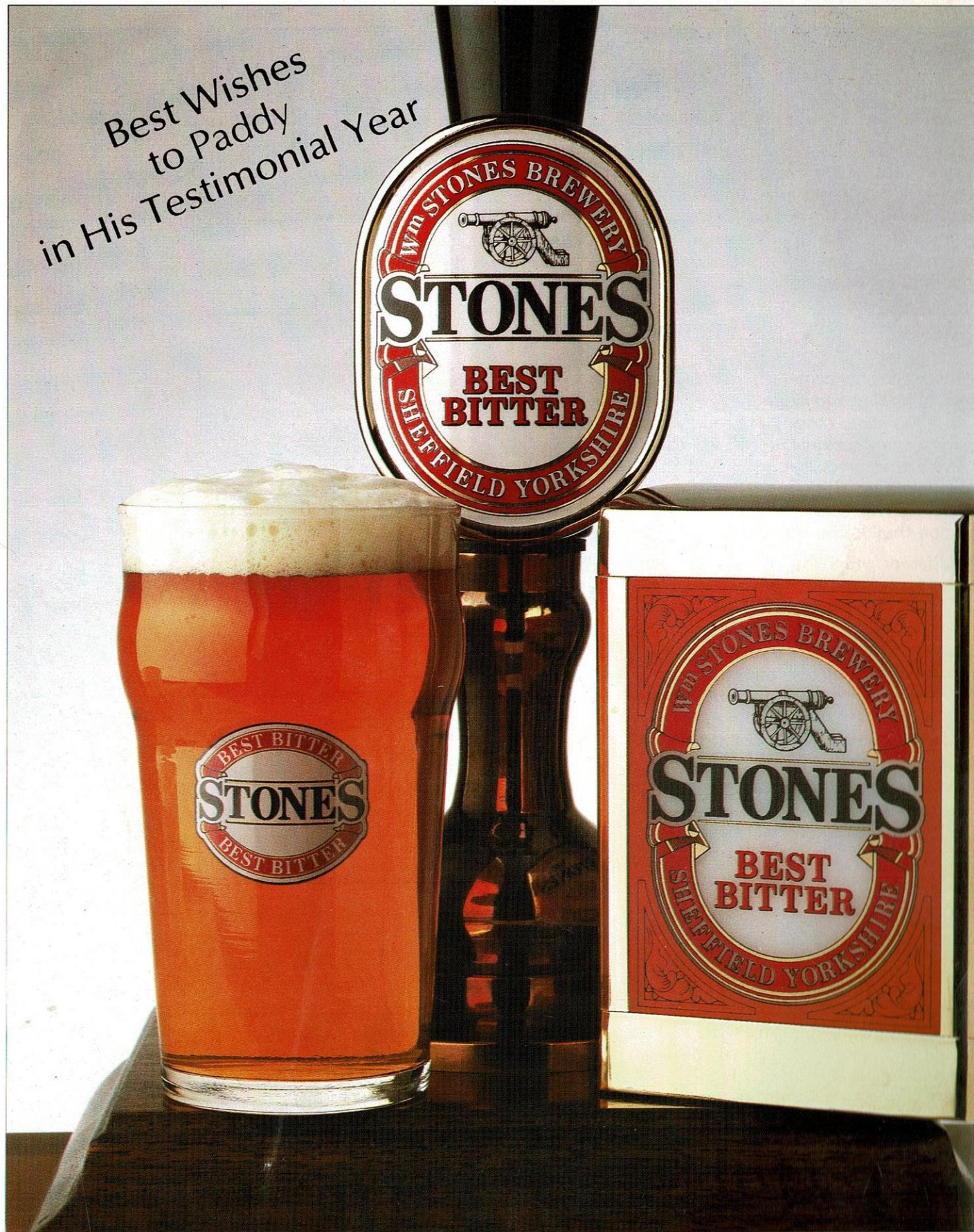


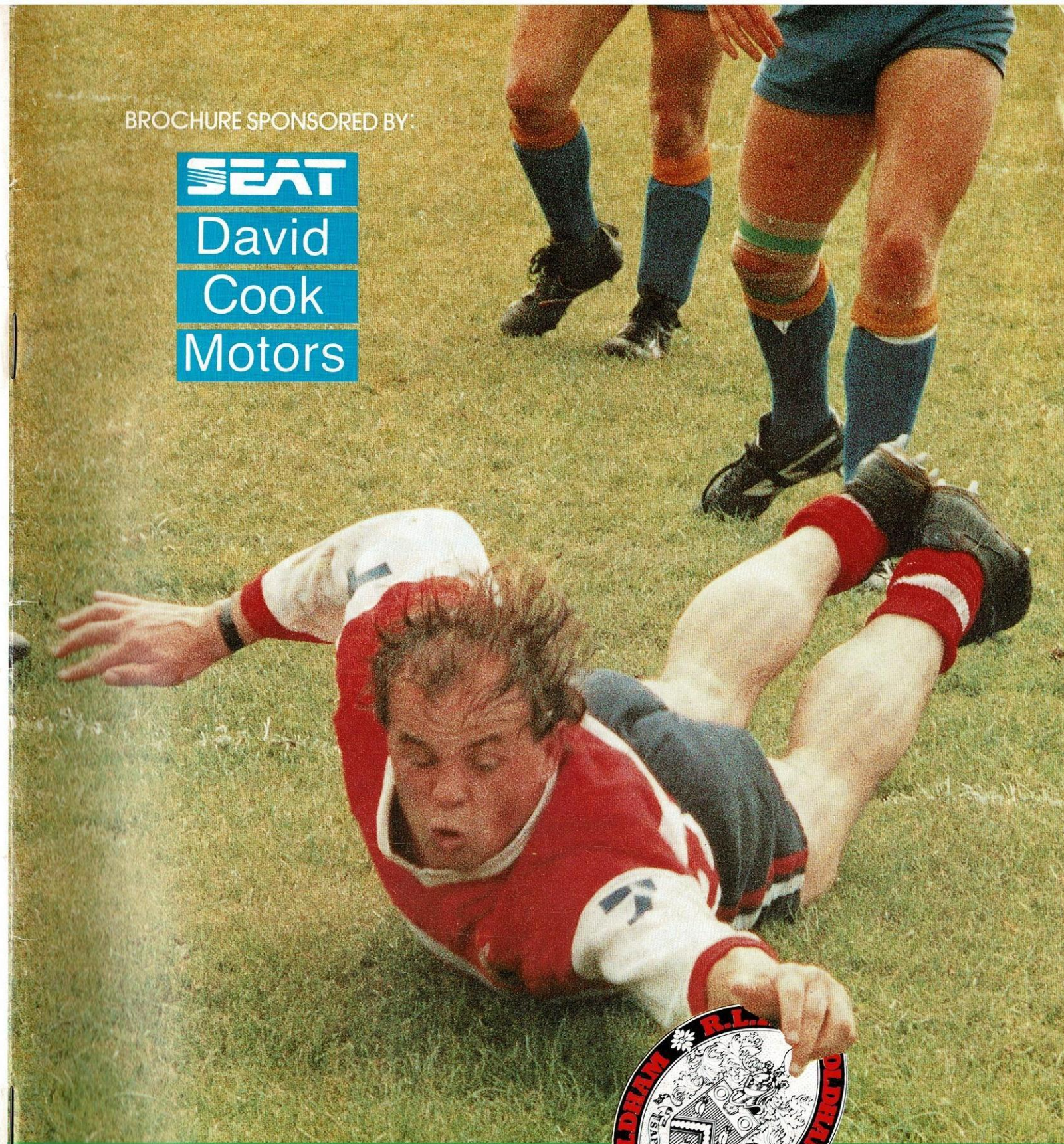
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**PADDY KIRWAN**

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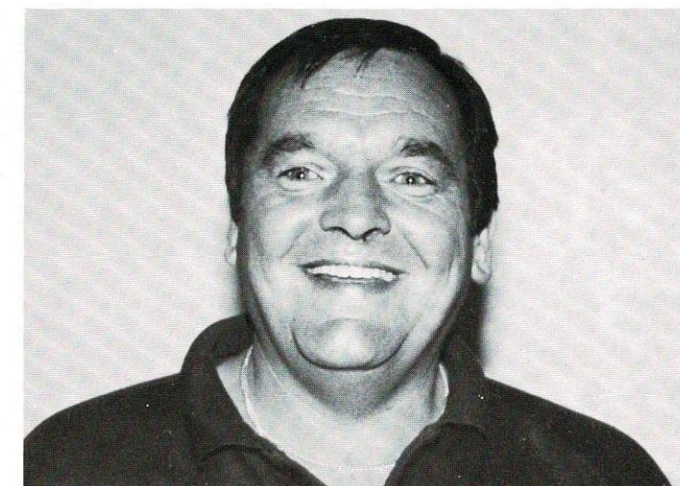
And many more who have offered to help throughout the year.

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I hope the 1990-91 season proves to be as memorable for Paddy as the last decade has been for me and I'm sure a lot more supporters — Not only with the Benefit Year but on the field as well. It will be great to see Paddy back in the fold after the bad luck he has suffered with injuries over the past two seasons.

As many of you know Paddy is well respected within the club and throughout the Town and League for his tough no nonsense game on the field and his gentlemanly attitude off the field. He is a lad who has always given his all for the Oldham club. A fact that is reflected by the positions he has played in: from his favourite scrum half through full back, stand off and even loose forward.

At the end of the last season he started his comeback and as usual had no qualms about helping out the 'A' team playing in the second row in one game. I'm sure the young lads in the Team had a lesson in commitment and loyalty from a true pro.

We hope, the committee that is, that the people of the town will rally round in his benefit season to help in anyway possible. Businesses, publicans, or supporters if you wish to help in anyway just pick up the phone and contact a member of the committee. Lets all have a go and make it a bumper season for a lovely lad.

Have a good one,

Joe Gallagher

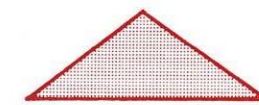
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*Paddy crosses for his 1st Try, Oldham v Carlisle, January 1986*



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## PADDY KIRWAN

# Pocket Battleship

The fact that there was such a mutual understanding and respect between the late Peter Smethurst and Paddy Kirwan, whose testimonial we proudly acknowledge in this brochure, was hardly surprising.

In their respective attitudes towards the game of Rugby League and their fellow professionals, notwithstanding their all action, never-say-die approach on the field of play, the similarities were uncanny.

Peter, whose sudden death in the summer of 1989 was a great loss to the game he loved, once told me that in any Oldham team he picked the first name to be pencilled in would be ...Paddy Kirwan at No. 7.

Kirwan was the Smethurst prototype of the Rugby League professional... dedicated, totally committed, courageous in the extreme, a player who would never surrender in any personal or team challenge and one who never knew the meaning of the word defeat until the final hooter sounded.

It would be less than honest of me to say that Paddy possessed ALL the qualities of a top scrum-half... and that would serve only to embarrass such a genuine man as he — because he sadly lacked a vital yard of pace and lightning acceleration to go all the way to the top.

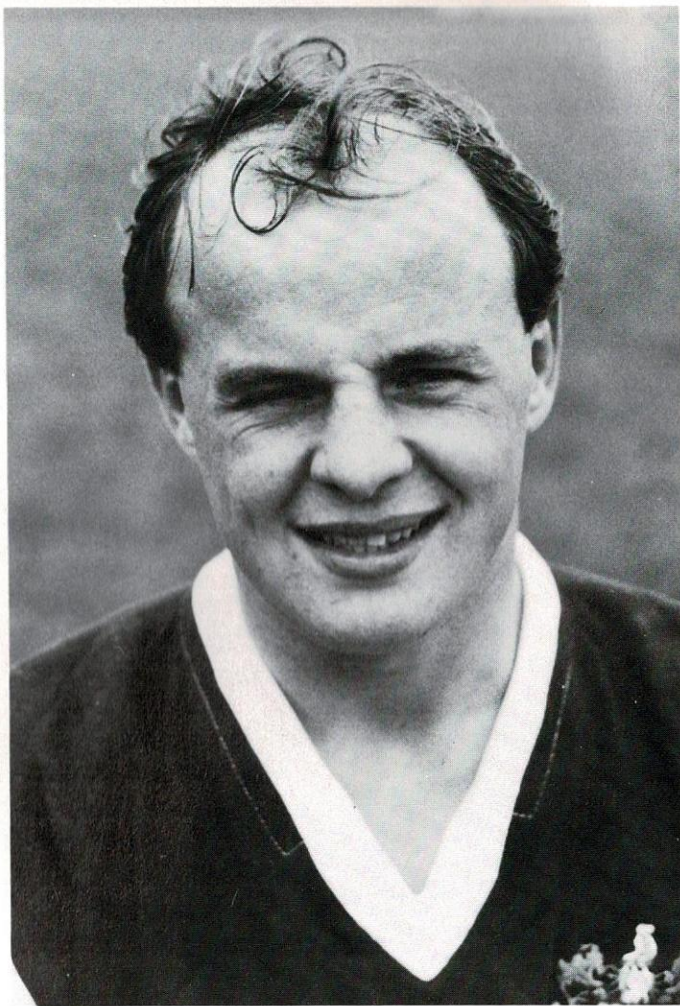
In every other aspect of play, Paddy matched the best... and was way ahead of many of them.

