

# PHIL LARDER

OLDHAM RLFC  
1968-1979

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# PHIL LARDER 1968 - 1979

I would like to thank the officials of Oldham R.L.F.C., particularly the Chairman, Mr. Hatton, for granting me a benefit, and for encouraging me to have the second operation on my arm when I had virtually accepted the fact that my playing days were ended.

I would also like to thank the spectators of the Club, and the people of Oldham for responding to my benefit so enthusiastically. Their response has made me very proud to be an Oldham player.

Although I have played for Oldham during lean times, I have always been very proud to wear the cherry and white shirt which I had always supported as a boy, and I have been proud to play alongside such Oldham stalwarts as Martin Murphy, Mike Elliott, Roger O'Mahoney and Fred Hall.

I realise that it has been heartbreaking supporting Oldham recently — it has also been heartbreaking playing at times — but hopefully success is again just round the corner. I would love to be able to play on and enjoy this success—I think we deserve it — but if not, I will be happy to know that the talented Town Team Schoolboys that I coach will form the backbone of the plans to put Oldham Rugby League Football Club back on top of the best game in the world.

Thanks again

**PHIL LARDER**



Happy family — the Larder family mustered for action outside their Uppermill home. Pictured (left to right): David, Phil, Matthew, Anna and Anne.



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# THE ROAD TO OLDHAM

By John Huxley  
Sunday Mirror

PHIL LARDER is what can be best described as Rugby's top example of a self-made man. For a player who has never had a Rugby lesson in his life, he has certainly come a long, long way.

Although he had a sound grounding in the best of Rugby League when he followed the great Oldham team of the mid-fifties with his parents Maurice and Edith, he never went to a Rugby playing school.

Born and bred in Moorside, Oldham, Phil went to his local junior school and Hulme Grammar, both of which were soccer-playing schools. But away from school there was only one sport for Phil — Rugby.

Much of his grounding came from playing in the Continuation League in Tom Webb's Werneth team. This was a side that produced two other well known Oldham Rugby League personalities, hooker Kevin Taylor, who is now playing with Leigh, and back-row forward Denis Maders.

Phil's father, however, saw his son's future moving away from his much-loved League and into Rugby Union. So down to Oldham's other Rugby club, the Union side, went the young Larder.

His stay at Keb Lane was brief. Phil's talent was noticed by first-class Manchester club Broughton Park and, after less than 12 months, Phil's Rugby world switched to south Manchester.



Union style — Phil Larder set to take a pass from a Manchester RUFC teammate in a match against Nuneaton.

There, in the lush pastures of Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Phil soon established himself. He was playing their first team by the age of sixteen and in the Lancashire School-boy team. Not bad for an Oldham lad who had never played the game at school!

At Broughton Park Phil played alongside England international second-row forward Barry Jackson and the Irish international full-back Barry O'Driscoll. But the parting of the ways came sooner than could have been expected at the time.



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Phil had to earn a living and he decided on teaching as a career. That meant going away to Training College and, for Phil, that meant the best, Loughborough College where rugby is not so much a game, more like a religion.

And what a way to play Rugby. Phil was soon playing in their first team as a winger, but, what wing to play on. His centre was none other than the great Welsh Rugby Union immortal Gerald Davies.

Commented Phil: "Gerald was a superb Rugby player. He was brilliant. Without doubt he was the best attacking player I've ever seen in my career."

And the rest of the back division wasn't too bad either. On the other side of Davies was another British Lion star of the future, John Taylor, who is seen so often on the television commentating on international matches while another Lion Colin MacFadayan, England RU winger Derek Prout and Roy Slay, all vied for places.

While at College Phil switched his Lancashire Rugby base. He left Broughton Park to try his luck with Manchester, who were still playing at Moor Lane, Salford.

While Phil was still at College, Rugby League clubs started to show some interest in him. Salford made him a serious offer, together with Gerald Davies, but he refused them.

He remembered: "Gerald received a fantastic offer, but turned them down flat.

