vice-president and Bert Summerscales secretary and treasurer.

On the resumption of normal football in 1945-46 the membership rose to 491. In all 52 players were called on for first-team duty, the captain, Norman Pugh, playing in 37 of the 40 matches with Harry Ogden (32 appearances) being the only other player to top the 30 mark.

Ogden and Bill Griffiths (23) each led the goal kickers and Norman Harris, with 14 was the only double figure try-scorer. The selectors could not find a settled team and 20 players made only one appearance each — a symptom of the difficulties of the time.

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Centenary Committee

Representatives from all levels of Rugby League in the Oldham area form the Centenary Committee. Among organisations represented are the Oldham Referees' Society, the Oldham Amateur R.L., the Oldham R.L.F.C. Vice-Presidents' Association, the Oldham R.L.F.C. Supporters' Club, the Oldham Schools Rugby League and the Oldham R.L.F.C. Ex-Players' Association.

By the nature of their leisure and social connections, the members are representative of all sections of the towns civic, leisure and commercial community.



Back row (left to right): Sam Shepherd, Cyril Farnworth, John Hall, Ron Hardaker, Ken Fisher.
Front row: F. Howarth, Harry Brereton, Fred Haworth, Keith Broadbent, Lawrence Hughes
Not shown: Dennis Goodier, Martin Murphy, Tom Webb.



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17

Spanning A Century

OLDHAM Football Club was formed when a group of enthusiasts met at the Prince Albert Hotel, Union Street West, during September, 1876.

A ground was used close to Glodwick Lows and the first match took place in October, 1876 when Stalybridge formed the opposition and, in fact, defeated Oldham in that historic opening fixture.

Oldham have always had a progressive outlook and in October, 1877 they became the first Lancashire outfit to play in Yorkshire when they travelled to take on Wakefield.

Just over 12 months later, in November, 1878, a match was played under floodlights at Oldham but it was not a very successful experiment and although there are records of various other clubs experimenting with artificial light it was not for another 87 years that floodlit football was introduced at Watersheddings.

In 1880 one of the game's most outstanding administrators joined the Oldham club. He was Mr. Joseph Platt, a partner in the firm of Platt & Whipp, surveyors and accountants, who had premises first in Queen Street and later in Church Lane.

He was also a partner in the company which owned the Palace, Empire and Grand Theatres in Oldham and he was in one of these theatres, the Palace, in September, 1930 when he was taken ill and died almost immediately.

Joseph Platt not only made a telling contribution to the progress of Oldham Football Club.

But he was also a leading figure in the management of the Northern Rugby Football Union and was made the first honorary secretary at the time of the split in 1895.

He worked tremendously hard to establish the new code of rugby right up to his retirement in June, 1920 when he was made a life-member of the Northern Rugby Football Union.

During Mr. Platt's early days at Oldham the club moved from Glodwick to Clarksfield where they shared their ground with Oldham Cricket Club but in 1889 came the most significant move of all when the present ground at Watersheddings was obtained.

The first game at Watersheddings was staged on September 28, 1889 when a crowd of 7,000 were attracted to see the home club take on Swinton. For this game Oldham wore a new strip, red and white hooped jerseys, and the only thing that marred an otherwise successful afternoon was the match result for Oldham ended up beaten by 2 goals, one try and two minors to one minor.

In the following few years rugby became well established in England and particularly in the North. In those days most of the players had to work on Saturday mornings before going off to play for their clubs and occasionally, when travelling to distant matches, players had to leave work early and therefore suffer a loss of earnings.

Many clubs approached the English Rugby Union asking to be allowed to pay expenses for this loss of earnings but each application was met by a firm refusal.

A great deal of trouble simmered because of these constant refusals and there was talk of the Northern clubs breaking away to form a league of their own.

On August 29, 1895 an historic meeting was held in the George Hotel, Huddersfield and Oldham were one of the clubs represented together with Batley, Bradford, Brighouse, Broughton Rangers, Dewsbury, Halifax, Huddersfield, Hull, Hunslet, Leeds, Liversedge, Manningham, Rochdale Hornets, St. Helens, Tyldesley, Wakefield Trinity, Warrington, Widnes and Wigan.

The outcome was the formation of the Northern Rugby Football League. The first games were played on September 7, 1895 although the Oldham and Huddersfield clubs were not allocated fixtures that afternoon. At the end of that first season, Oldham and Runcorn tied at the top of the Lancashire Senior Competition but Runcorn won the play-off.

In 1899 Oldham tasted their first Northern Union triumph when the club was the first from Lancashire to win the Challenge Cup, defeating Hunslet 19-9 at the Fallowfield Stadium, Manchester before a crowd of 16,000. In the first round Goole were defeated 63-0.

In 1907-08 the first tourists from "down under", the New Zealand "All Golds" visited Watersheddings twice, once to be beaten by Oldham 8-7 before a crowd of 12,000 and they met a heavier defeat by Lancashire, who whipped them by 20-4.

At the end of the tour Arthur Kelly and Kiwi vice-captain, George W. Smith, joined the successful Oldham club which won 28, drew two and lost two of the matches played that season. Oldham were beaten in the championship final, one of five successive appearances.

In 1910 an English team set out to tour Australasia and this provided Oldham with their first tourists in Tom Helm and Bert Avery.

About this time, during a most successful spell the record attendance for a match at Watersheddings was set up when Huddersfield visited Oldham for a league match on February 24, 1912 when 28,000 people were reported to be crammed into the ground.

In 1914, during the second Australasian tour the third and deciding Test match known as the "Rorkes Drift" was played when England was down to ten players when Billy Hall, Dave Holland and Alf Wood were in the team. Alf Wood's four goals helped England to win the historic encounter 14-6.

After the first world war Oldham appeared in the two first Lancashire Cup Finals, losing to Rochdale Hornets in May, 1919 by 22-0 but winning the second final in the Autumn of that year by 7-0, thus gaining revenge on the Hornets.

The club had an outstanding spell in the 1920's and in 1921-22 Reg Farrar crossed for 49 tries to establish the try-scoring record of the club which still stands half a century later.

The club appeared in four consecutive cup finals between 1924 and 1927. The first final was lost to Wigan 21-4 before chaotic crowd scenes at Rochdale when the record attendance of 41,831 was established.

Of Club History

Johnny Ring dived under a patrolling police horse to score one Wigan try as the crowd continually encroached on the pitch.

In 1927 another attendance record was established when 33,448 spectators saw Oldham beat Swinton 26-7 at Central Park, Wigan. The record has long since been extended but one notable feature will always remain. This was the first game of Rugby League to be broadcast over B.B.C. radio.

In April, 1928 Oldham inflicted upon Widnes that club's heaviest defeat when the Chemics were beaten by 60-5. In this period Oldham had many great players. Between March, 1933 and December, 1935 Tommy Rees played in 121 consecutive games for Oldham, believed to be a club record.

Tommy kicked over 700 goals for Oldham. One disastrous game in which he played was against Wigan, when the record defeat 54-2 was sustained by the club.

In November, 1940 Oldham staged an international game between England and Wales. Unfortunately the air-raid sirens sounded and the game was suspended while the crowd and players ran for cover.

