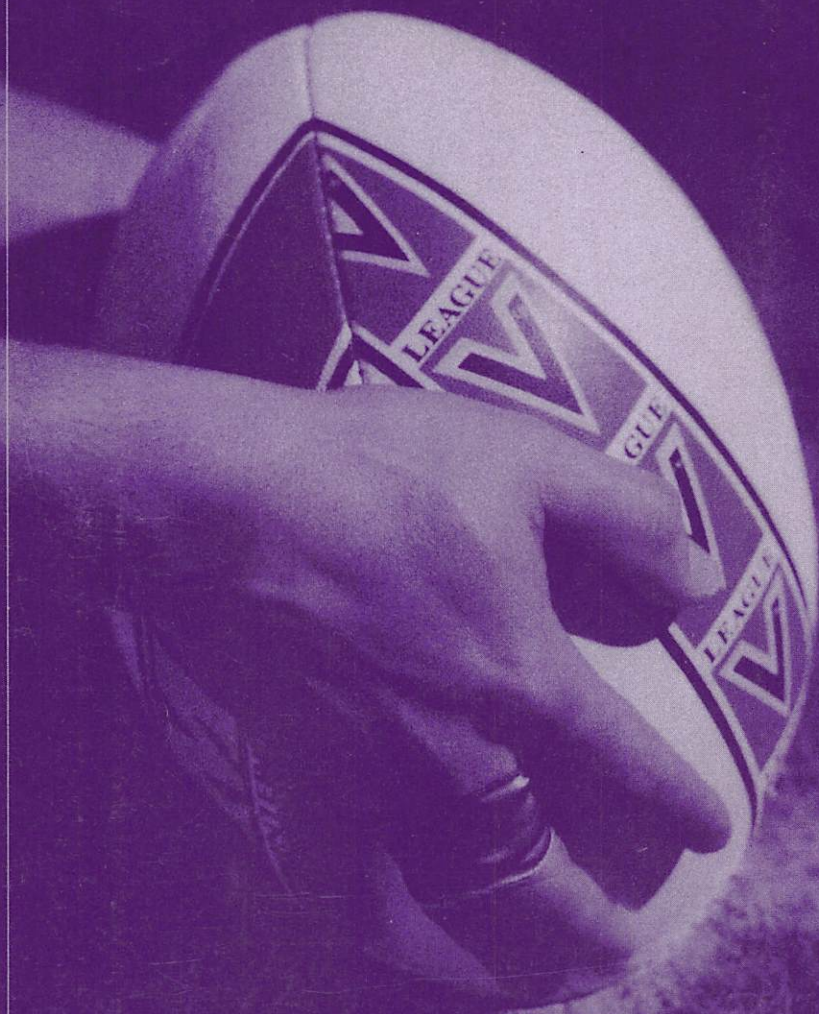


SILK CUT

CHALLENGE CUP



OLDHAM RLFC v HEWORTH ARLFC

SUNDAY 18 JANUARY 1998

KICK OFF 3.00pm

COMMEMORATIVE SOUVENIR PROGRAMME £2.00

THIRD ROUND PRELIMINARY MATCH



1998 SILK CUT CHALLENGE CUP

1998 SILK CUT PRIZES

This is the second season of Silk Cut's £2.1 million three year sponsorship of Rugby League's most famous knockout competition, played under the Silk Cut banner since 1985. The 1998 Wembley victors will receive a record prize cheque for £100,000.

Of the 1998 sponsorship investment of £700,000 a total prize fund of £486,000 is projected for the Silk Cut Challenge Cup. The remaining funds will be deposited in the League's Capital Development Fund. The complete 1998 Silk Cut Challenge Cup prize structure is:

SILK CUT CHALLENGE CUP

Third Round losers (1st and 2nd Div. Clubs)	£4,000	Quarter-Final losers	£15,000
Third Round losers (Amateur Clubs)	£1,000	Semi-Final losers	£20,000
Fourth Round losers	£5,000	Runners-up	£50,000
Fifth Round losers	£8,000	Winners	£100,000

PROJECTED PRIZE FUND £486,000

PROJECTED CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT FUND £214,000

GRAND TOTAL £700,000

1998 SILK CUT AWARDS

Silk Cut Awards will again be presented to the adjudged Man of the Match in each tie from the first round onwards. In each case the winner will receive a commemorative medallion, plus a cheque for £200 (from the third round through to the quarter finals). The Man of the Match at both semi-finals receives a cheque for £400 plus an engraved silver plated replica rugby ball.