He had good football vision, a steady pair of hands, a deep understanding of half-back play around the scrum, the strength of mind and body to dominate opposing scrum-halves, the heart of a lion and the physique and sheer guts to take on the world and play as an extra forward when the occasion demanded such a tough approach.

For most of his career, he also formed a clever, creative partnership with his lifelong friend Terry Flanagan in a double act behind the scrum that was, at times, a joy to behold.

Paddy was also a splendid leader and captain: a player who led from the front, set a marvellous example to his team mates and was, like Smethurst, the perfect example of a players' player.

The pundits used to say, of Smethurst, that he was not big enough for a forward and not fast enough for a back. Little wonder, then, that Peter could sympathise with Paddy whenever his limitations in speed were discussed.



The Smethurst philosophy was simple. "Speed is fine," he would say, "but give me the boy any time with pride and passion under his jersey."

I can still almost feel and see the pride and passion of Kirwan when, at the height of his career, he emerged from the Watersheddings tunnel ready to tackle all-comers in the name of his home-town club, socks around his ankles, sleeves rolled up, urging all and sundry to produce a little bit extra.

For those among us who believe steadfastly, way back in 1979 and the early part of the eighties, that Ray Hatton had it right off the field and Graham Starkey knew where he was going as team boss, the days of the lottery boom and the launch of the youth policy were exciting times.

The senior side had its problems, but there was something special about the growth and development, through the colts and 'A' teams, of boys who were soon to become men in Rugby League terms.

The class of '79 became household names... Kirwan, Flanagan, Ashton, Goodway, Worrall, Platt to name but a few. They formed the backbone of the side that spent five great seasons in the First Division and as one who was present on most of those balmy summer evenings in 1979 when a steady stream of fresh-faced boys turned up with proud parents to sign on the dotted line it gave me immense pleasure to see their careers unfold so successfully.



'Someone up there likes me' — A Try for Kirwan, v York, November '85

Along the road there had been many personal milestones for Paddy, but surely none to match that marvellous night in 1987 when Oldham beat mighty Wigan 10-8 at Watersheddings in the first round of the Challenge Cup.

Few will need any reminding of the part Kirwan played in that inspiring display even before he hit the headlines, and earned himself a niche in Central Park folklore, by scoring the all-important try from acting half-back only minutes from the end.

Andy Gregory always brought out the best in Paddy. That night of a million memories was no exception. Kirwan was king, Wigan were vanquished and Graham Lowe perhaps realised for the first time what Wembley meant to the Rugby League people of the North of England.

From that day to this, Wigan have never lost a Challenge Cup tie... and they still talk, on those Central Park terraces, of the Paddy Kirwan try that stunned the Rugby League world.

Three-and-a-half years on, in the unlikely surroundings of Oldham Cricket Club, a man with a rich Wigan accent overheard my conversation about Oldham Rugby and asked: "Do you go to Watersheddings"?

"Now and again," said I... wondering what was coming next. "Then you must know of Paddy Kirwan," came the reply. "Give him our regards, will you? He sickened us that night and Wigan fans will never forget that defeat, or the performance by the Oldham scrum-half."

It was a tragedy that, later in 1987, Paddy broke his leg in a cup-tie against Fulham. Little did anyone realise, at that time, that it was to be the start of a long run of cruel luck that was to keep him out of the Watersheddings spotlight for the next three years.

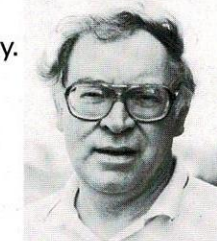
It was during those dark days that his greatest quality as a player... the will to win through... motivated him to finally overcome his injuries and return to action in a young 'A' team that was desperately in need of his strength and experience.

The wheel had turned full circle. It seemed like only yesterday that teenager Paddy, boyish and fresh-faced, was himself an apprentice in the 'A' team. Now here he was as the old hand... tougher, more resilient, more worldly-wise, but still with the same old enthusiasm for the game that was always the hallmark of his performance.

Elsewhere in this brochure, Paddy himself talks of how he would love the chance to return to first-team action in the First Division in season 1990-91. He must know that he faces an enormous task. But it wouldn't be Paddy Kirwan, the original pocket-battleship of Watersheddings, if he wasn't to make a fight of it.

It's been good to know you, Paddy.

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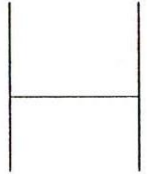
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## SCHOOLBOY DAYS

RUGBY LEAGUE started for Paddy when, as an eight-year old, he returned with his family from Australia to join St. Mary's R.C. junior school, a school with a long tradition for playing the game. In fact there will be many lads in the town who can remember playing on the old school roof. Says Paddy: "I got my first glimpse of the game on a wet Tuesday evening, watching St. Mary's play Parish Church on Oldham Edge and I immediately became hooked. St. Mary's did not have a grass pitch so we practised on an all-weather football pitch and played all our games away from home. In those early days the biggest thrill for me came with my first game at Watersheddings. The junior schools used to entertain the crowds at half-time, playing a seven-a-side knock-out competition, and I remember going blind at the scrum and scoring in the corner to a big cheer, which made up for the disappointment of losing 9-3 to Lyndhurst. Both the boys and the crowd enjoyed those seven-a-side games and, perhaps, the Oldham club should look at the possibilities of resurrecting them".

Paddy then moved on to St. Anselm's R.C. comprehensive school, where he teamed up with Terry Flanagan — a partnership that remained

unbroken for the following 18 years. Although only tiny at this stage, Paddy was made captain of the St. Anselm's side and pushed his way into Brian Whitworth's under-13's town team in time for the first, historic schoolboys' trip to France. This trip initiated by Bob Webb was a massive boost to schoolboy Rugby League in Oldham.

Recalls Paddy: "I remember being sent to St. Anselm's, instead of St. Alban's, by my mother and father to concentrate on my education and yet, within 12 months, they had become actively involved in fund-raising for the exchange visits to France. These exchange visits became regular features of the season for the town team and provided a good social education as well as encouraging the growth of Rugby League".

The improvement, at that time, in local Rugby League reached a pinnacle in 1976 when an under-16's team, including Paddy, Terry Flanagan, Martin Foy and Nicky Kiss, reached the English Schools final, the first Oldham side to do so. Although they lost at Knowsley Park against a St. Helen's side including Steven Peters, Paddy will never forget the experience. He says: "We were made to feel very special that day, being presented to Lord Pilkington before the National Anthem was played, playing the game, and then being presented with medals in the Knowsley restaurant after the game. That was my first taste of professionalism... and I loved it".

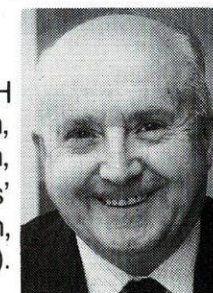


Picture of Oldham Schoolboys Teams before trip to France



In pursuit of Neil Holding, v St. Helens '84

FRED HOWARTH  
(Past Secretary and Chairman,  
Oldham Schools' RL Chairman,  
Lancashire Schools'  
RL Founder Chairman,  
English Schools' RL).



One of the great pleasures in life comes from seeing a young protege come to the forefront in any walk of life, and to see players like Paddy come through Schools Rugby and Amateur Rugby to emerge as a top-class professional for his home town Rugby League Club gives also great satisfaction. As with comedians, players growing up together come in pairs, and in Kirwan and Flanagan we had a scrum-half and loose forward who complimented each other to bring the club to the forefront with entertaining and constructive football.

Paddy is a dour and tenacious scrum-half possessing flair and distributive qualities, and gave many magnificent performances during his ten years service with the Club. Ideally he is at his best when taking on the opposition, creating openings and shipping the ball to his support in the tightest situations. He has also played loose-forward, centre and stand-off and full back when called upon to do so in times of difficulty for the Club and has performed well in these capacities and never let the Club or his colleagues in the field in any doubt as to his abilities.

He has always been a gentleman on and off the field, as well as a greatly respected player opponent on the field. Unfortunately he has suffered recently from rather serious ankle injuries which have curtailed his rugby activities and the last twelve months. However he has now recovered and hopefully he will resume playing and will, I know fight strenuously to regain his place in the first team. A great Oldham Club man, and I hope he is rewarded in this his benefit year with the support from the spectators and the Club he so richly deserves.

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## AS AN AMATEUR

Hungry for rugby, Paddy and the majority of the town team joined Saddleworth Rangers under coach Frank Walsh at under-16's level and then Brian Gartland at under-18's level. During this period the Saddleworth boys played in the Pennine League, winning every trophy in sight, and to the annoyance of the Lancashire clubs in the hot-bed of Wigan, St. Helens etc., twice entered and won the Lancashire Cup competition. This attracted great interest at the Greenfield ground with crowds of more than 1,000 often matching the attendances at the senior club, Oldham. Along with the crowds came the scouts and it was not long before players began to sign for senior clubs — Martin Foy and Nicky Kiss to Wigan, Dave Wharton to Rochdale. Like Terry Flanagan, Paddy resisted the early temptation to sign professional forms to allow him to concentrate on his 'A' Level studies.

It was not all a bed of roses, though, and Paddy still remembers with disappointment the first of many tussles with Andy Gregory in a Lancashire under-18's trial match. Says Paddy: "I remember partnering Ray Ashton in the trial game and, as well as completely outplaying Andy, scoring a 25-yard individual try. Still, I was picked only as reserve-to-travel, with Andy chosen to play".

Oldham selector Stuart McDonough stormed out of the selection committee, stating that the trial match was a farce and unfair because Gregory had been picked on his Lancashire League displays whilst Paddy had been performing well in the Pennine League watched by Yorkshire selectors.

Those formative years are well remembered by Coach Brian Gartland, who says: "When I was appointed to Oldham to form a colts side, the committee was told immediately that the priority signing, above all others, was Paddy Kirwan. I first set eyes on Paddy when he was playing for Saddleworth Rangers under-16's in a final at Huddersfield. I could not believe the work rate of this young scrum-half. He must have tackled every opponent on the park. Big or small, they couldn't escape his clutches.

"Paddy was to step up to the under-18's the following year and I knew I had a winner. I had the pleasure then of coaching him for two years and we won everything to be won, with the exception of the National Cup, in which we were beaten in the final at Blackpool just before he signed for Oldham.

One of the proudest moments for me was to see Paddy playing for the Great Britain colts side in their emphatic wins against France. I think Paddy Kirwan should have had a lot more honours in his outstanding career, but I'm biased and very proud of it.

Paddy has given his all for Oldham so come on all you fans and support his benefit in every way you can. He has been a great servant to the Oldham club and even now, after some terrible injuries, he is still doing an invaluable job in the 'A' team".

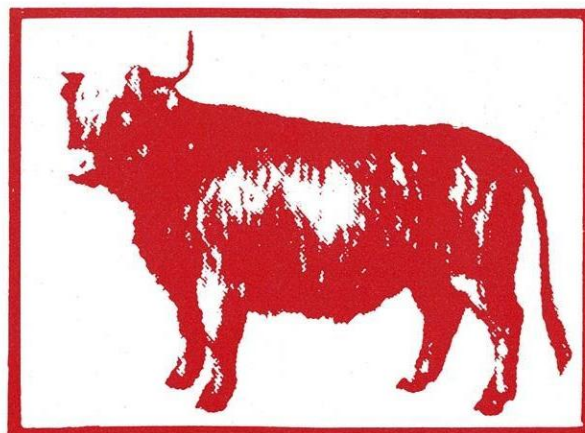


Saddleworth Rangers All conquering Under 18's Side Paddy 3rd left, front

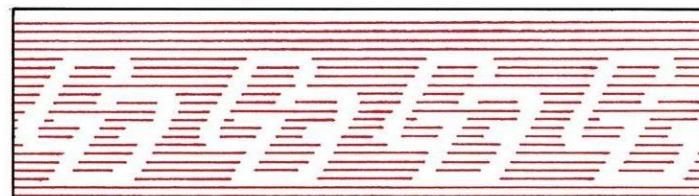
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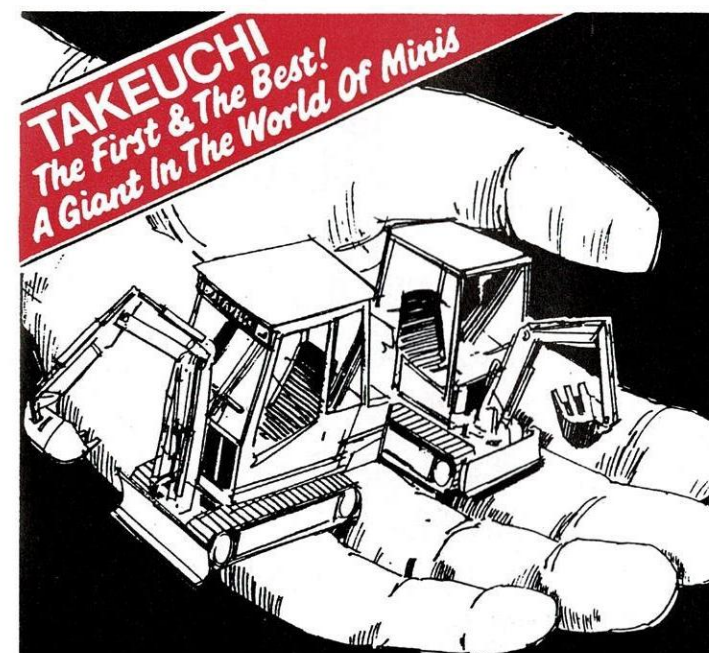
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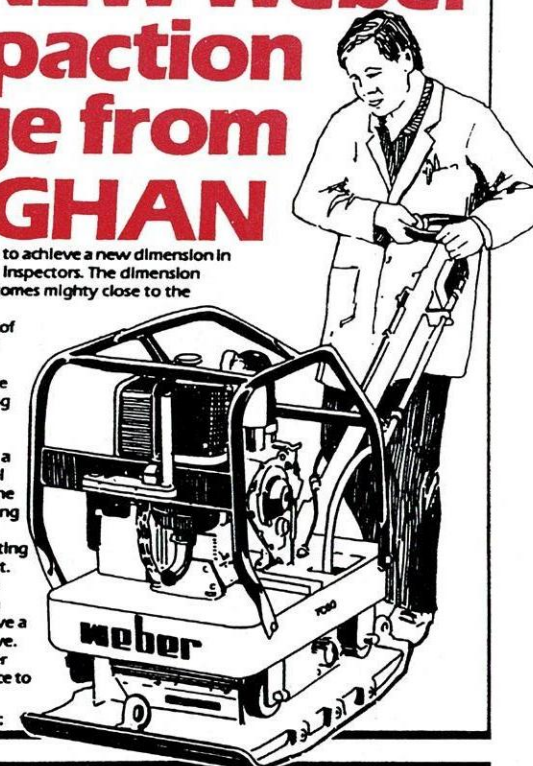
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Paddy scoring in Colts Premiership Final 1980