After a short break the game was resumed and England won by 8-5. During the war Oldham, along with the very few Lancashire clubs still playing, was admitted to the Yorkshire Cup competition. In 1941-42, Oldham suffered defeat on aggregate by Bradford Northern in home and away engagements by 15-9. Northern went on to win the cup, defeating Halifax in the final by 24-0.

In November, 1942 a car accident in Oldham robbed the game of one of its most brilliant advocates and administrators when the Salford manager, Lance Todd was killed returning from a match at Watersheddings.

In July, 1947, George Hutchins, the Oldham committee man, ex-president and an official of the Rugby League died and the club sustained a great loss.

He had managed the 1924 and 1928 tours of Australasia. The "penny rush" stand was renamed in his honour and his ashes were scattered on the playing pitch. In September, 1948 Oldham sustained its greatest defeat when Warrington won by 55-0.

The 1950's brought an upsurge in the affairs of the game and the club and Oldham appeared in the floodlit series in London, receiving a £400 fee for taking part in the competition.

By 1956-57 Oldham ended the season with a clear lead of six points over second club, Hull, scoring 893 points, the record aggregate during the 38 games. The club became Lancashire champions and won the Lancashire Cup and won the play-off 15-14 against Hull, before 62,000 spectators, at Odsal Stadium. The Australians were defeated 21-2 that season.

During 1957-58 Bernard Ganley broke the goal-kicking record established by Jim Sullivan, which had stood for 24 years. He kicked 205 for Oldham and 19 for Great Britain, including 10 in Britain's 44-15 defeat of France at Wigan. During his career Ganley kicked 1,391 goals for Oldham.

The league transfer fee record was broken when Oldham paid £10,650 for Ike Southward. In just less than a couple of years, Ike returned to Cumberland for a league record fee of £11,002 10s. Shortly after Ike had signed for Oldham, the club committee was suspended sine die by the League Management Committee for alleged illegal loans to players. The matter reached the High Court before the committee men were re-instated.

It was not all gloom and in April, 1959 Oldham beat Liverpool City 67-6 to record the highest score ever made by the club in competitive football. Ganley kicked 14 goals in this match.

A couple of years later Oldham had another high-scoring victory over Salford by 50-4, the biggest away win in the entire league programme. In July, 1962 the club made a sensational signing when record shotput holder, Arthur Rowe, was paid £1,500 for his signature.

Another £1,500 was promised after he had played 10 games but after four games on the wing, he was asked to play in the forwards. Arthur refused, probably realising that there was more to Rugby League Football than just brute strength.

The first floodlit match at the ground took place on October 20, 1965 when Roger Millward led the England under 24's to a 12-5 victory over their French counterparts. A bright playing area, however, did not lead to brighter playing fortunes and the club slid down the league scale with only a Lancashire Cup Final appearance to brighten the gloom. The worst playing season in the club's history was 1969-70 when the team went from November 1 to April 15 without registering a league victory and during that spell fell to the heaviest ever home defeat when St. Helens won at Watersheddings by 43-0.

A new regime took over office at Watersheddings and in 1971 the club changed its name from Oldham Football Club to Oldham Rugby League Football Club. Unfortunately a change of name did not bring about a change of fortune and consecutive home matches in November, 1974 brought the lowest attendances in the history of the club. A mere 767 saw the match against Workington Town but this was followed by a 'crowd' of 716 to watch the game with Batley.

Spring, 1975 brought promotion to the First Division of the Northern Rugby Football League and in its centenary year, Oldham has made a substantial effort to once again reach the top.

With increased support at matches and in fund raising activities, the club should once again be feared in the world of rugby football.

Don Yates



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The Roaring Twenties...

The twenties really did roar around Oldham town with the fabulous Watersheddings sides of the era appearing in four consecutive Challenge Cup finals – still a record which the club can be proud of.

It was a period that just could not be overlooked in this brochure.

Older fans will remember the finals well. Or will they? Time plays funny tricks on the memory. To nudge the memory of the veterans and to put the finals on record for future generations we produce details of the fabulous four.

1923-24

Wigan 3, 5 = 21, Oldham 2, 0 = 4

OLDHAM: Knapman, Corsi, Hall, Woodward, Rix, Hesketh, Bates, Collins, Tomkins, Baker, Sloman, Brough, Hilton.

WIGAN: Sullivan, Ring, Howley, Parker, Van Heerden, Jerram, Hurcombe, Webster, H. Banks, Van Rooyen, Brown, Roffey, Price.

1924-25

Oldham 2, 4 = 16, Hull KR 0, 1 = 3

OLDHAM: Knapman, Rix, Corsi, Davies, Farrar, Hesketh, Beynon, Marlor, Tomkins, Collins, Sloman, Brough, Hilton.

HULL K.R.: Osborne, Cook, Harris, Hoult, Austin, McIntyre, Raynor, J.R. Wilkinson, Boagey, J.H. Wilkinson, C.W. Westerdale, Bielby, Carmichael.

1925-26

Swinton 3, 1 = 9, Oldham 0, 1 = 3

OLDHAM: Knapman, Corsi, Higgs, Johnson, Rix, Hesketh, Jones, Marlor, Lister, Read, Baker, Brough, Sloman.

SWINTON: Pearson, F. Evans, Halsall, J. Evans, Brockbank, B. Evans, Rees, Strong, Blower, Morris, Halliwell, Entwistle, Beswick.

1926-27

Oldham 4, 6 = 26, Swinton 2, 1 = 7

OLDHAM: Comm, Holliday, Rix, Johnson, Higgs, Hesketh, Jones, Brough, Read, Scaife, Marlor, Ashworth, Sloman.

SWINTON: Leigh, F. Evans, Halsall, J. Evans, Brockbank, B. Evans, Rees, Morris, Strong, Blower, Halliwell, Beswick, Cracknell.

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Overseas Signings

OLDHAM have always shown a progressive attitude in the signing of players and a glance through the list of previous team sheets reveals the vast area from which Oldham have drawn their playing staff.

Like many Northern League clubs they have lured many players from the valleys of South Wales and they have also signed several players from the South of England. But they have also cast their nets further afield with signings from Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and even the United States, writes DON YATES.

The first overseas signing by Oldham was the excellent capture of former New Zealand All Black George Smith who joined the Watersheddings staff after touring this country with Baskerville's pioneer tourists of 1907-08.

That tour was Smith's second visit to England for he came to these shores in 1905 with the New Zealand Rugby Union tourists.

He was a member of the Auckland club then and was one of the stars of the All Blacks side with 19 tries from 18 appearances.

He played in the first two internationals of that tour against Ireland and Scotland. He did not score in the 15-0 defeat of Ireland but scored two tries in the 12-7 defeat of Scotland and would have had an even more successful tour but for an injury sustained against Munster which curtailed the tour from a playing sense as far as he was concerned.

Smith made a devastating start to the tour with four tries in the opening match against Devon which New Zealand won 55-4.

Two years later he was again in England, this time as the vice-captain of the New Zealand Rugby League tourists and it was at the conclusion of this tour that he joined Oldham.