1998 SILK CUT TIMETABLE

Silk Cut Challenge Cup

First round	6th and 7th December	Fifth Round	28th February and 1st March
Second Round	20th and 21st December	Quarter-Finals	14th and 15th March
Third Round	31st January and 1st February	Semi-Finals	28th and 29th March
Fourth Round	14th and 15th February	Final	2nd May

1998 SILK CUT TICKETS

Tickets for the all-seater 1998 Silk Cut Challenge Cup Final at Wembley Stadium on Saturday 2nd May can be booked now priced £39, £35, £30, £27, £22, £17 and £12 in the stadium, and £50 in the Olympic Gallery.

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1998 SILK CUT DRAWS

The draw for the first round will be made live on GMR at 7.10pm on Tuesday, 18 November.

The draws for the second and third rounds will be made live on BBC Radio Leeds on Monday 8th December and Monday 5th January respectively.

The fourth round draw for the Silk Cut Challenge Cup will be made live on BBC Radio Five Live at approximately 5.15pm on Monday 2nd February 1998.

The draw ceremonies for the fifth round, quarter-finals and semi-finals will be made live on BBC Look North, North West Tonight and BBC Radio Five Live at 6.55pm on the following dates:

Fifth Round	Monday 16th February
Quarter-finals	Monday 2nd March
Semi-finals	Monday 16th March

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BACK TO BASICS

OLDHAM RLFC (1997) Ltd

First Official Match

OLDHAM RLFC v HEWORTH ARLFC

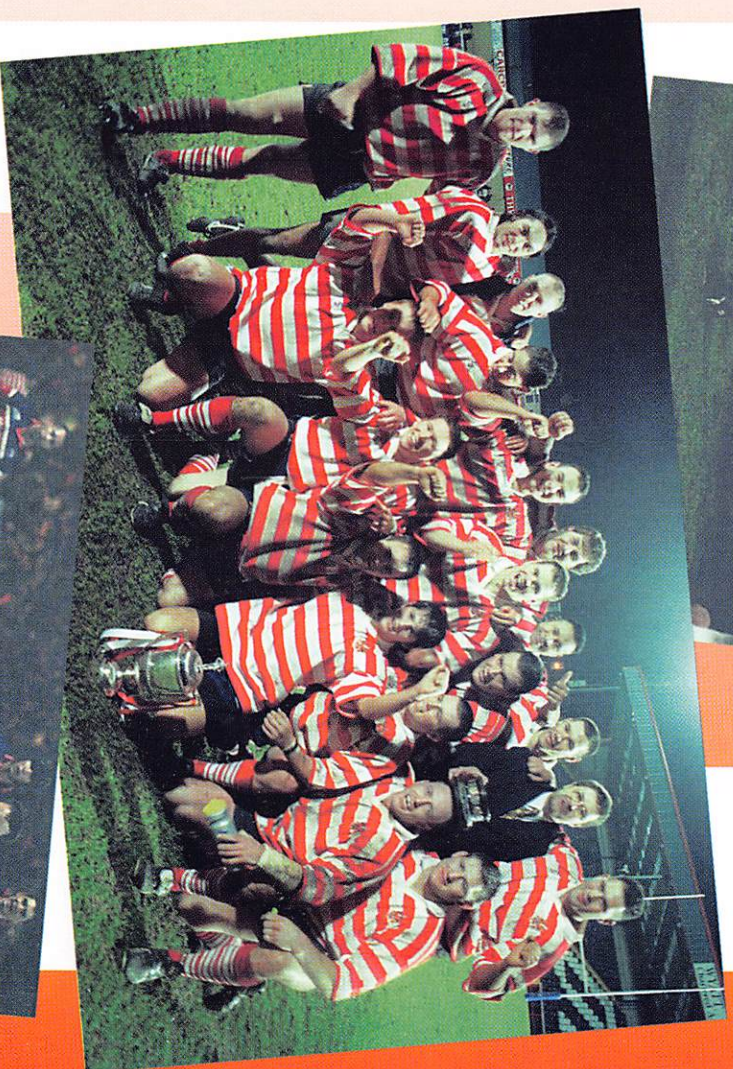
SILK CUT CHALLENGE CUP
3rd ROUND
PRELIMINARY MATCH