"I would have signed, but the coach at Salford, Griff Jenkins, said that I would have to leave College and return north. So that was the end of that."

Phil continued to play Rugby Union with Manchester and he enjoyed his stay with the club. They won the Manchester seven-a-side tournament, one of the best in the north of England, three times in succession, was

named as club vice-captain, and played for the full Lancashire team.

A dispute with the club, however, saw Phil, and six of his teammates, leave and move on to another first-class club, Sale.

Larder became an established first-team player with the Cheshire club and was soon producing the kind of performances which were certain to attract Rugby League scouts. And, sure enough, Oldham were among the clubs taking notice.

Phil, an Oldham lad, had always cherished the dream of playing at Watersheddings and it must have been a thrill to receive that first tentative approach from his home town club.

Contact was made through club scout Derek Foy, and a meeting was arranged for a lunch time in Uppermill. This was in the close season of 1968 and Phil still had much to learn about professional sport.

He remembered with a smile: "Before I left school I had a school lunch. When I met the Oldham committeemen in a pub they said I could have anything I wanted to eat, but I was too bloated. I knew better the next time."

All through the summer negotiations went on. Added Phil: "I had at least four meetings with the Committee. I wanted to get it right and get the best possible deal for changing codes."



The good old days — Phil Larder (front row, far right) pictured in the Werneth Under 16 team that also included former Oldham hooker Kevin Taylor (centre with ball) and Denis Maders, ex-Oldham and Huddersfield forward (back row, sixth from left).

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Eventually it did come right. He said: "I had always wanted to return to Rugby League, I felt that I had played Union like a League player and in my first game as a professional felt much happier than at any stage in Union.

"I never really understood Union, but I knew just what to expect in League."

His contract with Oldham was signed in the old committee room in the Social Club at Watersheddings, Bert Jones was the Club Chairman, Gerry Helme was the coach and prop Geoff Fletcher the captain.

Two weeks after joining Oldham Phil married his wife Anne. He joked: "When I'm looking at my photograph album I can always pick out the picture of my first try at Oldham — the only one I scored for them as a bachelor — because I'm smiling."

Now the father of three children, Matthew (6), David (3) and Anna (six months), Phil

is happily established as head of physical education at Saddleworth School and a successful businessman.

He used to run a successful sportswear business in Greenfield, but sold it recently so that he could spend more time with his family.

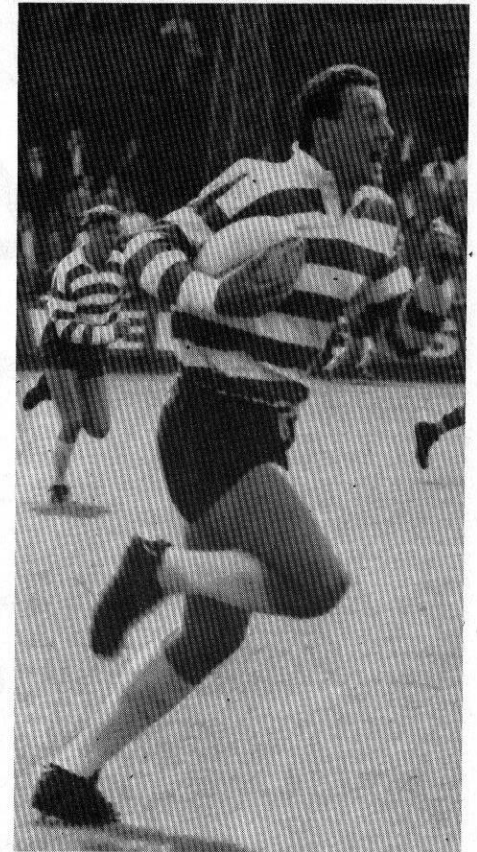
Above everything else in Rugby League. Phil is a professional player. Life has not always been sweet for him at Watersheddings, but nobody can deny that today he is now among the best centres in the Second Division, if not the League.