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## THE DAWNING OF A NEW ERA

Whilst the youth teams at Saddleworth Rangers had been enjoying success on the field the committee of the senior club at Oldham had life-saving success off the field with the launch of the instant lottery. As the money poured in, the decision was made to invest in top-quality youngsters. By the time Paddy had finished his 'A' Levels in June, 1979 Oldham had already signed Ray Ashton, Mike Cowley, Les Cook and Andy Goodway, and appointed Brian Gartland as youth coach. Impressed with the new set-up, Paddy signed for his home-town club despite the attention of several other North-West clubs.

Over the next 12 months, success seemed to breed success at Watersheddings with Paddy captaining the colts team to league and premierships victories and the 'A' team to a Lancashire Shield victory. The season also brought Paddy revenge at representative level, ousting Andy Gregory to play scrum-half for Lancashire colts and being chosen as substitute for the Great Britain colts side.

Paddy played twice against France, making a try for Terry Flanagan in Perpignan and scoring in the home game at Watersheddings.

Although often on the fringe of the 1st team squad he was kept out for most of the season by the

signing of the experienced Ken Gwilliam from St. Helen's. Eventually, though, he made his first-team debut at Rochdale on Easter Monday. Says Paddy: "I remember that game well. I scored a solo try from acting half-back and as I went over the line Alan Hodgkinson hit me harder than I had ever been hit before to welcome me to first-team rugby".

The success of the colts and 'A' team was mirrored by the first team to present a remarkable turnaround in the fortunes of the club. Promotion to the First Division, under the guidance of coaches Graham Starkey and Bill Francis, justified the policy of putting finances in order and then building a team on firm foundations.

Says Francis: "It gives me great pleasure to be asked to contribute to Paddy's benefit brochure. Paddy had just signed for Oldham when I arrived from St. Helens and was playing in one of the strongest colts teams I have ever seen, with youngsters like Andy Goodway, Terry Flanagan, Ray Ashton and Mike Worrall to name but a few. As captain of a side like that, Paddy had all the attributes to take him to the top of his profession, — a superb attitude, good vision, excellent tackling and a good pair of hands. I would like to wish Paddy a fully-deserved and successful benefit season".



**BILL FRANCIS**

*Former Wigan, St. Helens, Oldham and Great Britain*



G. Britain Colts Team Picture of full Squad



As we neared the end of the 1978/79 season it had already been decided that part of a new policy would be the signing of a new crop of young players of quality. Eventually this policy came to fruition and I first came to know Paddy Kirwan and the other young players who were signed in that era. I soon got to know them quite well for although they were signed primarily as Colts' players they progressed pretty quickly through to first team football.

It was an exciting time for me as coach to be working with these players who had such developed skills yet fresh and enthusiastic outlooks on the game. In some ways their rapid progress was their undoing as they were thrown into the furnace of first division rugby so soon.

Yet this also displayed one of the most respected qualities of Paddy Kirwan; one for which I'm sure his fellow professionals hold him in such high esteem. His style of scrum half play demands being in the thick of it amongst the forwards; he will put his head in the lion's mouth; he will 'take people on'. He was in amongst it, a boy amongst men; yet I never saw him knowingly lay a ball off to anyone in a bad position.

Mister perpetual motion during a game, wherever the ball goes you can bet that he will be trailing along close behind it and just when it looks like a movement has been stopped for lack of support up pops Paddy to keep it going.

From a coach's point of view he is a dream to have in your club. So many players, once they reach the first team, feel it is beneath their dignity to play in the 'A' team. Not so Paddy. If he was fringing the first team or coming back from an injury he would ask to play with the 'A' team. An excellent training record always ready to listen and work hard. But never, never, a 'yes' man. Quiet and somewhat unassuming maybe; but as well as having a deep love for the game he also is one of the game's thinkers and will analyse anything you put forward.

One of the wonderful moments of my times at Oldham was knocking Wigan out of the Challenge Cup in 1987. It was pure David slaying Goliath. How fitting that the dramatic match winning try should have been scored by Paddy. Still going to the end, never accepting defeat, ferreting about around the play the ball and not the slightest bit overawed by the mighty Wigan. It was the right player scoring in the right setting; it was fairytale stuff; it was the try we've all scored at touch pass on the street as a kid. That try in that game typified everything about Paddy Kirwan.

For all players and coaches there are the pleasures and the accolades when winning, the misery and abuse when losing. When the winning and losing has faded away there is a much more rewarding part — the people you have met and the friendships you have made.

It is a pleasure to be asked by Paddy to write this foreword as it gives me an opportunity to express publicly my respect for Paddy both as a player and a person. I wish him well in this his benefit year and feel sure the Oldham public will respond to a lad whose response for Oldham was never less than 100%.

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# LIFE IN THE 1st DIVISION 1980-81

Life in the First Division proved a massive step for the Oldham club. Coaches Graham Starkey and Bill Francis turned to experience, signing men like Brian Lockwood, Clive Sullivan and Geoff Clarkson in a bid to consolidate in the First Division and allow the youngsters to complete their apprenticeship in the 'A' team.

The first team found it tough, and by Christmas many of the experienced players had left the club. Meanwhile, Paddy had been having problems of his own, with damaged ankle ligaments restricting his push for a first-team spot.

In fact, Paddy had to wait until February of that season before he made his First Division debut. It was at Thrum Hall, Halifax that he helped Oldham to earn only their second away win of the season. The game was won 13-10 with Paddy making a major contribution to all 3 tries scored by Oldham. He stayed in the team until the end of the season. Paddy recalls: "The season ended disappointingly with relegation but we had made the whole of the Rugby League take note with the quality of play during the last 3 months of the season. Often games were lost in the final 15 minutes, but this was due to lack of experience, not lack of fitness. Under the training of Graham Starkey we were probably the fittest side in the Rugby League at that time". Although relegated there was no despondency and there was a feeling that good times were just around the corner".



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*1980 Colts Team winning Premiership Cup at Swinton*



*1980 A Team winning Lancashire Shield*

## 1981-82 The arrival of the Myler/Smethurst Partnership

The summer of 1981 saw big changes in Paddy's rugby and personal life. During the summer, Paddy married Debbie, his girlfriend for the previous 4 years and ex-Oldham Rugby League beauty Queen. At the club, Frank Myler and Peter Smethurst were snatched from Swinton to take over at the helm, while Brian Gartland remained in charge of the youth policy. Under Frank Myler, the season started well, the defence was tightened up and by November, Oldham had reached a major semi-final for the first time in 17 years, losing at Headingley to Hull in the John Player Trophy. During this period, Paddy was picked to play for Lancashire against Cumbria and captained the Oldham side for the first time.

The signing of Brian Hogan saw a change of fortune for Paddy. A loss of form in mid season, together with Brian Hogan's style of play suiting Ray Ashton, meant that Paddy spent much of the time after Christmas on the bench. He came back strongly though to play a part in the away win at Carlisle which clinched the Second Division Trophy. The first trophy won by the Oldham club since the 1963-64 season.



Leigh (V) Oldham (5-15)

Paddy making a tackle on Andy Goodway with lifelong friend Terry Flanagan coming from behind to help Goodway and put Paddy off

## 1982-83 — Back in the top flight

With Frank Myler's knowledge and Peter Smethurst's enthusiasm, the Oldham side prepared again for the big step into the First Division. This time they were ready; they had the experience of men like Brian Hogan, Alan McCurrie and Alan Taylor, to add to the promise of Union converts Alexander and Mordell, and the youth of Flanagan, Ashton, Platt, Worrall and Goodway. This time Paddy was determined to push his way back into the side. He played for the first team against France in midweek and was named as substitute at Halifax the following Sunday. After 10 minutes he came on for Ray Ashton, who had concussion. Grabbing his chance with both hands Paddy had a superb game and thought he had done enough to win his place back when in the final seconds, disaster struck. Paddy takes up the story:

"With the game already won I made a half break towards the Halifax line and passed in the tackle for Colin Hawkyard to score. As I passed the ball the biggest man in Rugby League Ian Van Bellen, dropped on my left leg, twisting my knee severely. The torn ligaments kept me out of action until January, 1983.

By this time Peter Smethurst had left to join Leigh as first-team coach. Says Paddy: "As soon as Peter moved, he was chasing me to go with him even though he knew I wasn't fit". Eventually Paddy agreed to go on a months loan in exchange for Terry Bilsbury, who came to Oldham. Things started well for Paddy at Leigh, playing a blinder at Hull on his debut, and after a month Leigh wanted to sign him, but Oldham were unsure about Bilsbury and asked for the period to be extended.

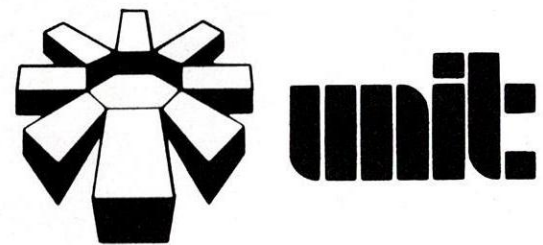
Paddy was still struggling with his knee injury and unable to train properly. He was also concentrating on his finals at University, and in April the move was called off and Paddy returned home to Oldham. Although disappointed, Paddy recalls it was a great experience to play with probably the fastest back line-up in the game — players such as John Woods, Des Drummond, Steve Dorlan, John Henderson and Phil Fox.

The year ended successfully however with Paddy graduating from UMIST with a second-class honours degree in Civil Engineering and a new job with Oldham Council.



KIRWAN CRACKER

Little scrum-half Paddy Kirwan shows all the determination of a front-row forward in this picture sequence — captured by Graham Collin — leading up to Oldham's vital third try. As Kirwan goes into the gap (top), four Workington players converge on him but Paddy beats two of them and is topped only a yard short. From this position John Paterson (bottom) forces his way over.



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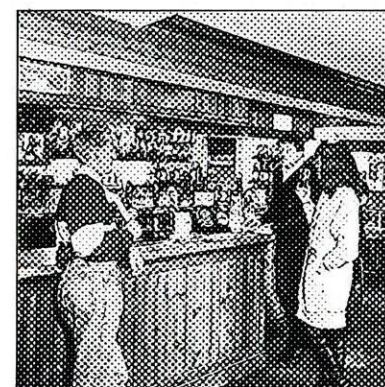
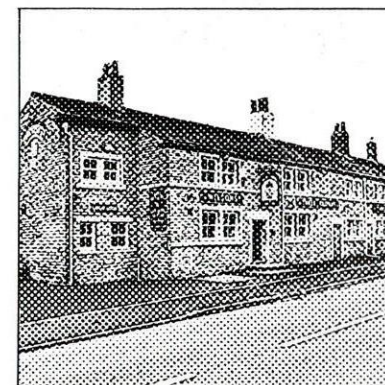
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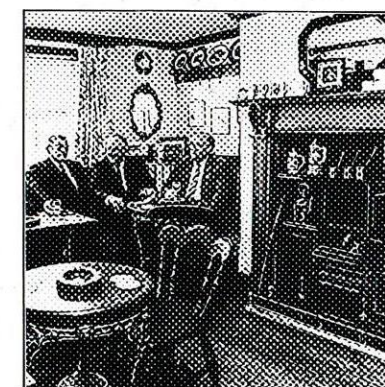
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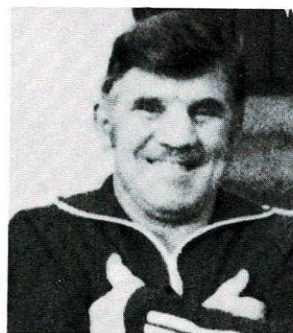
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PADDY KIRWAN BENEFIT 25

## 1983-84 Coaches, Disasters and Imports

As Paddy returned to Oldham for the second season in the First Division, Frank Myler was appointed Great Britain coach and so relinquished his duties at Oldham. This saw a return to Oldham of Peter Smethurst, with Frank Barrow as his assistant. A run of only four defeats in the first 14 games restricted Paddy to the 'A' team and the occasional sport on the subs bench. The tide turned, though, at the end of November when defeat on the first visit to Fulham led to a string of defeats up to the New Year. The poor run saw Paddy finally get his chance in a home game against Leigh on January 8, 1984.