Sunday 18th January 1998
ko 3.00pm
Boundary Park Oldham

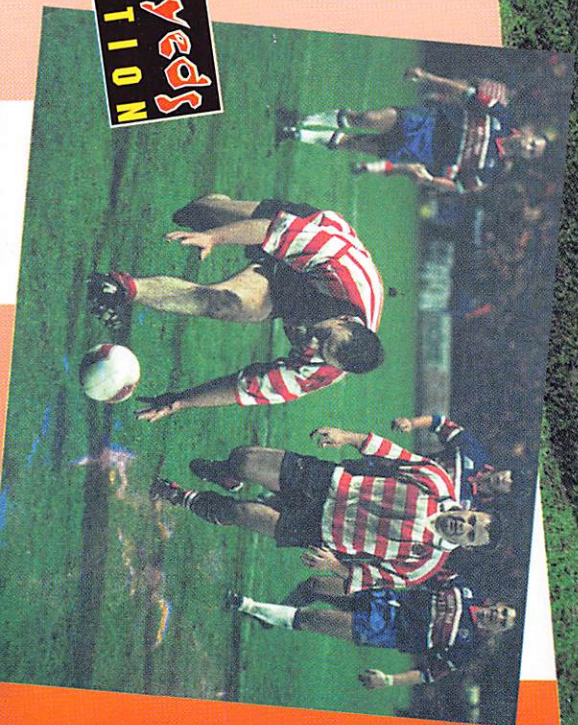
The Roughyeds
BACK IN ACTION

COMMEMORATIVE PROGRAMME

BACK TO BASICS



The Roughyeds BACK IN ACTION



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F O R E W O R D

IT IS with considerable pleasure that I welcome the new Oldham RLFC as a member of the Rugby Football League. I am particularly pleased that, with the help of BARLA and the members of FASDA, we have been able to find an opportunity for the new Club to take part in the 1998 Challenge Cup competition.

The town of Oldham has, over many years, been a hotbed of Rugby League and has produced many fine players both amateur and professional. I feel certain that the public of Oldham will want to support the Directors of the newly formed Club and, as Chairman, I would offer my best wishes to all concerned for a successful future.

Sir Rodney Walker, Chairman

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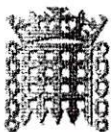
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IT IS truly a pleasure to be able to send this message of support for the new season – one that many thought Oldham would miss out on. The welcome for the new team at Spotland for the Law Cup match against Rochdale said it all – warm applause, genuine delight and gratitude to all those directors, players and off-field volunteers who made the resurrection possible. The result wasn't half-bad as well!

Oldham has always been a crucible for Rugby League and support and enthusiasm has grown in recent years. To have professional Rugby League without an Oldham side is as unbearable as it is unthinkable. Congratulations are due to all those involved but especially to the supporters who have stuck by the new club's efforts so strongly. Of course the directors take the lion's share of gratitude but I would also like to mention the *Oldham Chronicle* and the Council for their support.

Amateur Rugby League involves over 200,000 people who play or watch each week. It gives confidence and health to the youngsters and immense enjoyment to spectators at all levels. That's why having a professional club is so important, not just for the club itself, but for all those involved in Rugby League in the town.

Best wishes for 1998 and many, many years to come.

Phil Woolas MP, Oldham East and Saddleworth

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The Roughyeds are back in business

Cllr John Battye, leader of OMBC

JUST A FEW short months ago one or two cynics had us dead and buried so it is all the more pleasurable for the thousands of true Oldham RLFC fans – and I count myself amongst them – that today has finally arrived.