He has served his only professional club well, done a good job for an outfit that has not been enjoying the best of fortunes during most of his time as professional and now deserves a generous testimonial.

Ladies, Gentlemen and kids I give you Phil Larder, Oldham rugby player superb.

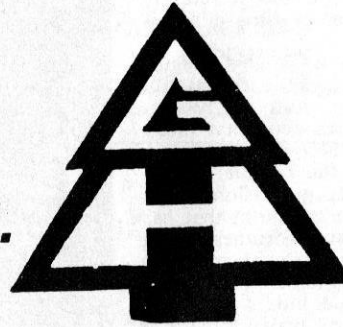


Watch it mate — Phil Larder watches as his long-serving wingmate Mike Elliott takes on a York defender at Watersheddings.



The first of many — Phil Larder streaks for the line to score his first try for Oldham. The defence left trailing belonged to Blackpool Borough.

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# WATERSHEDDINGS - AT LAST !

By Roger Halstead  
(Oldham Evening Chronicle)

PHIL LARDER was "sold" on Rugby League — and Oldham — when his parents took him to Watersheddings as a small boy to watch the great side of the late 1950s.

The Oldham side in those days was packed with big-name stars . . . Bernard Ganley, Sid

Little, Dick Cracknell, John Etty, Frank Pitchford, Jack Keith, Charlie Winslade and Derek Turner to name just a few.



Top of the Pops — Phil Larder hits the deck after scoring a try against the mighty Widnes. Mick Adams (right) arrives too late to prevent Phil touching down.

But even in that illustrious company one player stood out above all others to the young and impressionable Larder. Name — Alan Davies. Occupation — centre three-quarter. Claim to fame — Great Britain tourist and maker of tries par excellence.

Schoolboy Larder thrilled to Davies's speed, strength and skill and it was while watching Alan in action that Phil dreamed, like most boys do, of the day he, too, would drag an Oldham jersey over his head with a No. 3 or 4 on the back.

It took hard work, guts, sweat, toil — and a few thousand bumps, bangs and bruises — to make that boyhood dream come true.

But it happened at last, via Loughborough College and the Manchester area RU clubs, when Oldham scout Derek Foy spotted Larder's speed and handling ability in a Manchester sevens and recommended that the local lad be snapped up immediately.

He made his debut in a pre-season friendly against Blackpool and brought the house down with a 60-yard try out of his own half. I remember it as if it was yesterday.

Playing on the right wing, Larder scorched out of his own half and up the touch line towards the pavilion corner. Borough centre Keith Holden, now in the twilight of a great career, tried desperately to cover but a lengthening of the Larder stride left him hopelessly out-flanked.

It was but the first of many, many tries Larder was to score for Oldham but it was

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not until two or three years later, when he was firmly established in the right-centre spot, that he realised he had "made it."

Appropriately enough, it was that man Davies who ensured that he got the message! The occasion was a match at Central Park against St. Helens.

On the way to the match he called at his parents home and got an unexpected but timely reminder of what lay ahead of him. There, in the living room, was a framed photograph of Alan Davies, at the peak of his career, with a complimentary caption.

It was just what the young Larder needed to give his pre-match nerves a boost!

But Phil, like his idol, served the Oldham club steadfastly and loyally for more than a decade. More people than I care to remember have worn the Oldham No. 4 jersey in the last ten years or so. Not so many have worn 3: it belonged almost exclusively to Larder.

In my view Phil Larder has been one of the most under-rated players at Watersheddings since the break-up of that great team of 20 years ago.

He is one of the few Oldham backs with the speed, confidence and stamina to score out of his own 25 — and in Second Division football he is still doing that at 34 years of age!

Over the years he has made a ton of tries for his winger Mike Elliott, thanks to a good pair of hands and speed through the gap.

As a goalkicker, too, he has had no peer at Oldham since the days of Frank Dyson in the mid-60s.