He was a valuable member of the Oldham club, playing in one Northern Union Cup Final and three Championship Finals.

Following the success of the Smith signing, Oldham made another swoop into the colonial transfer market when they signed the Farnsworth brothers from Newtown, Australia. Billy and Viv Farnsworth were the first set of brothers to tour England when they visited these shores with the 1911-12 Australian side. Stand-off Billy played in 5 Test matches against

England beginning with the 1910 series. During the 1911-12 tour Billy played on the winning side in all his 13 appearances.

Tough-tackling centre Viv played in 8 Tests against England during the 1911-12 tour 'and' scored 19 tries from 29 appearances. Both these players were outstanding in Newtown's Championship success in 1910 and they were also excellent servants to the Oldham club.

The South African player who found his way to Watersheddings was Rhodesian full-back, John Winton, who was signed from Wigan and whose best season with Oldham was in 1965-66. That season he kicked 121 goals and ended in third place in the league's goal-kicking charts.

There have not been many top class Australian signings by Oldham in recent seasons because the Oldham management believes that it is better for club harmony to have a settled side instead of short visits from top 'down under' players, but in the early 1970's Oldham did recruit Australian, John Alchin, who was captain and coach of New South Wales Country club Wollongong. Around the same time Oldham signed two players from Entrants RLFC of Queensland. Bruce Cornwall did make one first team appearance but Brian Grace, a New Zealander, never made the first team but did play in a couple of reserve team matches.

Also in 1971, Oldham signed a couple of American players from the Peninsula Ramblers RUFU side of San Jose, California. Chris Machado made two appearances in the 'A' team while his comrade, Sam Moore, made a bigger impact. Moore played four times in the reserve side and scored three tries with his bruising, although unorthodox style.

Apart from his tremendous strength a feature of his play was his one-handed long pass, American football style, but his one appearance in the first team ended up in total disaster. His one-handed pass ended up with the opposition scoring and his thoroughly depressing debut ended up in defeat at the hands of lowly Blackpool Borough.

Moore packed his bags at the end of that game and has not been seen at Watersheddings since not even to collect his losing pay!

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They Carved Their Name With Pride...

Oldham Players on Tour

Over the years there has been a tremendous amount of Oldham representation in Rugby League representative teams.

So many Watersheddings players have been capped by their counties and by England, Wales, Great Britain and Other Nationalities that it is impossible to compile a full list of honours achieved by players in the red and white jerseys.

With the possible exception of playing at Wembley, however, most players see selection for a Great Britain tour of Australasia as the pinnacle of their career.

We record proudly the names of those from Watersheddings who crossed the world to play for their country or, in the cases of G.F. Hutchins and Jack Errock, to help on the administrative side.

- 1910: A.E. Avery, T. Helm
- 1914: A.E. Wood, W.E. Hall, D. Holland
- 1920: A.E. Wood, E. Davies, H. Hilton
- 1924: E. Knapman, S. Rix, A. Brough, R. Sloman
- 1928: R. Sloman, G.F. Hutchins (manager).
- 1932: G.F. Hutchins (manager).
- 1946: D.V. Phillips
- 1954: T. O'Grady
- 1958: A. Davies, F. Pitchford, K. Jackson
- 1966: J. Errock (assistant manager).
- 1970: R. Irving
- 1974: T. Clawson

World Cup Squads

- 1957: (Australia): A. Davies, S. Little, D. Turner.
- 1960: (England): A. Davies.
- 1972: (France): R. Irving.
- 1975: (Australia): D. Treasure (Wales)

They carved with pride not only their own names, but those of the Oldham club, on the rugby grounds of New South Wales, Queensland and New Zealand 12,000 miles away.

Honours List

Rugby Union

1893-94 Champions Lancashire Senior Competition
1894-95 Runners-Up " " "

Rugby League

1895-96 Runners-Up Lancashire Senior Competition
1896-97 Runners-Up " " "
1897-98 Champions " " "
1898-99 Runners-Up " " "
1899-
1900 Runners-Up " " "
1900-01 Champions " " "
1904-05 Champions Northern Rugby League
1906-07 Runners-Up " " "
1907-08 Runners-Up " " "
1908-09 Runners-Up " " "
1909-10 Champions " " "
1910-11 Champions " " "
1921-22 Runners-Up " " "
1954-55 Runners-Up " " "
1956-57 Champions " " "
1963-64 Champions Second Division
1974-75 Promoted from "

Challenge Cup

Winners: 1898-99 1924-25 1926-27
Runners-Up: 1906-07 1911-12 1923-24 1925-26

Lancashire Cup

Winners: 1907-08 1910-11 1913-14 1919-20 1924-25
1933-34 1956-57 1957-58 1958-59
Runners-Up: 1908-09 1911-12 1918-19 1921-22
1954-55 1966-67 1968-69

Lancashire League

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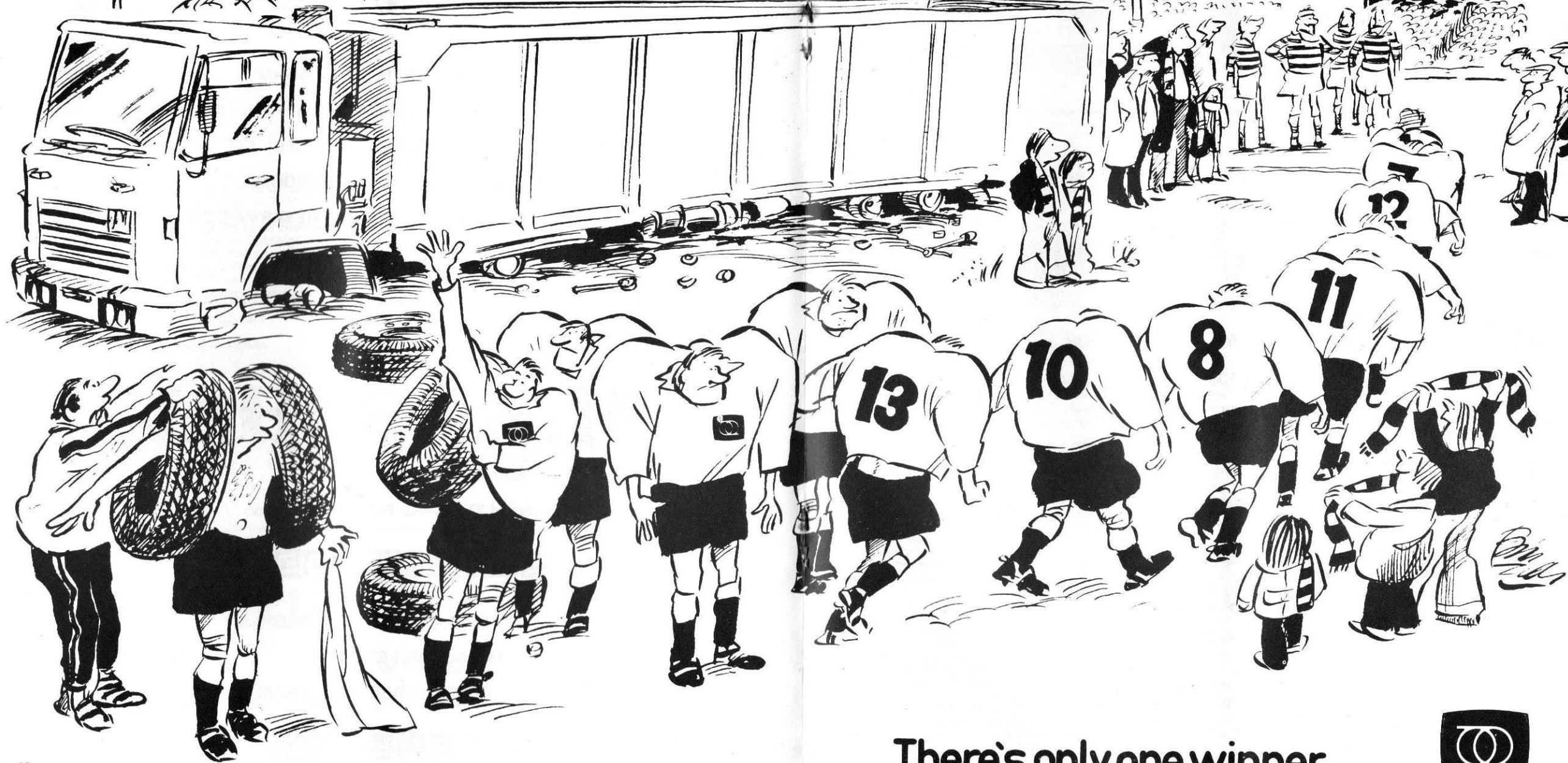
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Ganley The Great!