The game threw Paddy and the rest of the team straight back into the limelight, but for all the wrong reasons. In the 59th minute the referee, John Mean, abandoned the game for persistent brawling by the players. The referee turned away from the fighting, walked off the pitch and then refused to come out of his dressing room. A policeman who tried to intervene ended up on his backside, to the amusement of the crowd. The fighting soon fizzled out and the bemused players followed the referee back to the dressing room. Recalls Paddy: "I remember being involved on the fringe of the scrum as the fighting broke out, but the hardest I was hit was by a Leigh woman demanding her money back as I made my way to the Pavilion at the back of the main stand".



The saddest occasion of Paddy's decade in professional Rugby was the passing away of Peter Smethurst last year. Unfortunately Peter is the only one of Paddy's first team coaches not able to contribute to this brochure. He is not

forgotten, though and this is Paddy's tribute to him. "Peter's love for the game of Rugby League and respect for the players, was greater than anyone else I've ever met. Always enthusiastic at training and before a game, he was an ideal partner to Frank Myler. Frank's natural instinct for the game provided the right leadership while Peter's attitude to training, his will to win, and vociferous encouragement was loved by all the players. He was a genuine friend to me and all the players, always willing to help in any way he could. Peter was fair, honest and a true gentleman and it was a privilege to have known him. God bless you, Peter" — PADDY KIRWAN

As is normal, the players all had a friendly drink together after the game but the Leigh officials were fuming. Their team had been leading 26-14 at the time of the brawl. This was made even worse when Oldham won the replay in March. Unfortunately, this incident, together with the defeats before Christmas, brought about the resignation of coach Peter Smethurst, which in turn led to another disaster.

Frank Barrow took over from Peter in February for an ill-fated game at Whitehaven which Paddy still regrets having played in. A 42-8 defeat against a side that had not won a game in the First Division made the whole of the Rugby League look towards Oldham, and led to Frank resigning after only one game in charge. Knowing that Frank Myler was coming back after the Australian tour, Oldham again appointed from within with Brian Gartland taking over at the helm. Under Brian, Paddy played a prominent role in a team that won seven of its last 11 matches of the season to gain mid-table respectability.

The entry of Australian and New Zealand players into the British game saw a shift at Watersheddings from the youth policy to signing of overseas players. The signing of Nick Wright on a short-term contract could hardly be described as a success and set the scene for the years to come although an unknown Alan Sinclair, gave great service. Says Paddy: "With hindsight, the club was always in a poor financial state. Players coming in for only part of the season often upset the team, did not bring instant success and did not contribute to the long-term future. I think the situation is much better now with overseas players staying for the full season and a good youth policy ensuring the future of the club.



Frank Barrow worked hand in hand with Peter at Watersheddings while Frank Myler was on Great Britain duty and Frank (Barrow) has this to say of Paddy: After 11 years at Oldham, I think Paddy Kirwan deserves a bumper testimonial. I

found his attitude and professionalism towards Rugby League was 100%. He is a lad who never realises how good a player he has been for Oldham, while playing with overseas players costing a fortune to bring to Oldham and being paid top wages. He has seen so many but he has never let it get to him. As a local Oldham lad there was nobody with a better fighting spirit for the Oldham club. To me, a local lad with Paddy's attitude and rugby skills is always better for the team than any of the imports in the British game.

Paddy, all the best for your testimonial year". — FRANK BARROW

## WHITEHAVEN TRIP (Memories of an Oldham disaster)

It was to prove a memorable weekend in many ways. A group of us had gone up to the Lake District on the Saturday afternoon to stay in Bowness on the Saturday night and then travel on to the game on Sunday.

We should have known what was in store when one member of our party spent the night sleeping in the car owing to a most unfortunate disagreement with the bar manager of our hotel over opening hours.

On the Sunday it didn't get much better as the picturesque and quickest route to Whitehaven over the Wrynose Pass was impassable due to the snow-line.

After a thankless mooch around Whitehaven at 1.00pm on a Sunday in February, trying to find food, we discovered the local Wimpey bar. Incidentally, Bill McCracken's wife was working there, lamenting to us that Bill was still trying to play. It was then on to Anchor Vaults, opposite the imaginatively-named Chicken Shop, which contained several downcast locals who freely predicted an Oldham walk-over. Even at this point we felt able to offer them solace. We were not wrong!

What happened in the game is no doubt well documented elsewhere and could not be forgotten by any of those present, be they the demoralised Oldhamers or the delighted, delirious Cumbrians.

Suffice it to say that Frankie Barrow lasted as Oldham's coach for about as long as Egypt did against Israel in 1967:

At least, he did the decent thing, leaving Brian Gartland to supervise the rescue act of the season... and I saw Nick Wright play well,

**D. CHALONER**  
Secretary, Benefit Committee

ANSWERS TO PICTURE QUIZ  
1. Bob Weilding; 2. Mick Coombes; 3. Brian Gregory; 4. Green Vigo; 5. Les Cook; 6. Chris Pheasant; 7. Frank Pitchford; 8. Ashley McEwan; 9. Denis Ayres; 10. Mick Siddal; 11. Pasquale D'Adamo; 12. Johnny Blair.

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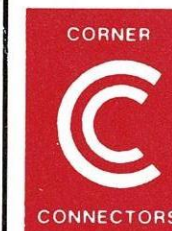
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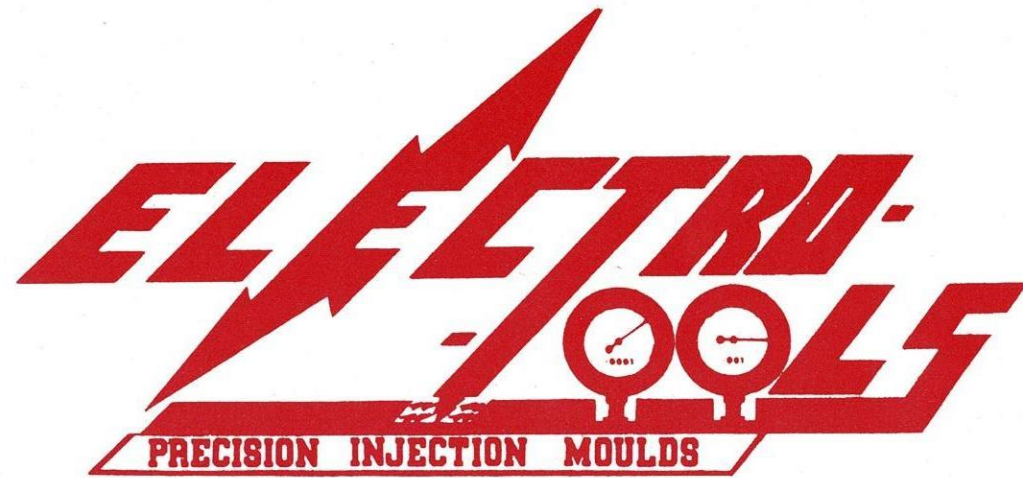
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Paddy breaking clear at Central Park v Wigan, 1986

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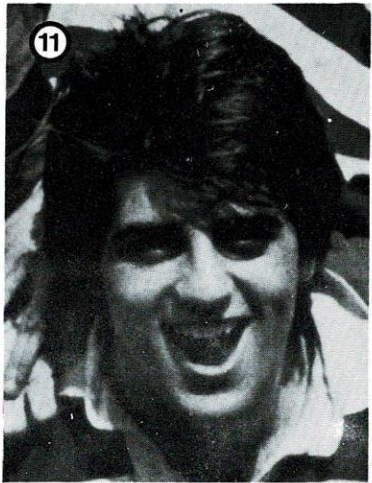
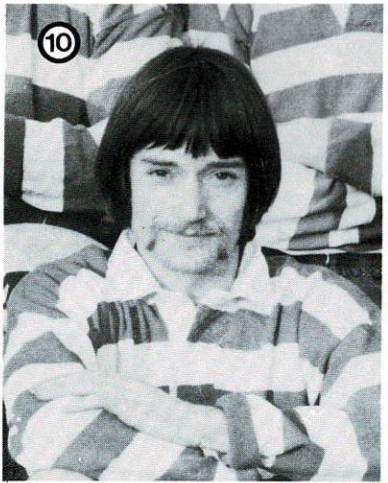
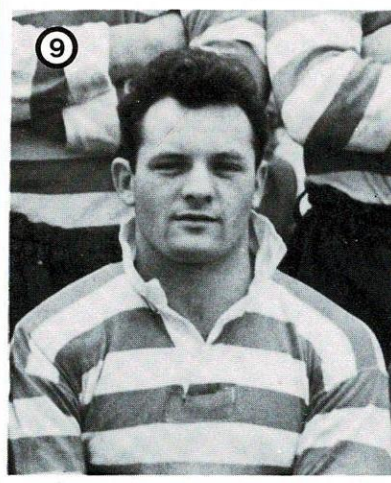
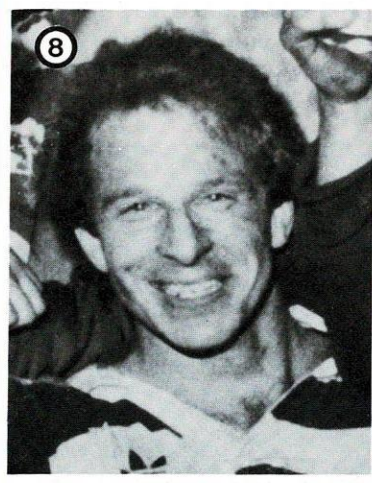
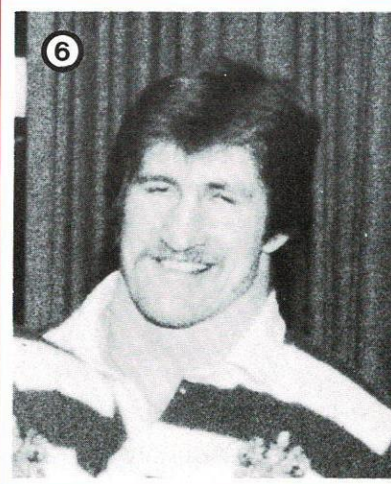
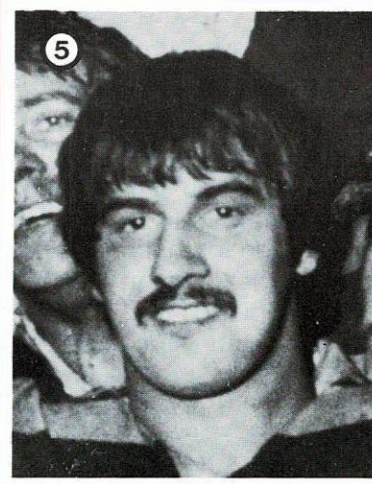
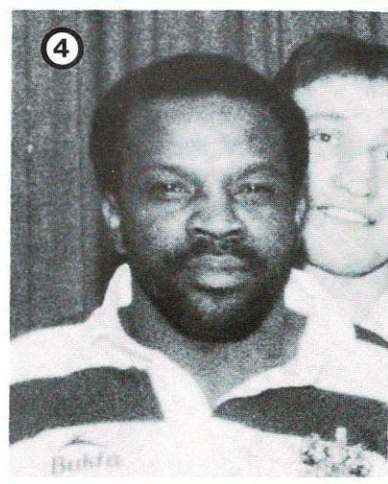
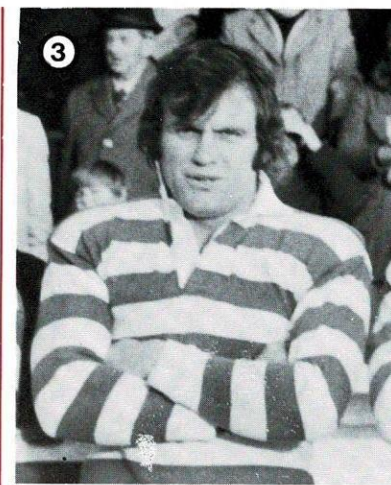
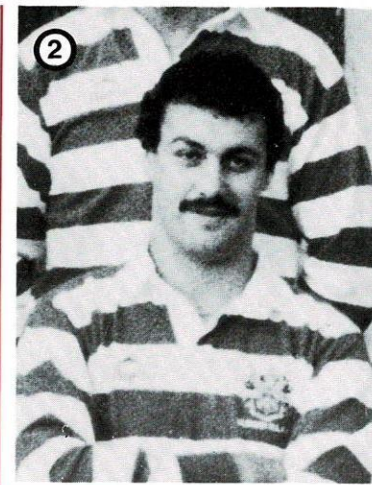
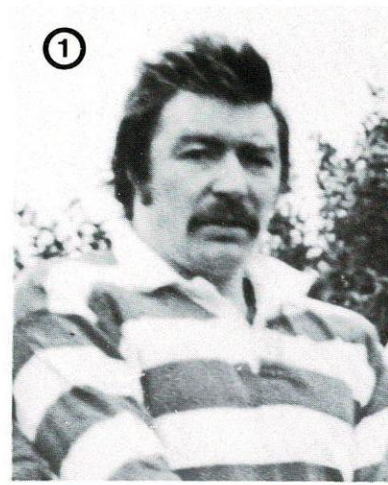
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# PADDY'S PICTURE QUIZ

TEST YOUR MEMORY AND NAME THESE PLAYERS FROM OLDHAM'S PAST - ANSWERS ON PAGE 27



## 1984-85 The return of Frank and the Tourists

While the five tourists, Ashton, Flanagan, Foy, Goodway and Worrall spent the summer in the southern hemisphere, Brian Gartland was busy preparing the lads at home for the forthcoming campaign. The season started well with Paddy a permanent fixture in the number 7 shirt, as the team won 9 out of the first 12 games to lead the First Division for most of the time up to Christmas. By this time, though, the injury problems to key players and internal disputes leading to the listing of Flanagan, Goodway and Ashton began to tell. The depth of the squad at the time was not strong enough to maintain the challenge and following a big freeze in January the team struggled during February. The poor spell coincided with the loss of Paddy's services after he broke his wrist at Widnes on Boxing Day.