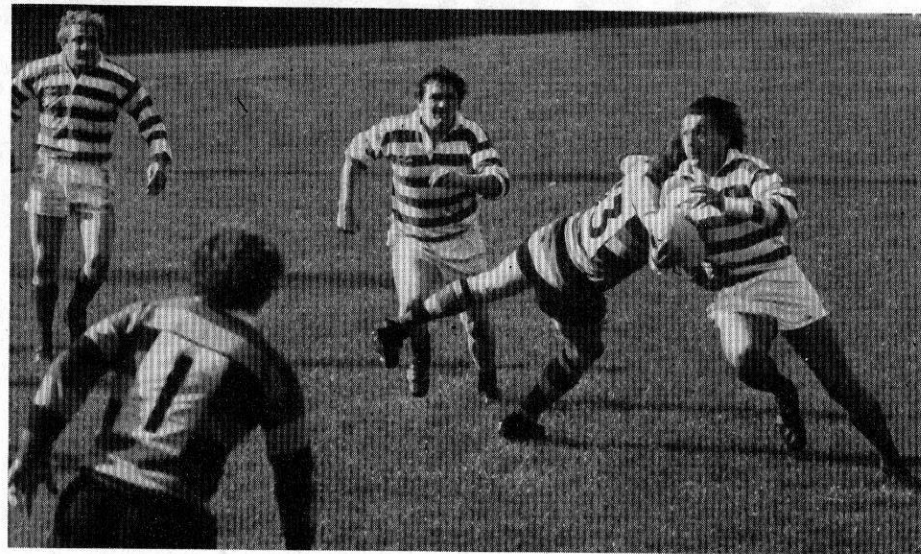
One can recall several Oldham marksmen in the last 15 years, among them Dyson, John Winton, Derek Whitehead and Brian Curry, all specialists at their job.

But few could match the number of goals per season which Larder landed when he twice topped the 100 mark during Graham Starkey's last spell here between 1970 and 1973.

I recall the first time Larder kicked for Oldham. It was at Featherstone when he was pressed into the job in an emergency and emerged as the reluctant hero by landing several beauties.

It was to earn him a job he never really wanted, but one which he tackled conscientiously until a year or two ago when the demands of business and family made it impossible for him to practice.

He is not a natural kicker. To be competent at all he had to put in long hours



On my way — Phil Larder shrugs off a tackle from a Dewsbury defender in a Rugby League second division match and sets off on his way for another try for Oldham.

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of practice and it says much for his dedication that, in a job he hated, he landed so many goals over so many years.

Off the field, Phil Larder is a man of many parts — teacher, rugby coach, business

and family man. As coach to the town's under-16 boys' side he is putting something back into a game that has given him pleasure and purpose — and doubtless one or two heartaches! — over many years.

It has been my privilege and pleasure to report and record his achievements over those years . . . and there will doubtless be many more to come if Phil pursues his avowed intent to go into coaching.



Hands off — Phil Larder looks for a way out as John Butler (making the tackle) and Stuart Whitehead try to bottle him up in a derby encounter with Rochdale Hornets.

## For the Record

Points galore. That's the record of Phil Larder since he joined Oldham back in 1968. His complete record, compiled by Roger Halstead of the Oldham Chronicle, is:-

	App.	G	T	Pts.
1968-69	28	7	7	35
1969-70	24	8	4	28
1970-71	35	16	17*	83
1971-72	38	114	11	261**
1972-73	42	129	13	297**
1973-74	24	25	2	56
1974-75	33	76	10	182**
1975-76	35	85	7	191**
1976-77	2	5	0	10
1977-78	26	17	18*	88
1978-79	28	3	16*	54
	<u>315</u>	<u>485</u>	<u>105</u>	<u>1285</u>

\* Club leading try scorer

\*\* Club leading points scorer

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on his Benefit



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# POINTS PAIRING

By John Huxley  
Sunday Mirror

**UNDER-RATED** Welsh winger Mike Elliott has been keeping a very careful eye on Phil Larder for many years.

Not only has the free-scoring Welshman Elliott played as Larder's wing partner for the past ten years, but he has been a personal friend for a good deal longer.