By Don Yates

STUDENTS of Rugby League will probably agree that the game's finest goal-kicker was Wigan's Welsh full back, Jim Sullivan, who landed a hundred or more goals in each of the 18 consecutive seasons he graced the game.

In season 1933-34 he landed 204 goals to create a league record which stood for 24 years until Bernard Ganley, Oldham's ace marksman, came on the scene and shattered Sullivan's seemingly unbeatable record.

Ganley was born into the game. His father was the former Leigh, Leeds and Huddersfield half-back and it was no surprise when young Bernard commenced activities in Leigh junior football.

In the late 1940's and early 1950's Oldham recruited many star players from the Leigh area, notably Alan Davies and Frank Pitchford and they also snapped up Bernard Ganley, a player who went on to land 1,391 goals in a career which saw him playing in a side generally regarded as the best club combination since the war.

During his career Ganley won four cup winners' medals from the triple Lancashire Cup successes of 1956-7-8 when St. Helens, Wigan and St. Helens again were beaten.

But Ganley's biggest club honour was when he skippered Oldham in the 1957 Championship Final before an Odsal crowd of 62,000 which saw Oldham beat Hull 15-14.

Although he was an outstanding goal-kicker, Ganley never won all the representative honours he so richly deserved. In 1959 he played in the Lancashire side which defeated Australia 30-22 at St. Helens. That evening Ganley gave an outstanding performance which seemed likely to earn him a Test spot against the Aussies, particularly as the 9 goals he landed were responsible for Australia's first defeat of the tour.

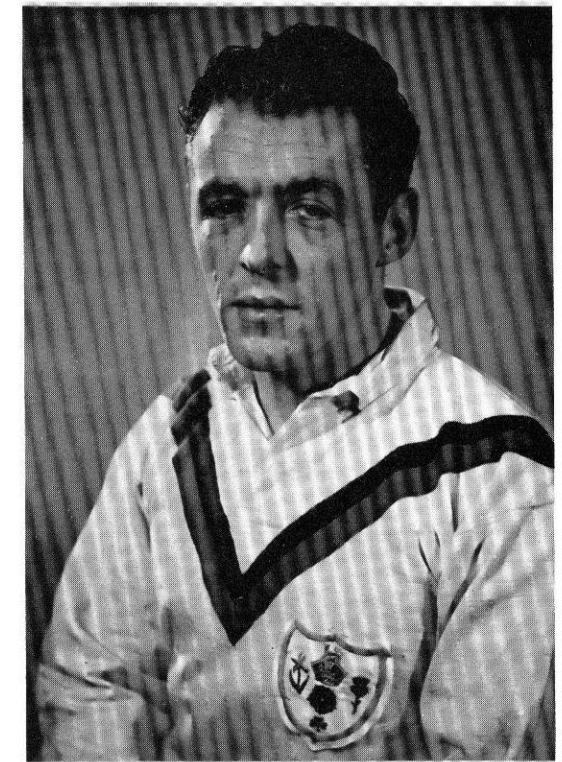
As it was Britain used a different full back in each Test, and surprisingly the three men who left Ganley out in the cold were Eric Fraser (Warrington), Frank Dyson (Huddersfield) and Gerry Round (Wakefield).

Ganley has represented his country on three occasions but these were all against France two seasons previously when Britain scored three comfortable victories. The first was in Toulouse where Ganley scored a try and 5 goals in Britain's 25-14 win and he followed this up with 10 goals in the 44-15 win at Wigan and a further 4 when France were beaten 23-9 at Grenoble.

Ganley's 224 goals in season 1957-58 are still a club record and the following season he broke another club record when he landed 14 goals in Oldham's mammoth 67-6 defeat of Liverpool City.

The first goal-kicking club record of Ganley's was in season 1952-53 when he landed 147 goals, but this only lasted four years for he landed 194 goals in Oldham's Championship-winning season of 1956-57.

The following season was Ganley's record-shattering season when his total of 219 goals and 5 tries gave him the league record for goals kicked in a season and his club's record points haul.



Bernard Ganley

The season started in impressive style and in Oldham's home win over Liverpool City on November 16, he landed his 100th goal of the season and from then on Sullivan's record looked likely to fall.

On April 12th Hunslet visited Watersheddings with Ganley four goals off his target. It did not take long for Oldham's dazzling stars to run in the tries and wait for Ganley's conversions and before half-time the league record was in the bag.

It was hooker Jack Keith who scored the try which led to the vital record-breaking goal kicked at the Waterhead Park end of the ground.

At the end of the season Ganley's total stood at 219 goals plus 5 tries which took his total points haul to 453 in competitive matches.

In season 1972-73 Ganley's record fell to Salford's David Watkins who landed 221 goals but as far as Oldham people are concerned the accurate and reliable boot of Bernard Ganley will live forever in their Rugby League memories.