Paddy bounced back in March as the team's form picked up again. Although the season had promised so much, the team had failed in the cup competitions and having seen the team head the division for much of the winter, supporters ended the season dissatisfied. The team did, however, finish in fifth position in the league — their highest position since the great days of the fifties and one that has not been bettered since.

Paddy himself crowned a superb season by sweeping the board as the people's choice as Oldham's top player-of-the-season. He walked away with the Supporters Club player-of-the-year Trophy, the Wildbores Trophy and the Junior Reds player-of-the-year Trophy.



Frank Myler always recognised Paddy's talents and he says: "Having been asked to pay this tribute to Paddy for his services to Oldham R.L.F.C. over the past 11 years, I am only pleased to oblige. Paddy must have been one of

the hardest players to play against. His rugged style and hard tackling must have been a nightmare for the opposing scrum-halves.

One of his assets is his ability to upset the best of scrum-halves. Andy Gregory's name springs to mind. On at least six occasions, I watched Paddy play against Andy and I can't remember once when Andy finished on top. This is a tribute indeed considering Andy Gregory is one of the best if not the best scrum-half playing our game today. Defence was not the only gift Paddy possessed. He also had a good football brain which could open up the best of defences. His understanding with Terry Flanagan produced some great tries at set scrums, an art sadly missing from the present game. If Paddy could have acquired an extra yard of pace I'm sure he would have played for Great Britain on many occasions.

Wishing Paddy the best of luck in his testimonial year, which he truly deserves, for his contribution to Rugby League. A top class player and gentleman, Your's in Sport" — FRANK MYLER



Oldham v Halifax at Boundary Park · 16th February 1986



Paddy with 1984-85 Player of the Year Trophy

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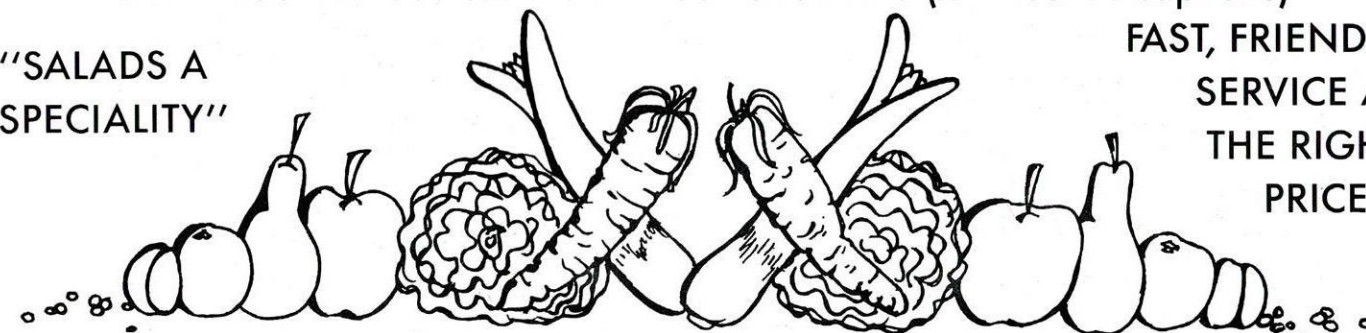
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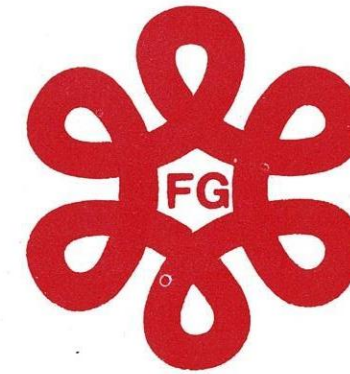
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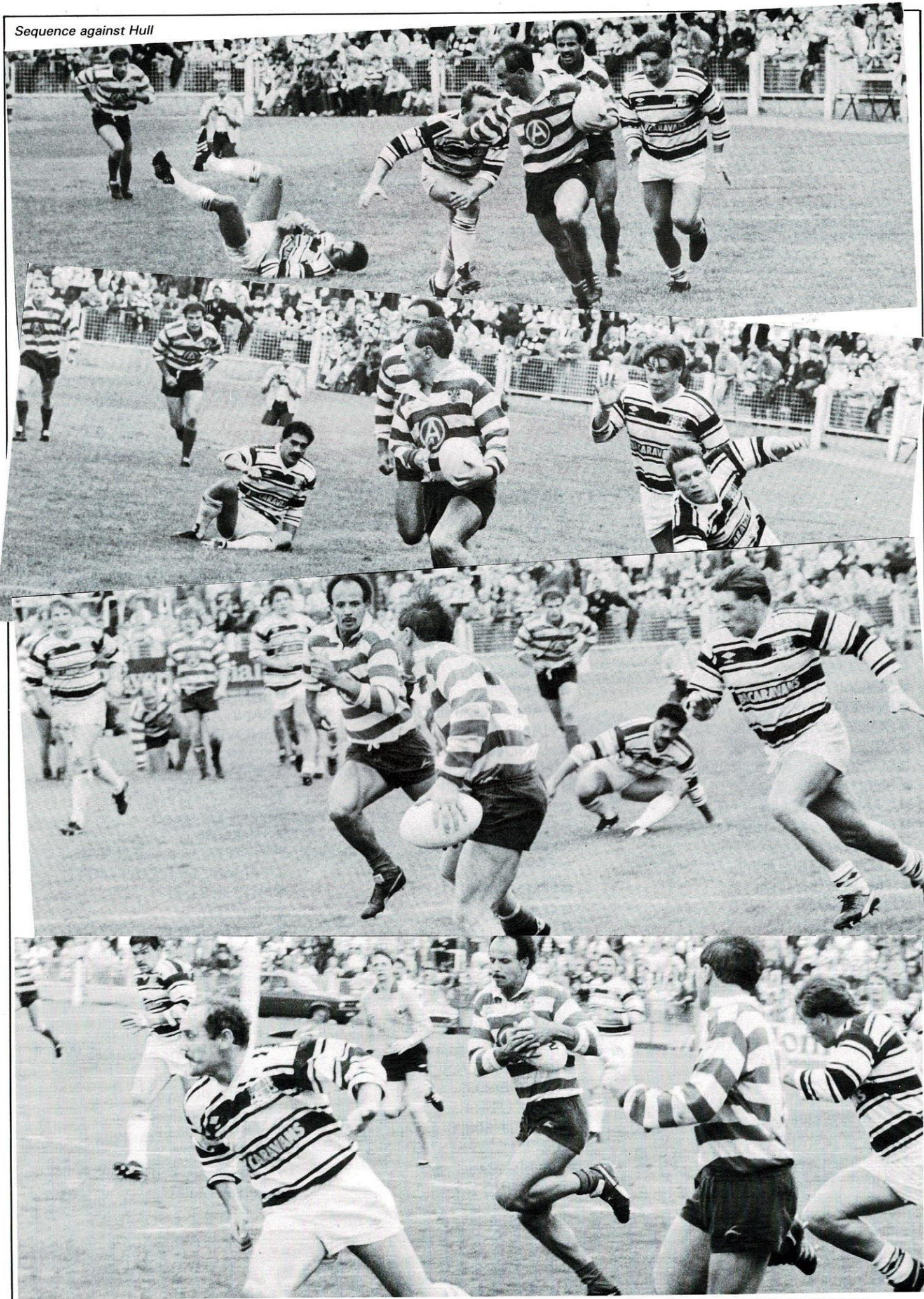
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Sequence against Hull



Paddy breaks blind from a scrum in his own 25 before sending winger Mick Taylor on a 60 yard run to score between the posts

## 1985-86

The start of the fourth consecutive season in the First Division saw an influx of overseas players with Mal Graham, Gary Warnecke, the Liddiard brothers and Hussein M'Barki joining the club. The team was further strengthened by the arrival of David Topliss from Hull. This left Paddy vying for position once again with Ray Ashton who had returned to form and full fitness. Paddy started off in the team but was relegated to substitute after several defeats. The arrival of the Aussie's revived the teams fortunes and the team was back among the pace setters by Christmas. Paddy was willing to play anywhere to get involved and pushed his way back into the side by first playing full back and then at loose-forward on New Year's day at Headingley, before winning back the No. 7 spot from Ray Ashton.

The big freeze came again but this time the games were switched to Boundary Park to avoid a backlog and maintain momentum. After breaking back into the side Paddy broke a bone in his hand in the opening minutes of a match against Halifax. Says Paddy: "The ground just about took a stud, there was a bitter cold wind and I'm sure the weather and hard ground contributed to the injury. The knock-on effect was bitter disappointment at missing Oldham's best Challenge Cup run and the semi-final heartbreak of the game against Castleford at Central Park".

As soon as the bone had healed Paddy was back in the team, scoring the winning try at Swinton on Good Friday and playing a blinder at Wigan on Easter Monday. Recalls Paddy: "I remember taking a pass from Gary Wernecke and going between the posts with Andy Goodway giving chase. He could not believe it when I scored because he'd always murdered me when sprint training at Oldham". That defeat was to prove costly for Wigan with them being pipped by one point for the League championship. There followed a hectic run of 7 games in 20 days which left Paddy and the rest of the team absolutely shattered, and the team again — finishing in a mid-table position.



Paddy scoring under the posts at Central Park



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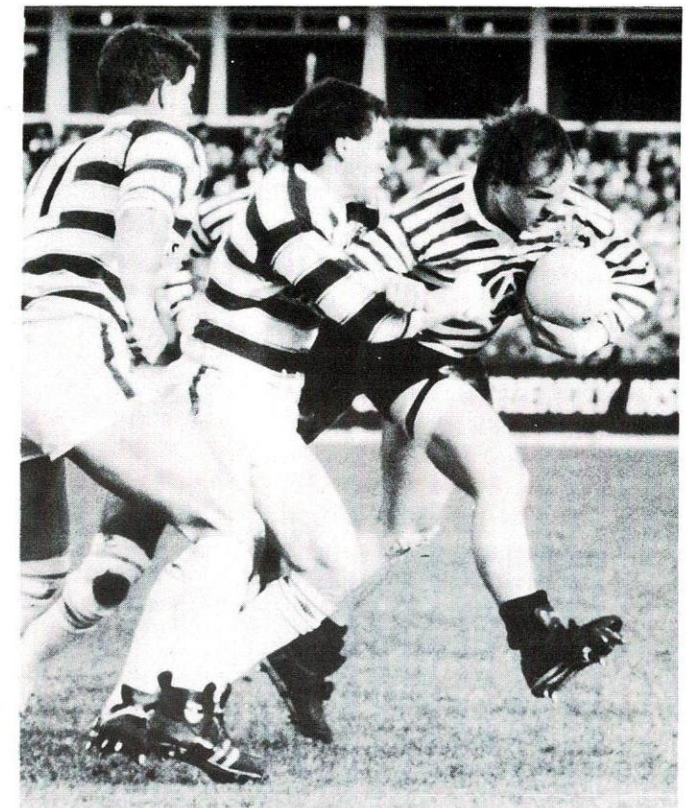
## 1986-87 Cup Excitement and Relegation

The 1986-87 season was a topsy-turvy season with some outstanding performances and even more awful displays. For Paddy, the season started with an approach by Len Casey, the Hull coach, to join them on loan with a view to a permanent move. Although not on the list and with Ray Ashton showing up well in pre-season training, Frank Myler said this: "Paddy is a 100-per-cent player. To let him go would be a big gamble, but it could be a big break for him. I am only prepared to consider the gamble because the lad is so genuine and has always given his all for Oldham". Weekend talks with Hull were vetoed by the Oldham committee and Paddy stayed where he always felt he belonged.

Again fighting with Ray Ashton to partner David Topliss at half-back, Paddy played a prominent part in the club reaching its first final since the fifties, putting David Hobbs over for the winner in the Lancashire Cup semi-final against Widnes. The game against Wigan at Knowsley Road was Paddy's only appearance in a major final and for a long period in the first half it looked like being successful. The Oldham team led 6-0 thanks to a Gary Bridge try following work by Paddy and Bruiser Clarke. A controversial try by Michael Ford just before half-time led the Wigan revival and the Wigan stars hit top form in the second-half to lift the Trophy.