Softly spoken Mike said: "I met Phil quite some time before he turned professional. We met at a pub in Oldham and it was only natural that we should strike up a friendship as we were both rugby players."

Elliott, who was born in the same village as Salford's well-known former Rugby Union international David Watkins — Blaina — believes that Larder is among the top half-dozen centre three-quarters in British Rugby League.

"Look at it logically," said Mike. "Playing for Oldham has not been easy. We've not done well over the last few years and I still can't think of any centre in the League who has put one over on Phil."

Elliott had been playing as a professional for five seasons before Larder switched codes back from Rugby Union to his natural game of Rugby League. He commented: "Phil was very lucky. He didn't have the problems that affects most Rugby Union converts."

Being close friends off the field has helped Phil and Mike's performances for Oldham.

"When we get a particular problem we can discuss what has gone wrong and how to put it right over a pint," explained high-

scoring Mike. "And that's helped my game as well as Phil's."

Nobody is better qualified than Mike to judge the quality of Phil's performances. Together through thick and thin — mostly thin in recent years — he has had a chance to assess every quality and defect.

And, after a moment's careful thought, Elliott added: "It's been so very difficult

for Phil at Oldham. The team has been going through a very difficult spell and I'm sure that with a First Division team Phil would have established himself at international level."

That is praise indeed from a man who has seen from the closest quarters just what Phil Larder is made of.



Saints alive — after leaving St. Helens defenders David Hull and Geoff Pimblett stranded Phil Larder breaks past Welsh winger Roy Mathias. Although he caught the Oldham centre Larder still got his pass out for Mike Elliott to score a try.



L.T. O'BRIEN & SON

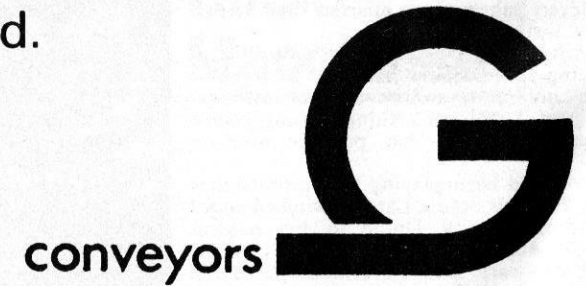
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All the very best wishes for the future, Phil

# RUGBY LEAGUE'S HONOURS GRADUATE

By David Burke

THE PERSUASIVE tongue of a rugby-mad dad talked Phil Larder into becoming involved in schoolboy Rugby League.

Five years later Phil is, arguably, the most successful schools coach in the business with two of the sons of that persevering parent helping Oldham to a sideboard full of trophies.

It all started at a junior schools seven-a-side tournament at Watersheddings when St. Edward's, coached by Charlie Saul, were making a bid for glory.

Phil, who was head of PE at the soccer-strong Saddleworth School where Rugby League was as foreign as American football, went along as an interested spectator.

Phil takes up the story: "I was watching the sevens as a bystander when Albert Willis got a grip of me. He said his two sons Chris and Paul were playing for St. Edward's and they were coming to Saddleworth next term.

"He said it was a disgrace that Rugby League wasn't played at the school and was I going to do something about it. Well that was the push I needed and Rugby League was soon on the curriculum."

Phil, who never played schools RL as a youngster, played soccer at Hulme GS although he turned out at Under-16 level for the Werneth RL club.

But he had always had a leaning to the coaching side and his 25,000 word thesis at Loughborough College was entitled,



Now listen — schools coach Phil Larder passes on some of his long experience to some of his Saddleworth School players.

"Differences in training methods between Rugby League and Rugby Union."

He studied Oldham, under the immortal Gus Risman, Salford (Griff Jenkins) and St. Helens (Joe Coan) and came to the conclusion that "Rugby League is more advanced than English Rugby Union but, very limited in comparison with many other professional sports."

Since then Phil has picked up more knowledge under professional coaches Gerry Helme, Geoff Fletcher, Griff Jenkins, Ken Wilson, Brian Churm, Graham Starkey, Alan Kellett, Jim Challinor, Dave Cox and Bob Welding.