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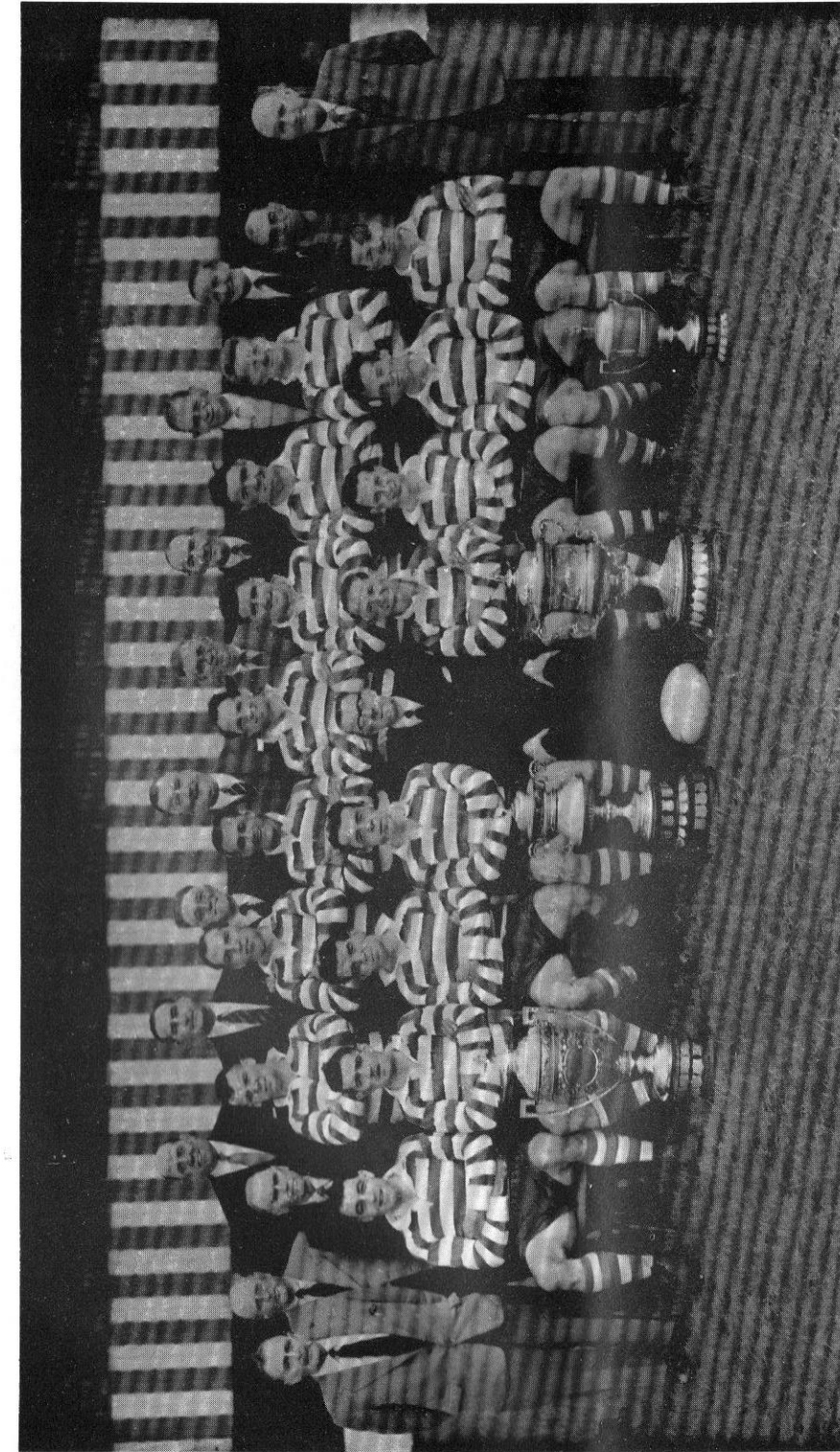
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The team of all talents parading the four trophies they won in season 1956-57
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J. Coulthard, D. Vines, C. Winstade, J. Keith, D. Turner, K. Jackson, A. Jarman, G. Jenkins, A. Cordwell, Seated: R. Cracknell, A. Davies, F. Daley,
B. Ganley, W. Howard, F. Stirrup, F. Pitchford, D. Ayres, J. Eddy.

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Frank Daley scoring a try . . . could it have been Stirrup
who sent him in?



Frank Stirrup . . . daddy of 'em all!

The Peerless Pair

By Jack McNamara

Manchester Evening News

FOLLOWING Oldham in the great era of the fifties was as much a pleasure as work.

Strangely enough, in a team crammed with stars, two players with no pretences to glamour remain firmly imprinted in the memories of all who watched Oldham regularly.

They were Frank Stirrup and Frank "Dan" Daley. Both provided much of the setting in which spectacular stars like scrum-half Frank Pitchford and centre Alan Davies shone.

Stirrup was a masterly rugby footballer, clever, nippy and courageous. He could play anywhere in the backs. He had a particular talent on the occasions when he stood in for Bernard Ganley at fullback of running the ball out under pressure.

Daley was a superb tactician and as tough as old boots with it. He was a demon tackler and, perhaps, his finest defensive display was when he tamed Billy Boston totally when Wigan shifted him to stand-off to smash Oldham out of the Lancashire Cup.

Daley had a quick wit, too. He was picked at loose-forward in one match and coach, Griff Jenkins, instructed him to "give Pitchford plenty of cover."

"If Pitchford needs more cover than I can give him," retorted Daley, "tell him to bring an umbrella."



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Thanks for the Memory

By Don Yates

STATISTICS indicate that the greatest ever team was the Huddersfield side which ruled the roost immediately before the First World War.

That side lost only 14 of the 136 league matches played between 1911 and 1915 and must have been a wonderful combination. I was not around to judge, but I did watch the Oldham team of the mid-fifties and I rate them as the best and most attractive side I have ever seen.

They had one of the most accurate goal-kickers of all time in Bernard Ganley, a world-class centre in Alan Davies, a brilliant scrum-half in Frank Pitchford, Sid Little, a mobile second-rower and Derek 'Rocky' Turner, whose determination welded together Oldham's pack.

Those were the stars of the side but they could not manage without the other "bread and butter" members, players like Dick Cracknell, Ken Jackson, Don Vines and Charlie Winslade.

It seems a little ridiculous calling those four "bread and butter" players for they were all internationals at a time when the game was rich in talent.

Oldham also had its characters. Frank Daley was the utility player who would play anywhere from stand-off to second-row forward and at the beginning of each training session would ask coach Griff Jenkins, 'Where am I playing this week? Shall I put on a stone or shall I take a stone off?'

There was hooker, Jack Keith, who would do some outrageous antics on the field which made his colleagues despair but they always seemed to come off and leave Keith clear of the opposition and heading for the line.

Left-winger, Jack Eddy was never a speed merchant but what tremendous guts he had! He often appeared to score tries when they were needed and his strongest point was his tremendous defence.

That flying Saints winger, Tom van Vollenhoven, never scored a try against Oldham when Eddy was in the team but following Eddy's transfer to Wakefield, Vollenhoven celebrated by skipping over for a hat-trick on his very next appearance at Watersheddings.

Such was the strength of Oldham in those days that when Great Britain thrashed France at Wigan in November 1957 by 44-15 five Oldham players were included in the British line-up - Ganley, Davies, Jackson, Little and Turner.

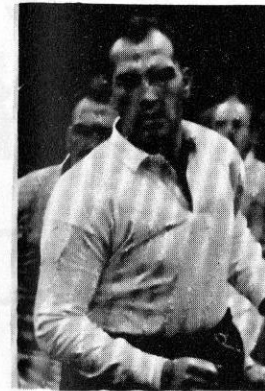
One of my fondest memories of that great side was during their Championship-winning season of 1956-57. It was the home game against Barrow, themselves a fine side who finished third in the table, and it was an important game with plenty at stake.