Picture of Winning Try v Wigan



Picture of Lancs Cup Final being tackled by Michael Ford

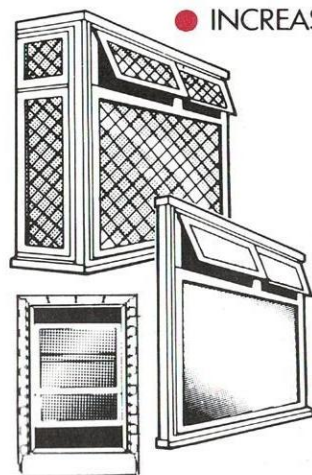
The Lancashire Cup Final was one of three highlights in the season. Others were the game against the Australian touring side, which Paddy missed through injury, and the game he will probably be most remembered for — the Challenge Cup defeat of Wigan. After a tremendous tussle once again with Andy Gregory, the game was 8-4 in Wigan's favour when, in the dying minutes, Paddy won a scrum in the Wigan 25, knocking the ball from Henderson Gill's grasp. Oldham won the scrum and Gary Bridge was held short of the line. Enter Paddy: "I went to dummy-half, heard David Hobbs shouting for a run-around, spotted a gap and dived in by the posts. The atmosphere of a full house at Watersheddings on a Wednesday night is always special, but at that moment the whole place erupted. Mick Burke kicked the goal to win the game 10-8 and celebration lasted well into the night. The defeat cost Wigan the "grand slam" that season and they have been undefeated in the Challenge Cup since, winning it 3 times.

The early sending off of Ian Sanderson in the second round of the Cup killed off the Challenge Cup hopes. Off the field, the committee announced that it was going at the end of the season, followed by news that Frank Myler was also giving up his reign at the helm. Morale dropped alarmingly, the Australians at the club decided it was party time and were allowed to treat it like a holiday camp. This caused resentment among the English lads, not money as was suggested at the end of the season. The unrest led to six defeats at the end of the season and relegation. Even then Oldham went down in the now defunct fourth spot with 9 points more than the team below them and only two points off a top-eight spot!

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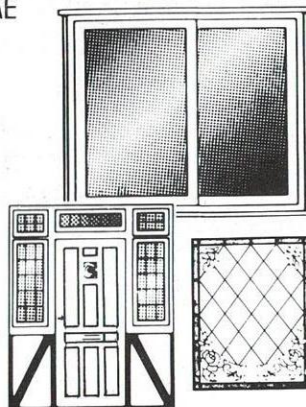


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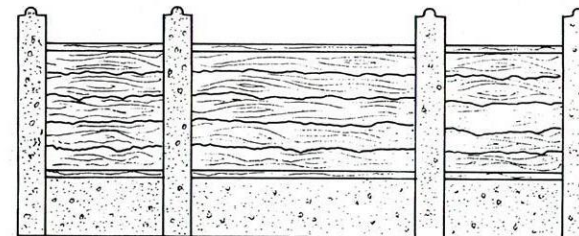
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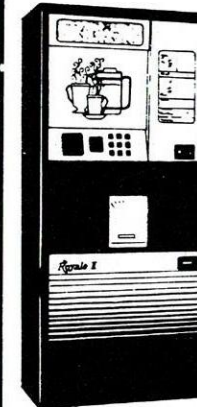
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### Mick Morgan

It gives me pleasure to be asked to contribute to Paddy's benefit brochure.

When I came to Oldham in the twilight of my career I was to play with two top class scrum halves, Ray Ashton and Paddy Kirwan. While taking nothing away from Ashton who to be fair was probably the better footballer but if I was selecting one to play for my life it would definitely be Paddy Kirwan.

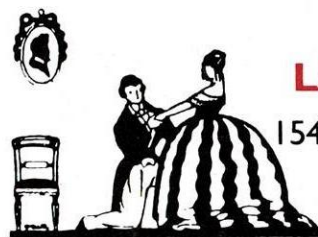
When Paddy was on the field it was like having a seventh forward on the Park. Forever doing the lions share of the tackling but also willing to take the ball up himself giving his forwards a much needed rest. Always played well above his weight and one thing you could never say about Paddy Kirwan was that he lacked bottle. Because of his size and the way he played the game, probably contributed to more injury problems than he would have liked. That was Paddy, played the game hard but fair.

It has been a pleasure having you as a colleague but move importantly a mate. Here's hoping for a bumper benefit, nobody deserves it more.

**MICK MORGAN**

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When I first arrived at Oldham, Paddy Kirwan was maybe not one of the better known players in the Rugby world, but one of the first things to emerge was the non-stop determination of this little character.

Paddy's attitude and willingness to compete was often an inspiration to those playing with him, as showed in the achievements of the Club during my stay.

May I just say I would like to see the Oldham people make this a good benefit year for Paddy and his family, a true Clubman who richly deserves it.

**DAVE HOBBS**

When Martin Foy, Mick Nanyn and myself were offered terms to turn professional at Wigan, we gladly did so. Paddy had another year left at school doing 'A' levels and stayed at Saddleworth Rangers as an amateur. I thought it would be a formality that he would join us at Wigan in twelve months time, especially after the great reviews he had collected for the previous two seasons. But no, he signed for Oldham instead and it was congratulations all round except from me. This was just selfishness on my part, I wanted him at Wigan to carry on hammering and taking the Michael out of the opposition as we had done previously at school and at Rangers.

The years went on and Paddy has continued to do just that with his non stop tackling and constant probing creating havoc amongst the opposition, Wigan included. He has always shown exemplary leadership and enthusiasm unlike some of the vastly inflated newspaper reputations of some past players you may have seen alongside him, and sometimes even in his own position.

If ever a player deserved recognition with a testimonial then it is Paddy due to his courage, determination and loyalty to the team and town over the last decade. I wish you, your wife Debbie, and the family the good fortune you deserve.

God Bless  
**NICKY KISS**  
Wigan and Great Britain





## 1987-88 Back in the 2nd Division

After the disappointment of the previous season it was all change at Watersheddings. The new board of directors appointed schoolteacher Eric Fitzsimons and Iain McCorquodale, products of the new National Coaching Scheme. Training methods changed, fitness was improved during the close season, and everyone looked forward to a quick return to the First Division. The team soon showed it was too good to have been relegated, winning the opening four league games and scoring an average 30 points a game. For Paddy the season was going well and by November he had played in eight wins as Oldham headed the Second Division. It was in the John Player 1st Round game against Fulham that disaster struck. "I remember taking the ball at second man off Terry Flanagan and going for a gap in the Fulham defence. I was tackled from both sides in the type of tackle I have been involved in hundred of times. My leg became tangled with the Fulham players and a loud crack was heard. I did not feel any pain at first and it was not until I tried to stand up and play the ball that I realised it was me and not a Fulham player who had broken a bone. As I stood on my left leg a searing pain shot through my body and to the surprise of the crowd I collapsed back on the ground". It proved to be a broken left fibula, the sort of injury which had previously kept coach Eric Fitzsimons out of the game for over nine months. With this in mind, and following up previous interest, Eric quickly swooped to sign Michael Ford for the No. 7 spot.

Undeterred, Paddy healed quickly and was back playing in the 'A' team at the end of February, 1988. By the end of March, Paddy was back in the first team squad only for ill-luck to strike again with Paddy breaking a small bone in his foot in an 'A' team game at Wakefield. Rushing the injury to try to make the squad for the Premiership play-offs was a risk that did not pay-off. The bone did not heal properly and was to give Paddy trouble for the next two seasons.



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Picture of Eric playing for Hunslet tackling Paddy



Eric Fitzsimons came to appreciate Paddy's contribution to the club and team and was pleased to make this tribute: "Paddy has had more coaches than Barlows in his 11 years at Oldham — in fact, it would be an interesting

exercise to read his viewpoint of his experiences of coaches. Despite only a brief period of time, as his coach, I feel highly qualified to make some very truthful comments about the man in question. I have had the distinction of playing with him, against him, refereeing him and knowing him as a youngster of outstanding potential. If you know his parents, Peter and Muriel, you'll probably understand when I say it was inevitable that one or two attitudes would rub off to add to his inherent skills and abilities.

Loyalty unquestioned, honest, hardworking and with a genuine love of the game that he plays with a commitment that belies his size. Underestimated by many opponents, Wigan will particularly loathe the day they ignored his strength and determination when scoring the winner in that memorable cup tie win in 1987.

He will put back into the game (coaching my guess, when he finally calls it a day) all the qualities he displayed as a player during his excellent career. The last of 3 long-serving players, Paddy has drawn the short straw by going last for his testimonial year. I wish him success. He is a winner in many eyes."

ERIC FITZSIMONS

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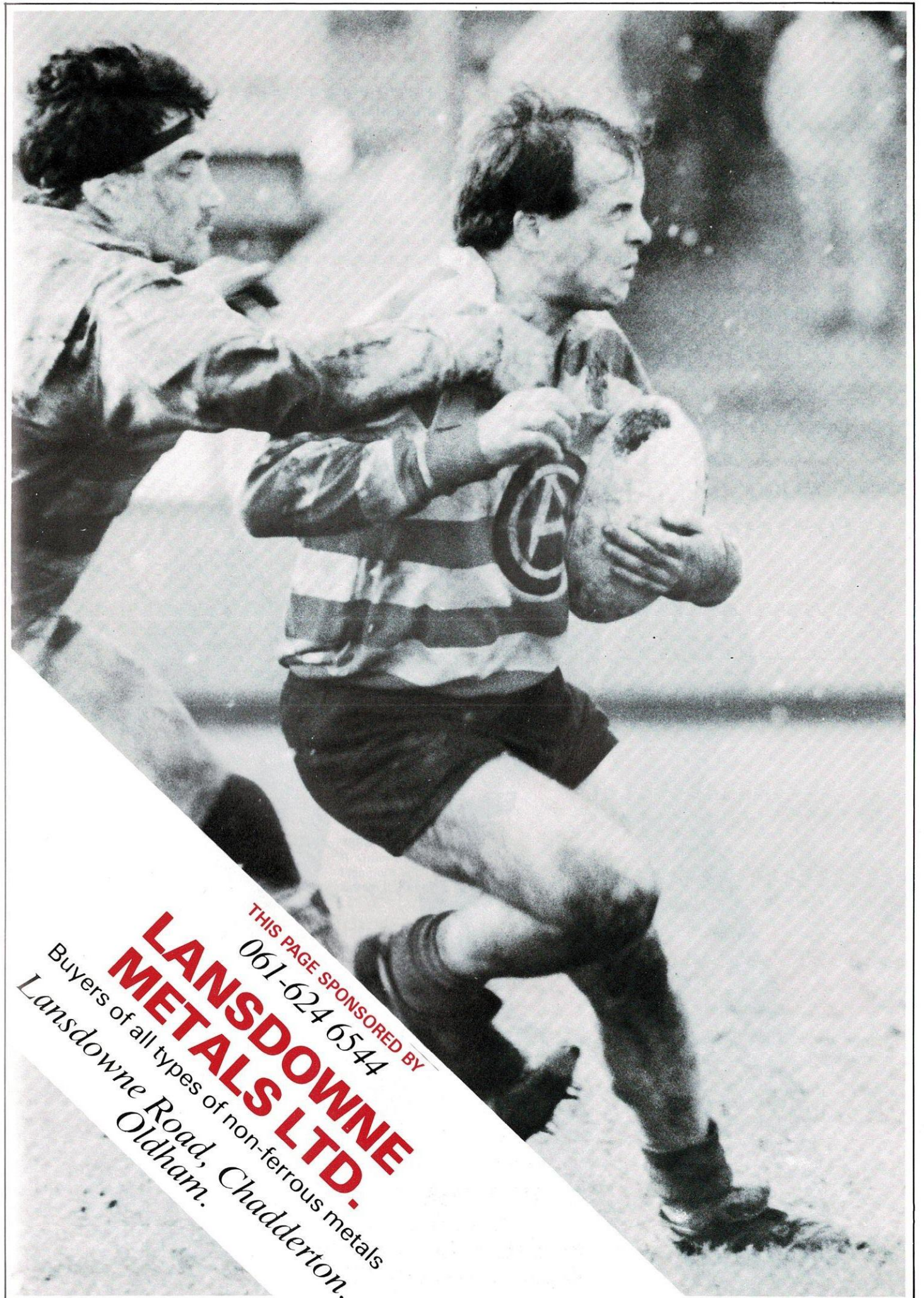


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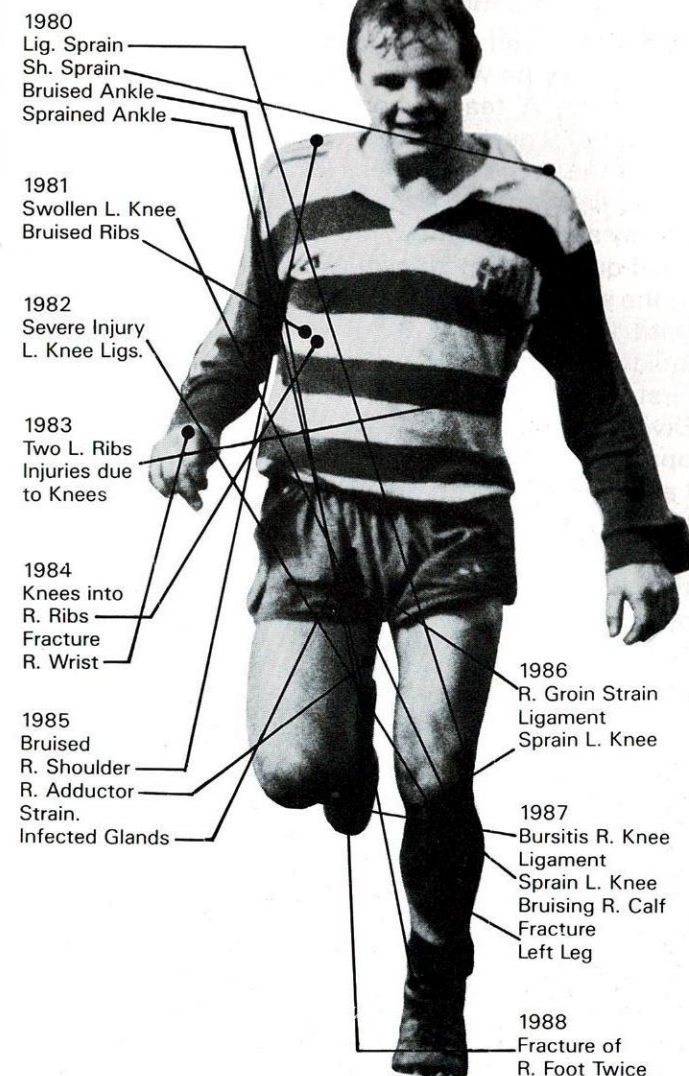
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It is a privilege to have been associated with Michael (Paddy) Kirwan for the past 12 years. In all that time I have never known him not to put in a hundred-per-cent effort towards his Rugby League career.