Pinch yourself if you must but you needn't – the red and white hooped jerseyed players belong to the new Oldham RLFC – the Roughyeds are back in business and competing once again!

Oldham is a rugby league town. Our pedigree and heritage proves this as do the events of recent months when those true to the game in our town stood up to be counted and said professional rugby league will not die in Oldham.

Here I must offer a special word of praise and admiration to Christopher Hamilton, the chairman of Oldham RLFC and his fellow directors who picked up the ball and ran with it, so to speak, against significant odds.

If their commitment, dedication, hard work and enthusiasm is transferred on to the field of play – I'm sure Paddy Kirwan will have a good go to make sure this is the case – there's no telling what lies ahead for the Roughyeds. Super League status may not be that far away.

Certainly from the Council's point of view it will give whatever assistance and support it can to help make this possible. On a practical level this involves providing the club with training and other facilities and we are happy to do this.

Oldham RLFC features very strongly too in the Council's plans to develop a new stadium next to the A627(M) motorway to be open by the new millennium which will provide players, fans and sponsors with a venue and facilities that those in the world of rugby league can only admire.

We extend a warm Oldham welcome to our visitors from Heworth RLFC today and look forward to a competitive, entertaining game and the beginning of a new era for the Roughyeds.

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The Thoughts of Chairman Tenko . . .

Chris Hamilton, chairman Oldham RLFC (1997)

A VERY warm welcome to everybody at Boundary Park today for what is an historic occasion with the game against Heworth ARLFC. We also extend a special thank you to our guests today from BARLA, FASDA and the RFL and sponsors Silk Cut who, by working together, have made our entry, albeit belatedly, into the 1998 Silk Cut Challenge Cup possible.

So much has happened in the past few months to professional Rugby League in Oldham that at times I am amazed at how myself and the board have managed it. We hope that how we have gone about things is something which you, the supporters of the club, can relate to because as we have said all along, this is YOUR CLUB. The ideals and principles on which we have based our philosophy so far will not be compromised to achieve success. Short-term success can lead to long-term ruin and, although it makes our

task much harder now, the foundation that we are now laying will hopefully ensure the long-term survival and prosperity of Rugby League in Oldham.

It would be totally inappropriate today not to make mention of events at Spotland on New Year's Day. If those of you who turned out in such great numbers gained just an ounce of the pleasure that I did on that day, then you will certainly have had a tremendous day out. The back to basics approach was typified by the manner in which the players applied themselves showing 100 per cent commitment to the Oldham jersey – long may it continue.

Finally, welcome to the players, officials and supporters of Heworth for what is bound to be a keenly contested tie. As far as Oldham is concerned, please keep up the level and volume of support and, hopefully, we will see another victory.



Oldham directors Sean Whitehead, Chris Hamilton, Melvyn Lord and Stuart Hardacre

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The Medlock Team wish the Oldham players, staff and directors every success for the future and look forward to us being a major force in Rugby once again



Oldham win the Law Cup - New Years' Day 1998

A Welcome from FASDA

Bob McDermott, chairman and Bob Scott, General Manager

IN YEARS to come, many Rugby League supporters will reflect on the events which took place on 16th October 1997 at the Forte Crest Hotel at Brighouse. It was there that the historic 'Progress through Partnership' agreement was signed between the Rugby Football League and BARLA. This put an end to 24 years of impasse between the two governing bodies. At that venue on the same day, your new chairman Christopher Hamilton met with Bob McDermott and Bob Scott of FASDA to outline his hopes for reviving Oldham RLFC.

The two Bobs were immediately impressed by Christopher Hamilton's passion and commitment to re-launch Oldham as a new venture at the earliest opportunity. The task to restore Oldham's Rugby League status was so daunting that many people would have foregone the challenge and accepted the demise of professional Rugby League in Oldham. The fact that we are here today to witness the rebirth of Oldham Roughyeds is testament to the hard work, pride and determination that Christopher Hamilton, his fellow directors and supporters have shown in their club.