Oldham won the toss and elected to defend the Waterhead Park end so Willie Horne, the Barrow skipper, kicked off and the ball was gathered by Derek Turner.

Sixteen seconds later, after half a dozen passes, Dick Cracknell was touching down beneath the posts and the finest exhibition of Rugby League football that I will ever see had commenced.

Oldham won easily, 45-13, but that match contained everything good about this Rugby League game. There was strong-running and tackling, fine handling, excellent kicking and a brand of sportsmanship from both sides which we only too rarely see nowadays.

Those days are gone now, probably for ever, but to each and every member of the Oldham staff during those great days I say, 'Thanks for the memory'.



C. Winslade



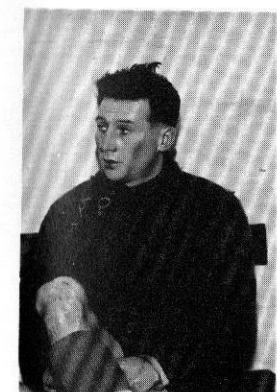
Sid Little



Alan Davies



R. Cracknell



F. Pitchford

'We Would Have Turned Wembley and Back Again — But The The Worse Our Luck Seemed

THREE times I climbed the steps to the Royal Box at Wembley to take hold of the greatest prize of them all . . . the Rugby League Challenge Cup.

I have Lancashire Cup winners' medals, Lancashire League medals, and a Northern League championship medal from that May day in 1957 when Oldham town went wild as we snatched the title with a 15-14 win against Hull at Odsal.

Great days . . . great games . . . memories of Rugby League at Oldham and Wakefield — that I will treasure so long as I have Yorkshire breath in my body.

BUT NOTHING CAN HIDE THE DISAPPOINTMENT THAT I FELT THEN — AND STILL FEEL NEARLY 20 YEARS ON — AT OUR CONSISTENT FAILURES ON THE ROCKY ROAD TO WEMBLEY.

When I left Oldham and ultimately captained Wakefield on three occasions at Wembley it served only to remind me of what might have been had the Oldham side of the fifties graced that sacred turf.

By hell, we would have set the stadium on fire with our own very special brand of super, attacking football. Can you imagine that great side of ours turning on the charm on a Spring day, a firm ground, and a pitch tailor-made for open rugby?

The searing breaks of Pitchy, the power-play of Alan Davies in the centre, the finishing of John Etty and Dick Cracknell, the ball work of Charlie Winslade, and the running of Sid Little.

We would have turned Wembley inside out — and back again — and given the honest-to-goodness folk of Oldham the proudest day of their lives!

We knew it, the club knew it, but most of all the fans knew it.

THE TROUBLE WAS THAT THE HARDER WE TRIED THE WORSE OUR LUCK SEEMED TO GO.

No, there was no money trouble in the camp so far as the Challenge Cup was concerned. It would be less than honest of me to say that we were satisfied with our league match pay but we were happy with our Cup bonuses and in each of the four years I was at Oldham we really thought it was going to be OUR year.

Your recollection of the disasters are probably as good as mine. Suffice to say that our failure to reach Wembley will be a regret I shall carry with me to my dying day.

Strange, isn't it, that we won the championship at Oldham, but never went to Wembley, and we went to the Empire Stadium three times with Wakefield — but never lifted the league title.

I suppose it's one of those strange quirks of fate that can never be answered satisfactorily.

36

Certainly, it's something I still think about when I bring out the scrapbook or afford myself the luxury of reliving old times in front of the fire on a winter's night.

For I always did, and always will, have a lot of affection for an Oldham club that thrust me to fame within a season of paying out £2,750 to Hull KR for my services in 1955.

I regard it as a privilege and a pleasure to be asked to make a little contribution to the club's centenary celebrations. For those were great days at Oldham . . . days of big crowds, great footballers, trophies on the sideboard, and some of the best mates that one could ever ask to play with on the field.

I am often asked how I would compare that Oldham side of the fifties with the Wakefield side of the early sixties. It is a difficult one to answer because both had so much to offer.

Derek Turner Talks To Roger Halstead

But I will say this: At Oldham there was no such thing as stars and bread-and-butter men. We were ALL stars — all at the top of the tree in our own right.

It was a tree which ultimately came down with a heavy crash. But this is neither the time nor place to reflect on what went wrong.

I prefer to remember the better times — such as when we lifted the Lancashire Cup in 1956, 1957 and 1958, such as the great occasion when Colin Hutton let us off the hook with his goal miss at Odsal and there we were on top of the Rugby League tree as UNDISPUTED CHAMPIONS OF THE RUGBY FOOTBALL LEAGUE.

Who can ever forget the moment when Hutton swung his kick wide? I recall that some of the lads, standing dejectedly under the sticks, turned away in their anguish. They didn't want to look.

Inside Out — Harder We Tried To Go'

I suppose because I'm me I stared it out. But I didn't see how Colin could possibly miss. Miss he did — and at last we had gone some way towards erasing the memory of those cup disappointments.

It was a team that had everything: pace, power, skill and character. We were a good side with a good trainer in Griff Jenkins and a wonderful fellow as president in the late Bill Howard.

In those days there was no such thing as doing PT as part of our training schedules. It was all running on the track and ball work on the field.

In some respects we were like hungry boxers. If we wanted to make a few bob on the side we looked to rugby to provide it. But we had to get into the team and the competition was so great that it was no holds barred even in training sessions.

Nowadays, you will see players on the track running together, keeping stride for stride. In those days, when the pistol went, it was hell for leather to the other end. You were running for your place in Saturday's team — and you ran till your lungs felt like they were going to burst!

But because we were a good team, taking on all-comers and packing Watersheddings to the seams, we felt we deserved the best the club could afford in the pay packet. We got £12 for an away win, £10 for a home win.

My first match at Wakefield provided us with a win against little Batley at Mount Pleasant — and we picked up £18 apiece.

Mind you, we were winning every Saturday and that helped a lot. And I do owe it to Oldham for signing me as a comparatively unknown forward on Humberside and rocketing me to the top at both club and international level.

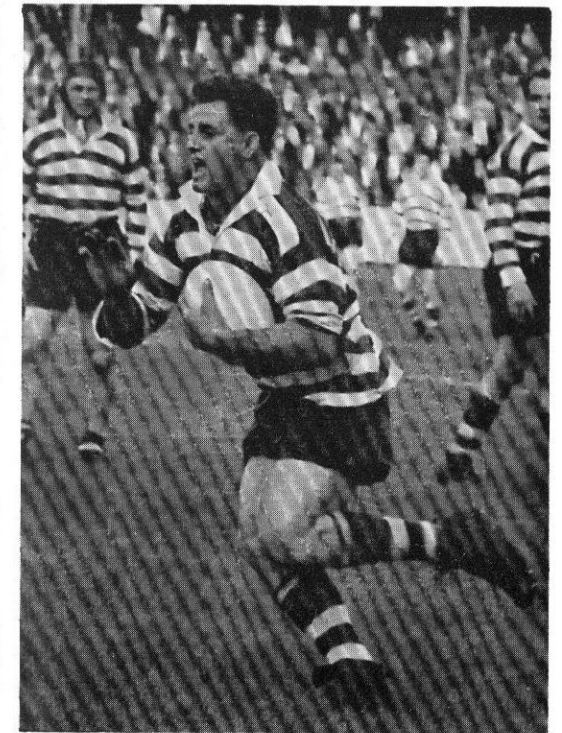
I never believed, that day I signed the Oldham forms, that I would one day play for Great Britain.