From his early days as a colts team captain, when he led them to the Colts Premiership, through to last year when his involvement in the game was curtailed because of injury, Paddy always worked hard to be at his very fittest to cope with the testing nature of the game of Rugby League. How testing it can be is illustrated by the number of injuries Paddy has sustained in his playing days.

The illustration below indicates the areas of his body injured, which shows the amount of commitment and involvement Paddy has during games.



It gives me much pleasure to contribute this small tribute to Paddy during his Benefit year. I sincerely hope the year goes well and that every fan who has derived great pleasure from Paddy's playing ability will help make it a bonanza.

ALAN E. BONELLE,  
Grad.Dip.Phys.,MCSP.,MCPA.,SRP.  
Club Physiotherapist

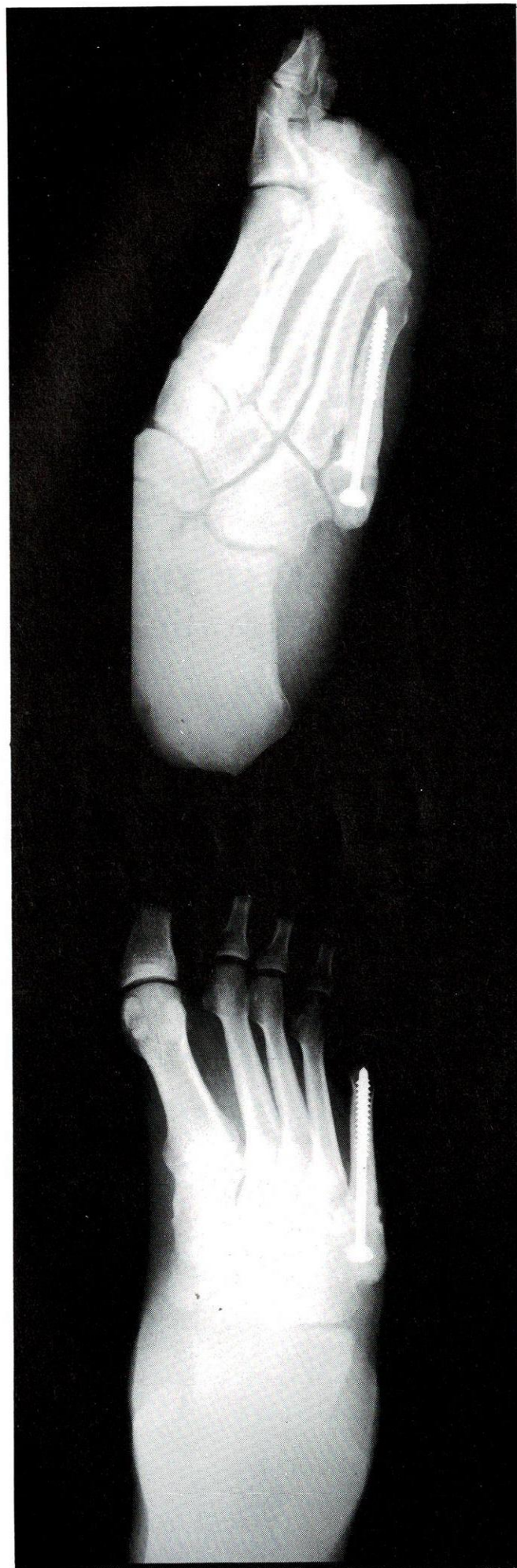
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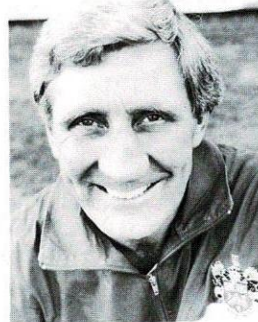
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## 1988-90

When the club suffered the disappointment of relegation, followed by last season's thrilling drama's, Paddy has fought his own battles off the field. The bone in the left foot refused to heal properly, breaking down on at least four occasions and limiting Paddy to just five 'A' team appearances up to October 1989. It was then after seeing three specialists, that a decision was taken to operate. The bone was broken again, cleaned up and a stainless steel screw inserted to hold the bone together. The specialist had been reluctant to operate because the bone was small and the obvious cure was a bone graft which would have affected another part of his body and had only a 50% chance of success. Eventually Mr. Mace from Rochdale agreed to try to pin the bone, although he had never done the operation on a metatarsal bone before!

To Paddy's relief, the operation was successful and by February he was back spoiling the average age of a young 'A' team whom he helped to win 8 out of the last 9 games. Says Paddy: "After 18 months out of the game my fitness left a lot to be desired. In the first few games it was the joy of being able to play again that pulled me through 80 minutes of good-quality Alliance League rugby. Towards the end of the season I felt the timing and stamina returning. With the benefit of a full summer training I am looking forward to the coming season. Life in the First Division is a big step-up from the Second Division and a big squad will be needed. If the opportunity of first-team rugby presents itself then I aim to grab it with both hands. It won't be easy, though, because the squad at Oldham, in terms of depth, is stronger than I've known in my decade at the club. It augers as well, though, for a successful return to the top-flight".



Tony Barrow, who will be leading that return to the First Division, describes Paddy as the "perfect professional". He says: "During my time at Oldham, Paddy has been very unlucky with injuries, but when I was coach at Warrington and

we played against Oldham he was always a force to be reckoned with and a key part of the side make-up. He is the sort of player you would prefer to have on your side, rather than the opposition's. An excellent defender with a big heart, only one thing stopped him from being an international and that was an extra yard of pace. I am delighted to have the opportunity to contribute to Paddy's brochure because he has been a credit not only to himself and his family but to his coaches, fellow players and his club".

# Best Wishes to Paddy in his Benefit, Here's to the next Ten Years

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# PADDY KIRWAN

by DAVID TOPLISS

As a Wakefield lad, playing and coaching for my hometown team has meant a great deal to me. My spell with Hull brought me the kind of honours and success I had always dreamed about. The final phase of my career was equally enjoyable, and I regard it as an honour to have played for the 'Roughyeds'. Oldham have some of the finest supporters in the game.

My time at the club coincided with a period in which Frank Myler moulded a very useful side. We contested the 1986 Lancashire Cup final and went within eighty minutes of breaking the club's long-standing Wembley hoodoo. And a brave performance frightened the life out of the mighty Kangaroos on a famous night in 1986.

But the greatest moment of my Oldham playing career came about because of the sheer persistence and never-say-die spirit of one man... Paddy Kirwan, whose last-gasp try in the 1987 Cup-tie against Wigan ensured him of everlasting fame in the town. It effectively denied Graham Lowe's great side the Grand Slam of all five major trophies.

A number of players have served the bulk of their careers at the Watersheddings and several of them, in recent times, have enjoyed a benefit season. It says much for the enthusiasm and encouragement

of the Oldham fans that so few players want to leave the club. There is a family spirit about the Watersheddings that few clubs can match.

My former half-back partner Paddy Kirwan is the latest in a long line of dedicated, devoted Oldham players, and his well-earned benefit season, coinciding as it does with the club's welcome return to the First Division, is sure to be a big success. There have been few more popular Oldham players than the former Great Britain Colts scrum-half.

As a stand-off, I always enjoyed playing alongside Paddy, whose infectious high spirits and fierce determination invariably brought the best out in those around him.

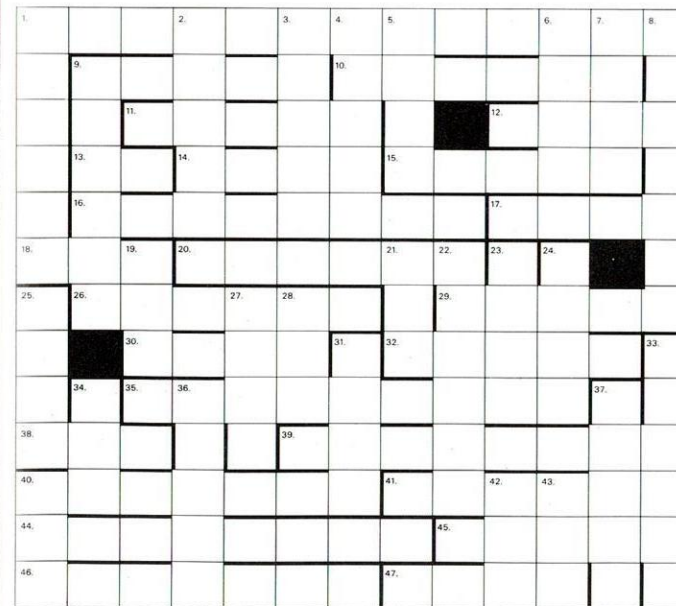
Club honours have been few and far between for Paddy. Nor has he been blessed with much good fortune, suffering more than his share of injuries, in recent times. But if Paddy Kirwan never kicked a ball again, he will always be remembered affectionately by Oldham fans for THAT try against Wigan.

I'd like to wish Paddy, personally, and all at Oldham, a successful season. There is little doubt that the fans will rally round a player who has never given less than 100% in the red and white.

All the best, Paddy,  
DAVID TOPLISS

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### ACROSS

1. RANT ANGRY FLEA (ANAG.) (5) (8)
9. FORMER OLDHAM PLAYER BENDS THE KNEE MAYBE (5)
10. SEE 18 ACROSS
11. DID THIS CHAP ASSIST A. RICHARDS IN DEVISING BASIC ENGLISH (5)
12. SEE 4 DOWN
13. LITTLE PHYSICIAN — ASK ALAN BONNELLE (2)
14. SMART MAN MR. GIVENS (4)
- 15 & 41 ACROSS — A DECADE OF ACHIEVEMENTS FOR THIS QUALITY MAN (5) (6)
16. JOURNALIST BROTHER OF MRS. BLYTON (8)
17. POSSIBLY BLACK BUT DEFINITELY GREEN (4)
18. & 10 ACROSS — A FORMER PLAYER OF SOME LITTLE NOTE (3) (6)
20. ANTIPODEAN DIETETIC REFORMER (6)
26. + 4 PERHAPS (6)
29. A MURDEROUS COLLEAGUE (5)
30. RUMOUR HAS IT A MODEL PLAYER (4)
32. SEE 34 DOWN
35. ALAS A BUTCHER NO MORE (9)
38. THIS SORT OF BRUSH SWEEPS CLEAN (3)
39. 'OLD FAITHFUL' (8)
40. LANCE TODD TROPHY WINNER WHO PLAYED FOR OLDHAM (7)
41. SEE 15 ACROSS
44. IS THIS MAN BY ANY CHANCE RELATED TO HANS (8)
45. ARE THIS MAN'S TALENTS OFFERED FOR UNWORTHY PURPOSES (5)
46. AN AREA OF PAROCHIAL RELIEF (7)
47. OUR STREET VENDING BOSS (4)

### DOWN

1. SARTORIAL SORT OF CHAP (6)
2. QUITE A ROYAL TROPHY REALLY (5)
3. TERRY'S FEET COULD NEVER BE ACCUSED OF BEING THIS (5)
4. & 12 ACROSS — POOR FELLOW MET HIS UNTIMELY DEATH IN A ROAD ACCIDENT AFTER A GAME AGAINST OLDHAM — STILL HIS NAME LIVETH ON (5) (4)
5. QUICKLY (4)
6. LOCAL CHAP ON AN ADMIRABLE ROAD (4) (4) (3)
7. SEE 6 DOWN
8. MALAYO — POLYNESIAN DESCENDANT — LATE OF HUDDERSFIELD (7)
9. A TEAM KNOWN TO CONSOLIDATE — SO TONY SAYS (6)
19. DYSLEXIC DES (3)
21. INITIALLY NOT SO GOOD (1) (1) (1)
22. NORTH AFRICAN R.U. CONVERT (6)
23. LITTLE RICHARD (4)
24. NO END TO CLARKY (4)
25. THIS LAD'S BROTHER ENDED OLDHAM'S 1986 WEMBLEY DREAM (4)
27. NOT THE SORT OF NEUTRAL TONE WANTED BY PADDY (4)
28. NEW MAJOR SPONSORS OF SPORT (1) (1) (1)
31. MR. McALISTER (4)
33. THE HOME OF THE GRAND FINAL (6)
- 36\* SEE 37 DOWN
37. & 36 DOWN — FORMER OLDHAM COACH (5) (5)
40. A RUGBY FAUCET (3)
42. LORD'S ABILITY TO RAPIDLY GAIT (3)
43. SEE 6 DOWN
- 34\* LION-HEARTED PROP FORWARD (3) (5) (SEE 32 ACROSS)