Despite the initial setback of not being included in the draw for the Silk Cut Challenge Cup, Oldham have benefited from tremendous support within BARLA and First and Second Division Association of the Rugby Football League. The League's chairman Sir Rodney Walker, together with BARLA chairman Mike Morrissey, supported by initiatives by Maurice Oldroyd and FASDA whose determined efforts behind the scenes have borne fruit, culminating in today's historic encounter. Today heralds a bright new dawn for the future of Oldham and highlights the Progress through Partnership, which can be achieved by the professional and amateur game working in harmony. It is fitting therefore that Oldham's opponents today are one of the most respected amateur clubs – Heworth. A warm welcome to their players, officials and supporters.

Rugby League is a sport which prides itself on traditional values, honesty, commitment and mutual respect combined with an overwhelming feeling of being part of something special. These words also apply to the new Oldham RLFC itself and, on behalf of Rugby League supporters everywhere, FASDA is proud to welcome back the Roughyeds. Good luck and best wishes.

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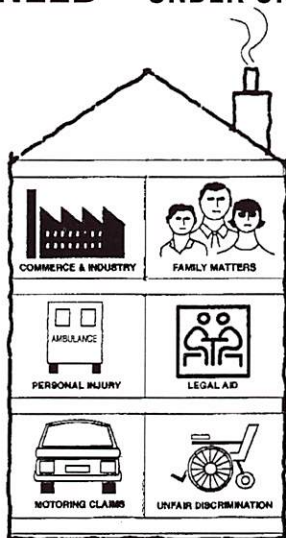
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The Coach's View

Paddy Kirwan, ORLFC coach

SINCE RETURNING from holiday at the beginning of November, life has been hectic to say the least. I came back disillusioned with Rugby League and in particular the demise of the old Oldham Bears club. The discussion with the new board of directors was a two-way dialogue. As well as showing I was capable of doing the new coaching job, I needed convincing about their motives and plans for the new club. It was very quickly apparent that they were genuine supporters who had done a lot of their homework and had a similar love for the game as I do. Being on the same wavelength, I was delighted to accept the opportunity to coach the new team.

The rest of November seemed to be spent on the end of a telephone talking to potential recruits. The early appointment of Mick Coates as assistant coach was a big boost. I played with Mick in a very successful Saddleworth Rangers youth team before we both went into the professional game. Unfortunately for Mick, a back injury cut short his playing career at Swinton, after a short spell at Rochdale Hornets. Mick's unprecedented success in the amateur game, as coach of Saddleworth Rangers first team, and his knowledge and respect within the local game, meant he was ideal for the job. Since his appointment, Mick's assessment of local amateur players and local players who have gone into the professional game during the last three to four years, has been invaluable.

If we need any encouragement, the attendance at the public meeting held in the Queen Elizabeth Hall, was a real spur. It was also a very positive negotiating point when talking to players about joining us. The support shown in the meeting, and day-to-day in the town, made some of the decisions made by the Rugby League over the divisional set up, and the Challenge Cup debacle, easier to deal with.



Coaches Mick Coates and Paddy Kirwan

Although I am pleased that Oldham were eventually allowed in the Challenge Cup, I would have preferred a one division set-up rather than our present position in Division Two. With some clubs affiliated to Super League clubs and quality players floating from week to week, the Second Division could become a lottery.

I am sure the fact we were placed in the Second Division also affected the decision of Chris McKinney and Steve Gartland to opt for the First Division clubs. I believe that the potential for professional rugby in Oldham is far greater than either Rochdale or Swinton, and we will have grown bigger than them within three years.

With a lot of young professionals showing interest in the new club, it is important to get the right balance between potential and experience. The signings of Paul Round (forward), Neil Flanagan (scrum half) and Shaun Cooper (centre) gives us an experienced trio to build around.

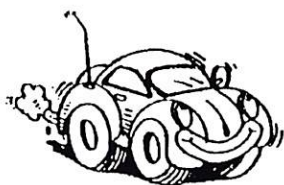
I was thrilled for the players and the supporters with the result of New Year's Day at Rochdale. The result did not matter as much as the individual performances. As a team we still have a lot of work to do, particularly on defence. It was great to see youngsters Craig Barker and Joe McNicholas thriving on the big stage. I was also impressed with John Hough, Martin Maders, Ian Sinfield and Brian Quinlan. After such a great start the aim is for a good Challenge Cup run and a continuation of the performance and support we experienced at Spotland.