"All have given Rugby League great service, but I have been greatly impressed by the fitness training of Starkey and the tactical knowledge of Kellett," said Phil.

"I reckon that Dave Cox would be an all-time great if he could land a job with a top club, and I have learned to respect the work of Ken Wilson.

"Coaching is all about winning and the only trophy Oldham have won since I joined the club, the second team's Lancashire Combination Shield, was achieved under Wilson's guidance."

Phil has attended coaching courses and was assessed Grade one after a trip to

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**PHIL LARDER**

from the

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EVENING  
CHRONICLE**

Lilleshall to study under national coaches Laurie Gant and Albert Fearnley.

Rugby League has slowly become established at Saddleworth School, one team at a time, although it has to be said that it is still dominated by the round ball game.

His success at Saddleworth School brought Phil's talents and enthusiasm to the notice of the Oldham Schools Rugby League. He took over as secretary two years ago and became responsible for the senior town team — and neither of them have looked back since.

The Oldham club have given Phil and his lads every encouragement, especially with their help with training and use of the Watersheddings ground.

"We were the only association last year to train under lights during the winter and it made a big difference."

Oldham gained promotion from the National League second division in Phil's first season as coach.

"We lost our third game at Dewsbury 21-11, beat them away in the cup 16-3 in December and thrashed them 30-0 in the end of season play-off. That illustrates how we progressed. We also reached the semi-final of the English Schools losing 8-7 to eventual winners Hull.

"We played Wigan who had lost only two games all season in the Lancashire League top four play-off at Central Park. Their team contained nine county players and we didn't have any. We were losing 9-0 and had two tries disallowed before winning 16-14 — what character!"

Oldham finished second to Hull in the 1978-79 league—after losing the vital fixture 24-8 on Humberside in the first match of the season with a depleted team. But Oldham gained revenge in the English Schools final winning 10-5 at Watersheddings.

Phil has already had a couple of offers to coach professionally and he has some strong views on what makes up a top coach.

"He must have a complete knowledge of RL and be able to establish a pattern of play to suit his team. He should have the ability to maintain a high standard of fitness of all his players and raise these as the important games arrive," said Phil.

He added: "He needs the ability to motivate his players and get the best out of them, again especially in big games.

"RL coaching awards are of a high standard for schoolteachers and amateur bodies. But I feel there is a need for an advanced coaching scheme similar to the Football Association's full badge.

"I would also recommend coaching weekends where top coaches trade ideas and are made more aware of advances in training and treatment of injuries

"Many professional coaches have usually qualified on the basis of having been a great player. But is this a suitable qualification to coach?"

Phil certainly believes they need the "extra" and said: "Rugby League is the greatest sport in the world and since the appointment of David Oxley and David Howes great steps have been made to sell the game at home and abroad.

"But, if the game is to advance further the top coaches must be introduced to the modern developments that have been made in sport during the last few years. RL players deserve the benefit of the most advanced methods."

Mr. Albert Willis has a lot to answer for!

#### WHAT THE RECORDS SAY . . .

Oldham Schools have never tasted as much sweet success as they have in the last two years under Phil Larder.

He took over at the start of 1977-78 when

Oldham had not won a trophy for 10 years. Here is a list of their achievements in the past 24 months with Phil's own comments.

#### 1977-78

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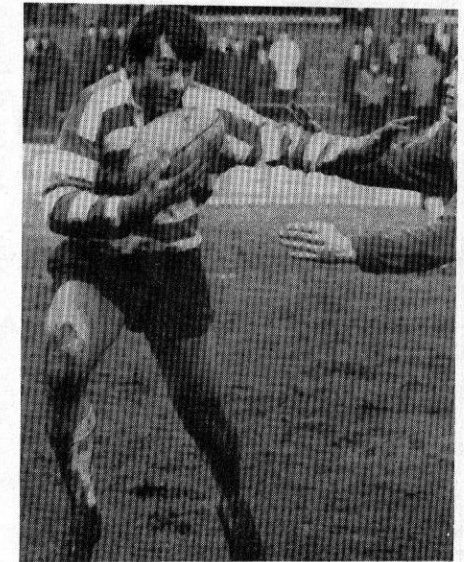
#### 1978-79

ENGLISH SCHOOLS DIVISION ONE — runners-up.