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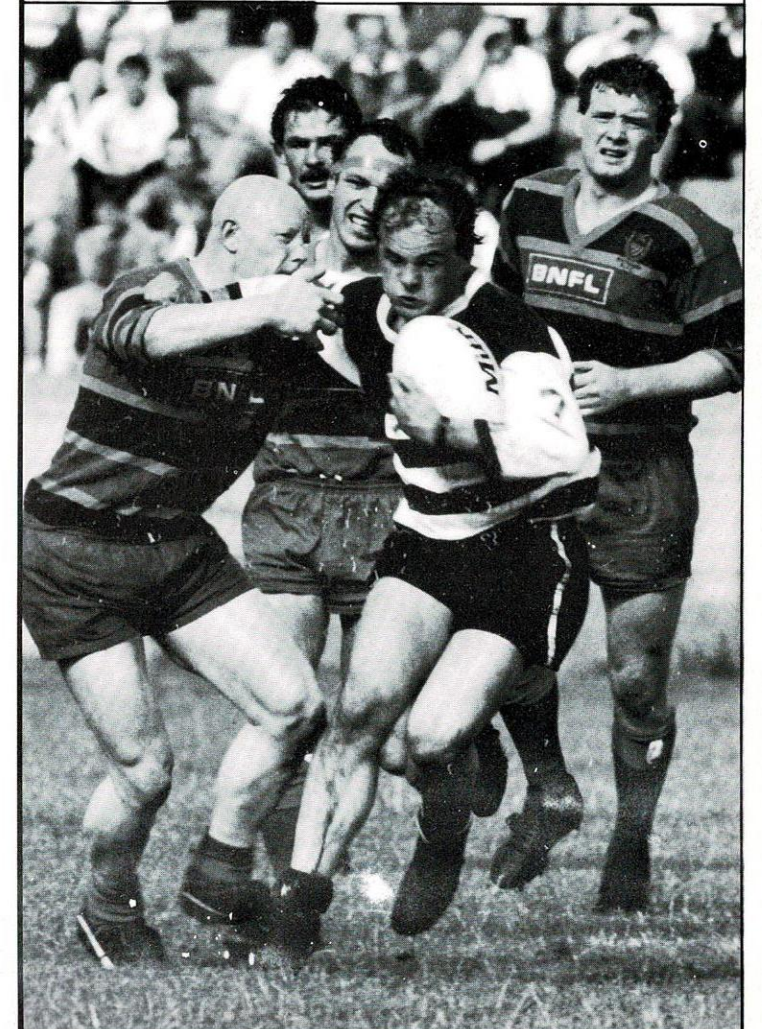


Best wishes to Paddy for a successful year.

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## “PADDY KIRWAN — THE REPUTATION BREAKER”

by

Terry Flanagan

It goes without saying how privileged I am to be one of Paddy Kirwan's closest friends. It is very difficult trying to write a testimonial to a man in a few pages when I could write a book. The best place to start I suppose is at school when we first met.

Paddy and I met at St. Anselms School after Paddy had played exceptional rugby at St. Mary's Primary School.

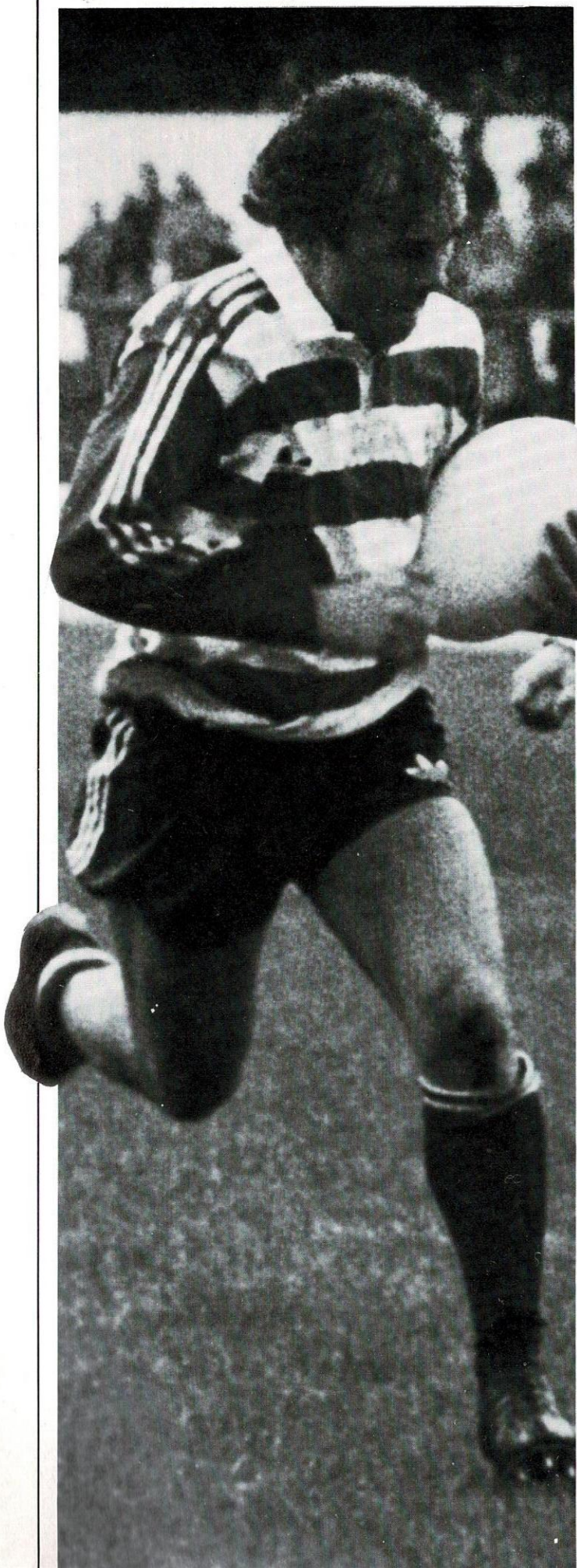
It is well chronicled how we have played together since school boys and I can honestly say he has never taken the slightest bit of notice of my advice — he just does the right thing without any guidance! In the schooldays, Paddy was always perceived as being too small, not by the real knowledgeable people, but by those who basically couldn't see a good player when they saw one. I can recall one occasion as we played for Oldham School's under 16's against Wigan the English Champions at Strawberry Gardens. Paddy came up against their scrumhalf Chris Ratchford, who was the Lancashire and England boys scrumhalf and being chased by all the top clubs. I will not go into details but, Paddy destroyed him in every department. Paddy has never cared for reputation. Need I say more!

After schoolboy rugby, we embarked on our amateur career with Saddleworth Rangers. We had, what many people believe, the best ever youth team from the Oldham area and Paddy as usual, was at the forefront. He developed physically between the years of 16 and 18 and again, proved himself as being one of the best scrum halves in the game. Honours unfortunately, didn't come his way, and a certain Andy Gregory appeared on the scene. Despite Paddy playing a blinder in the Lancashire trials, Gregory got in the team. Gregory however, knew all about Paddy Kirwan and two epic battles with Wigan St. Pats on their home ground confirmed to the rugby world Paddy Kirwan was going to the top.

In addition to playing rugby together we were also going through all the normal growing pains. We studied closely together, continuing into sixth form at St. Anselms. The school was a good school and our close group of friends all did well. It is a measure of Paddy that every year he still organises the 'old boys' reunion drink around Christmas time when we reminisce and Paddy never buys a drink.

Paddy had, as usual, considerable success at school and attained all the qualifications to go to University.

Numerous clubs were chasing his signature now, yet Paddy chose Oldham to sign Professional for. Shortly after, I followed him and one of the reasons I did so was because it gave me the opportunity to continue



our flourishing rugby double act. Success followed with Great Britain Colts honours and the game against the French held in Perpignan was the scene of our schoolboy tours. We won the game along with the return game at Sheddings. It was a marvellous feeling, turning out in the red, white and blue alongside my sparing partner.

The early eighties saw Paddy and Ray Ashton trying for the first team, No. 7 berth. When Ray, Paddy and myself played together, the mid-field triangle was complete and I always felt that the Oldham Spectators saw some of the best rugby on the hallowed Sheddings turf. When Paddy wasn't in the first team, he was merely captaining the 'A' team to triumph in the Lancashire shield.

Unfortunately, injuries came and went as they have done for a number of years, but Paddy, after a particularly good spell in the first team in the early eighties, achieved perhaps his greatest individual honour. He played for Lancashire against Cumbria at Wigan and played a blinder. I recall being in the dug-out urging him on.

Off the rugby field, we were inseparable. We both went to UMIST studying different degrees.

Paddy obtained an excellent degree in Civil Engineering and this was a great reward for him and his family.

I mentioned earlier how Paddy has always had a disregard for reputations and my mind now goes back to February 1986 and a cold, damp night at Watersheddings. Graham Lowe brought his Wigan All-stars into Paddy Kirwan's back yard. It was a real Goliath v David (plus Paddy Kirwan) clash. What a night! The memory will stick with me forever. Paddy scoring near the post at the feet of Andy Gregory.

To this day mention Paddy Kirwan to any of the Wiganers and they wince in agony. It is fitting that Paddy has made his way into the record books as the man who last knocked Wigan out of the Challenge Cup before their record breaking three wins in a trot.

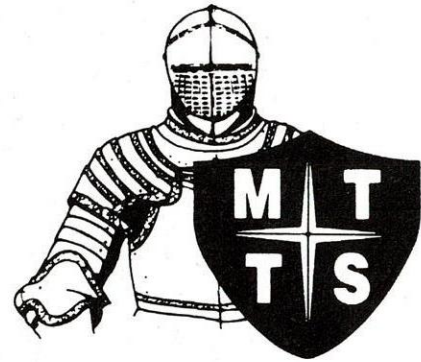
The later years have again been injury ridden, not least his foot injury. But gladly, he's over that now and is raring to have a good season. It is a measure of the man's resolve that he has overcome the numerous obstacles at various times of his career. It is also a measure that even when he's been down in the dumps he has always been loyal to Oldham Rugby.

Paddy has always been a model professional and I expect him to continue for a few years yet. His friendship to me has always been solid and true and I find it very difficult to put into words what I think of him as a man and a rugby player. I can best summarise by using the phrase Oldham coined last season: "Paddy Kirwan — Simply the best!"



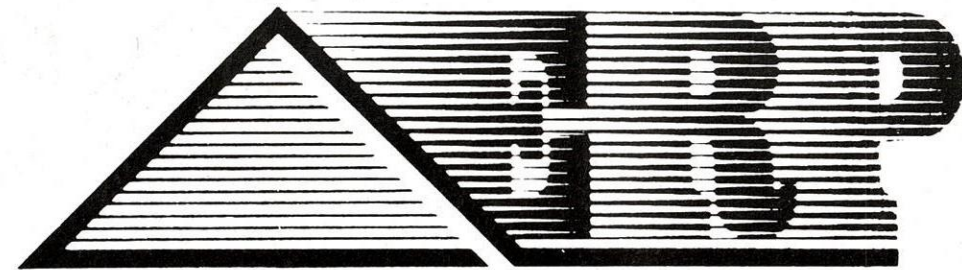
Terry sets Paddy away on the break with Ray Ashton in support in a game against Salford

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Oldham v St. Helens, August 1984



Paddy draws Bradford full-back Keith Mumby and sends team-mate Colin Halkyard on a gallop for the line



Paddy Kirwan: The proud graduate, with wife Debra

## Thanks for Everything

Words are often inadequate when it comes to thanking people for all the time and effort they have contributed to the twelve months of hectic activity that takes place during a benefit year. To have the loyal support of my family and benefit committee is absolutely invaluable. Having experienced the dedication and hard work that went into Terry Flanagan's Benefit year I fully appreciate their support.

Throughout my career my wonderful wife Debra and two sons Neil and Adam have shared and tolerated the happiness, moodiness, and absences that are part of a professional rugby league player's life. They have been especially understanding when I've been struggling with injuries. Their tremendous support has pulled me through when I've needed it most and I hope they know how much that means to me.

In a career which started when I was nine years old there have been so many people who have guided and assisted me. Without naming each one of them I would like to thank the vast number of players, teachers, coaches, backroom staff, committee members, directors and supporters who have prompted me in their own ways over the years. A special mention must go though to my parents Peter and Muriel whose commitment and encouragement sowed the seeds of my eleven years at the Oldham club.

Thanks to everyone who has bought, advertised, or contributed to this brochure, you have already given me a terrific start to the season ahead.

During the year I'm sure there will be many more people to thank at the various benefit events organised. Obviously I hope they are profitable but it will be the aim of the Benefit Committee to ensure that they are also enjoyable for everyone who participates.

I can only finish by saying that I hope that everyone who has been involved in the great game of Rugby League with me during the last twenty years has enjoyed the experience as much as I have.

*Paddy Kirwan*