But in my first season Griff came to me and said "Derek, my lad, one day soon you'll wear the shirt of your country". I didn't have to wait long. For that I would like to thank, through this brochure, all those who helped me along the way.

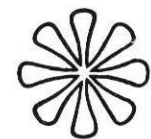
There are too many to name individually, too many memories to recall in detail.

But I offer sincere congratulations to the club on reaching its 100th birthday and, attach to that a hope that one day soon the Oldham fans really will be walking up Wembley Way to watch their very own team in action.

Believe me, when Challenge Cup time comes around, I still sneak a gingerly look at the scores — and keep my fingers crossed for the old club!



Derek Turner

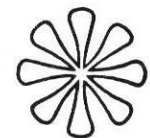


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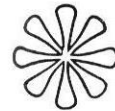
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Memories are made of this . . . the first of the three consecutive Lancashire Cup wins. Club secretary, Bert Summerscales, holds the cup after the 1956 triumph against St. Helens at Wigan.



Memories are made of this . . . a picture from the private collection of Edward Woolley, the Oldham Evening Chronicle's Chief photographer, showing the scene before the 1955 championship final at Maine Road, Manchester. Warrington won to take the title for the second consecutive year. Oldham skipper Alan Davies, introduces Lord Derby to winger Terry O'Grady. Other players in the line up are (left to right): Harry Ogden, Frank Pitchford, Frank Daley, Dick Cracknell, Roland Barrow, Frank Stirrup.

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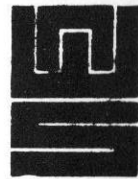
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Memories are made of this... winger John Etty goes in for a try during the 1957 championship final against Hull at Odsal. Note the packed terraces in the rear. Attendance: 62,000.

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Ex-Players' Association

By Fred Howarth, Secretary

IN contributing to this centenary brochure the ex-players would like to wish the Oldham club many more years of good luck and fortune.

The association has been in existence for six years with their headquarters at the Parkfield Country Club, where every facility is provided by that genial host Mr. Eric Mellor.

The committee have done a great job in giving assistance to their fellow ex-players who have needed help and have also fostered a binding friendship with the other two ex-player associations at Hull and Wakefield.

Many of the greats have played their football at Oldham and some of them are members of the ex-players committee, such as Norman Pugh, Ernie Foote, and Harry Ogden.

While mentioning these ex-players we must not forget others who make-up the committee, of whom have special stories to relate of their service with the Oldham club.

Tommy Leyland signed from St. Helens a tough, rugged player whose family was steeped in Rugby League football. He served Oldham well, and was given the name "Tank" as he bulldozed his way through the opposition. Tommy is Chairman of the ex-players.

Les Anthony, a Welsh international, came to Oldham in 1947-8 and he was soon a popular player with the fans. As Les was capped for Wales just before he joined Oldham he never received the Welsh cap, but to his delight last year he received the cap twenty-seven years late.

Bert Ambler was a front-row forward whose strength brought fear to many opponents. Bert was a real 80-minutes player.

Roland Barrow, a gentlemanly player, was a centre of that great team of the fifties, playing in that memorable match at Maine Road, against Warrington, on a mud bath. Roland was treasurer of the ex-players, but had to give up due to business and the new treasurer is Alan Jarman, ex-Oldham & Halifax.

Harry Ogden's outstanding performances in the No. 8 Jersey, will be remembered by supporters of the forties, and fifties. Many tributes were paid to Harry and one was that he was the best No. 8 in the game.

Percy Carter, Ernie Foote, and Norman Pugh each gave their services to the Oldham Club. Percy, after being a player, served on the Committee in nearly every position and is now one of the trustees. Norman, "The Whip", was a loose-forward to be reckoned with by opposing teams and was a founder-member of the ex-players.

To tell the stories of all our members, such as Jackson, Eddy, Bell, Turner, Rowbottom, Vines, Davies, Daley, Stirrup, Winslade and many more, would take all the pages of this brochure.

But I would like to mention the association President Mr. Bill Adshead who has given valuable assistance and the vice-presidents Ken Fisher, Eric Mellor, Stan McBride, Alwyn Davenport, Ted Turner, and Albert Taylor, who have all helped to keep the association in a financial position to carry on its aims.

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Looking To The Future

By Roger Halstead
Oldham Evening Chronicle

Confidence and goodwill between Watersheddings and the local amateur RL clubs must be the long-term goal of all associated with Rugby League in Oldham.

Each can benefit the other through a sound, working relationship based on trust and understanding but, most of all, on confidence in each other.

League will be set fair for a tremendous future in Oldham if and when the day dawns when relationships are such that local youngsters have a burning desire to represent their home-town club.

Many are the problems and pitfalls that lie ahead. But they will be no different to those that have impeded relationships in the past and are still erecting obstacles to progress in every town where RL is played.

They say the family feud is the most bitter of all. So it is, or can be, in relation to a professional club and the amateurs who play beneath its shadow.

A local lad fails to make the grade after signing and soon lets the whole area know that he has had a raw deal. Tales of woe spread like wildfire... and they never lose anything in the telling.

But it's not all one-sided. Senior clubs without exception need to be more aware of what's going on around them and show a good deal more faith in the boys on their doorstep.

The amateurs will be looking for more contact — not over a pint on match days at Watersheddings but through Oldham representation on the touchline at Waterhead, Saddleworth, St. Anne's, Salem Hornets,

Fitton Hill, Higginshaw, Ferranti or wherever groups assemble to play the code in and around the town.

Oldham can help, too, in aiding the amateurs in the recruitment of men to help run and organise teams and putting their weight behind the battle to woo the local authority into making school facilities available to boys up to the age of 18 free of charge.

Some authorities, such as Leigh and Leeds, already do this.

The big need in Oldham is for more teams to bridge the gap between school-leaving age and the under-18 level of those teams run by Saddleworth and Waterhead.

It won't cost Oldham RL club a penny to help fight for the amateurs in the corridors of power at the Town Hall.

It would cost them money to reform a "B" team — and now that the schools and BARLA are doing such a magnificent job themselves one can in any case envisage the day when a Colts League, run by the Rugby League, is no longer necessary.

Far better be it for the amateur clubs in any given area to each run a side at this level rather than have one such team run and maintained by the senior club of that area.

But adult concern for the boys once they leave school is of paramount importance.

And Oldham RLFC can help the amateurs and schoolboys by offering their facilities, fighting their cause in the paths of local authority power, and lending the sort of moral support that can only benefit the code at all levels.