ENGLISH SCHOOLS CUP — winners.

LANCASHIRE CUP — winners.

DENNIS DAVIES TROPHY — winners.



HANDS OFF — Phil Larder pushes off an opponent.

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#### HONOURS:

ENGLAND —Chris Willis (captain), Des Foy, Steve Walsh.

NW COUNTIES v East of Pennines — Chris Willis (capt.), Paul Stott, Des Foy, Steve Walsh, Paul Willis.

NW COUNTIES area team v France — Chris Willis, Peter Rankin, Steve Dobb, Paul Stott, Damian Chadwick, Des Foy, Steve Walsh, Paul Willis, Mike Dixon, Craig Whitehead.

#### WHAT THE LADS SAY . . .

PHIL LARDER is number one — that's the view of the players who have come under his guidance in the past couple of years. Here a few pay tribute to their rugby coach.

CHRIS WILLIS — "As captain of English Schools and NW Counties I have been guided by many good coaches and teachers but I can honestly say that Phil Larder has been the best of them all.

"Since his arrival the team has been transformed into the best organised side in the country, something confirmed by the fact that sides are now reluctant to challenge us.

"He has taught the team to play to a pattern but one which still allows variation and chance for individual skill and flair to show from full-back to prop.

DAMIAN CHADWICK — "His dedication in helping the team has been second to none. As a result of Phil's efforts the team has been inspired and have thanked him in the best way possible by winning four trophies and more important putting Oldham Schools RL on the map."

STEVE WALSH — "Under the supervision of Phil Larder for the past two seasons I and my fellow players have attained a high standard of schoolboy rugby, due to his great knowledge and vast

experience of the schoolboy game.

"Without Phil the team would never have been able to reach the present status of English Schools champions.

#### WHAT MR. SCHOOLS RL SAYS . . .

FRED HOWARTH has been to Oldham Schools Rugby League what Lord Baden-Powell was to the Boy Scout movement.

His long connection with the schools game started way back in 1930. He is PRO for the English Schools RL and also a life-member of the NW Counties and English Schools. And now Fred pays tribute

to Phil Larder.

"Phil built up the Rugby League game at Saddleworth School from nothing — and that has been a great achievement.

"But his greatest impact has been with the town team. His arrival has been the biggest boost for Oldham schools rugby in recent years and the last two seasons have been the most successful we have ever had.

"Most of the credit is due to Phil. He has shown a lot of dedication and ability. The boys of Oldham have plenty to thank him for."



And this is what can be achieved with a little organisation. Oldham Schools Rugby League's roll of honour for 1977-78. Under-16 North West Counties Cup: winners. English Schools Division II: winners. Under-15, Dennis Davies Cup: winners. Under-13, North West Counties Cup: winners. English Schools Division II: winners.

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The workers — some of the Phil Larder Benefit Committee at work. Back row (left to right): Bessie ....., Fred Hall, John Watkins, Bob Crowther. Front row: Carol Johnson, Phil Larder, Jean Shore, Anne Potter.  
Missing from the photograph are: Ethel Crowther, Muriel Kirwan, Fred Howarth, Frank Diskin, Trevor Heywood, Mike Elliott, Alice Collinge, Bob Jay, Fay Bowden.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** — Phil Larder wishes to thank the following people for their help in preparing this benefit booklet: the Phil Larder Benefit Committee, John Huxley (Sunday Mirror), Roger Halstead (Oldham Evening Chronicle), David Burke (Manchester Freelance journalist), the Oldham Evening Chronicle for the loan of photographs and all advertisers for their contributions.

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