The family feud might be a vicious one. The paradox is strength in a closely-knit community.



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The late Bert Summerscales was officially connected with the club for 40 years until his retirement as secretary in 1965. Elected to the committee in 1925, he was honorary treasurer from April, 1939 to June, 1946; honorary secretary from 1941 to 1946; full-time secretary from 1946 until 1965.



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Ab Ashworth was the first Oldham player to gain international honours when he appeared in the English RU team which met Ireland at Whalley Range, Manchester on February 6, 1892.

After ending his career at Oldham, Ab played for Luzley Brook in the Oldham Junior League.

Harry Varley also played for England in that season but at the time he was attached to the Heckmondwike club. He captained Oldham in their first two seasons in the Northern Union.

Dai Gwynne, who joined Oldham from Swansea in 1890, played for Wales as did Bill McCutcheon, who also joined the club from Swansea. Incidentally, both Gwynne and McCutcheon were selected for Lancashire versus the Rest of England in 1891, besides wearing the Lancashire colours in several other engagements.

Both Gwynne and McCutcheon captained the club while the latter was club president from 1924 to 1926.

Congratulations From Across The World!

May I personally congratulate Oldham RLFC on achieving its centenary and assure the club and its supporters that we will strive to emulate such a great achievement.

When we achieve one hundred years of history in New Zealand's Rugby League we will emulate your splendid efforts to celebrate our centenary.

The best wishes of all connected with the game in our country are sent to you. May you have a most successful centenary celebration.

JOHN PERCIVAL
RL Referee

APPEARANCES, 1975-76. Maximum Possible 41

	App.	Club Total	DG	G	T	Pts.
M. Elliott	39	394	0	0	12	36
M. Murphy	38	324	0	0	5	15
K. Taylor	37	432	0	0	2	6
P. Larder	35	259	0	86	7	193
F. Hall	34	123	0	0	2	6
D. Treasure	34	88	1	0	12	37
E. Barton	31	72	0	0	5	15
K. Flanagan	29	33	0	9	2	24
B. Kear	26	26	0	0	1	3
A. Peters	26	54	0	0	5	15
M. McCone	22	106	0	0	8	24
J. Blair	21	92	3	16	2	41
T. Ramshaw	21	21	0	0	1	3
A. Wainwright	21	122	1	1	8	27
R. Brown	20	44	1	0	8	25
S. Bottom	18	30	0	0	4	12
S. Herbert	18	19	0	0	2	6
B. Hughes	17	51	0	0	1	3
C. O'Brien	17	61	0	0	1	3
J. Paterson	14	22	0	0	2	6
R. Welding	13	42	0	0	1	3
R. Hicks	11	33	0	0	1	3
S. Lund	9	12	0	0	0	0
J. Reynolds	9	108	0	0	0	0
K. Jackson	6	9	0	0	0	0
G. Owen	6	20	0	0	1	3
J. Hammond	5	5	0	0	0	0
W. Ryans	5	5	0	0	0	0
G. Munro	4	43	0	0	3	9
K. Ashcroft	3	115	0	0	0	0
R. O'Mahoney	3	11	0	0	0	0
H. McCourt	2	2	0	0	0	0
I. Holland	1	30	0	0	0	0

FINAL TABLE, 1975-76. First Division

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Salford	30	22	1	7	555	350	45
Featherstone Rovers	30	21	2	7	526	348	44
Leeds	30	21	0	9	571	395	42
St. Helens	30	19	1	10	513	315	39
Wigan	30	18	3	9	514	399	39
Widnes	30	18	1	11	448	369	37
Wakefield	30	17	0	13	496	410	34
Hull K.R.	30	17	0	13	446	472	34
Castleford	30	16	1	13	589	398	33
Warrington	30	15	2	13	381	456	32
Bradford Northern	30	13	1	16	454	450	27
OLDHAM	30	11	1	18	380	490	23
Dewsbury	30	10	1	19	287	484	21
Keighley	30	7	0	23	274	468	14
Huddersfield	30	5	0	25	370	657	10
Swinton	30	3	0	27	238	581	6

SECOND DIVISION

Barrow	26	20	3	3	366	213	43
HORNETS	26	19	3	4	347	200	41
Workington	26	18	4	4	519	228	40
Leigh	26	19	1	6	571	217	39
Hull	26	19	1	6	577	278	39
New Hunslet	26	15	1	10	371	308	31
York	26	12	1	13	447	394	25
Bramley	26	11	1	14	344	370	23
Huyton	26	10	0	16	242	373	20
Whitehaven	26	8	2	16	253	347	18
Halifax	26	7	1	18	322	460	15
Batley	26	6	1	19	228	432	13
Blackpool	26	6	1	19	224	460	13
Doncaster	26	2	0	24	195	726	4

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ALMOST!!!...



Front row

(left to right): Len McIntyre, Dave Parker, Stuart Whitehead, Ken Wilson, Harry Major, Charlie Bott.

Back row

Trevor Simms, Jack Pycroft, John Donovan, Geoff Sims, Frank Dyson, Peter Smethurst, Vin Nester.

In the spring of 1964 Oldham came closest to achieving the ambition of playing at Wembley. In the Challenge Cup semi-final against Hull K.R. a late drop goal by Len McIntyre earned for Oldham a replay at Swinton which was abandoned for bad light in extra time. A second replay was staged at Fartown before the Oldham dream was blighted yet again.

Open Letter from the Committee of the Oldham Rugby League Football Club

As all who have read this commemorative brochure are now aware this year our club celebrates one hundred years of representing the town in Rugby Football. Over eighty years since the club, with other breakaways, formed the Northern Union to lay the foundations of the Rugby League as we know it today.

Over the hundred years the club has had its share of success, its ups and downs. Many famous players have pulled on the equally famous cherry red and white jerseys of Oldham and many generations of Oldhamers have been thrilled by the many great games seen at Watersheddings.

One hundred years... a long time. The club is a great institution in the town, a way of life to a lot of people. It would be difficult to think of Oldham without a Rugby League Club... Yes, unthinkable — but yet not impossible.

The last ten years, due to the tremendous changes in our society, have been without doubt ten gruelling years for those people who are struggling to keep Rugby League alive. The ten most trying years financially in the games history.

In order to balance our payments we the committee at Oldham run several money raising schemes; the social club with its late licence and two pools on a permanent basis.

Also each year we run several auxiliary fund raising functions and yet we never close the gap, inflation is always that one step ahead. If the club is to become great again then obviously this "Battle of the Gap" has got to be won.

What our members and supporters have to realise is that time-wise there is only so much that a nine man committee can achieve. It is not any shortage of ideas that is the problem but the implementation. What we need from our members and supporters is that very valuable commodity — Time. Not a lot of time from one or two but a little time from more people.

This is your club, make it your hobby, become involved, give a little of your spare time to the club, create for yourself another interest. Come forward and make yourself known. We have the ideas and we will do the organising.

It is not your money we are after, just a little of your spare time, for unless more of our townspeople do become involved that unthinkable thought could become a very sad reality.

*This space donated by the committee
Oldham Rugby League Club.*