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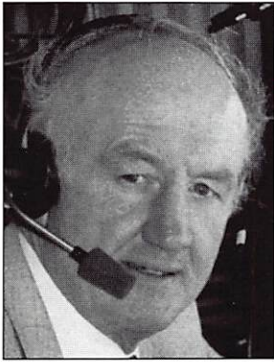
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Ray French, BBC and The Rugby Leaguer

JOSEPH PLATT, one-time treasurer of Oldham RLFC and, for many years, the finest secretary of the Northern Union, must have been a happy man

when he and the Roughyeds returned home from Fallowfield, Manchester as winners of the 1899 Challenge Cup.

For that victory over Hunslet was the climax of many hours of work behind the scenes attracting top Welsh players like R. L. Thomas and Scotsmen of the calibre of Jim Moffatt to the club. And persuading wing star Sam Williams to leave his Northampton home and delight the Oldham fans with the magic on the touchlines which saw him top of the League's try scorers for three seasons between 1898 and 1901.

Today, as the Roughyeds prepare to tackle one of the leading lights of the amateur world – Heworth RLFC – chairman Chris Hamilton and his fellow directors Melvyn Lord, Stewart Hardaker and Sean Whitehead – have every right to feel a similar pride in their achievements.

For the quartet have rescued a once-great club and battled bravely against seemingly insurmountable

odds to take their rightful place in the Silk Cut Challenge Cup.

The club may not possess the household names in its team line-up that Joseph Platt, in its earliest days, was able to look upon from his seat in the grandstand. No Len McIntyre to kick that stunning last-minute drop goal against Hull KR at Headingley, a match which proved the start of a nerve-tingling three-match epic Challenge Cup semi-final in '64. No Paddy Kirwan (at least on the pitch) to grab that dramatic last gasp try against Wigan in the first round of the Challenge Cup in '87, and no Mick Burke to send the ball over the crossbar and the Oldham fans delirious.

Names which have passed into folklore. But today there are still 13 Roughyeds, clad in red and white hooped jerseys, and all prepared to put their body on the line. What more could the good folk of Oldham want?

Oh yes, and they are 'up for t'Cup' again, an entry unbroken since that first round against Bradford on 20th March 1897.

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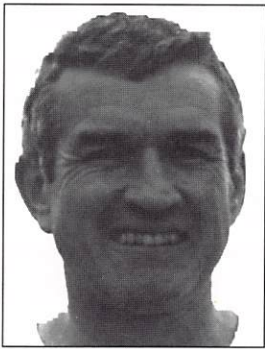
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Like Blackpool without its Tower

*David Burke, Manchester Evening News
& The Times*

RUGBY LEAGUE without Oldham would be like Blackpool minus the tower! News that Oldham Bears had gone into liquidation with debts of £1.2 million devastated not just local fans but also supporters throughout the game. Also add journalists and rival players to those in mourning because Oldham are an institution in the game.

Expansion to London, Cardiff, Gateshead, Bristol and Dublin may be the modern thinking but Oldham epitomise the tradition and history of the 13-a-side code. Take away part of the heart and the body can't function.

Thankfully, Christopher Hamilton and his consortium rescued Oldham who have now entered 1998 with a new confidence as well as a new team.

Oldham have played a big part in my Rugby League development. As a young Salford supporter in the 60s, I'll never forget making regular trips to Watersheddings – more often than not making the short journey home down Victoria Avenue about as happy as a flue-stricken Victor Meldew.

Tug Wilson, Kevin Taylor and Peter Smethurst (later to become a dear and trusted friend before his tragic premature death), were often the scourge of the Red Devils. Then Salford realised how to beat Oldham: sign their best players!

The irrepressible Charlie Bott, an anachronism in those days as a prop forward with a degree, Geoff Sims and 'the butcher' himself all arrived at The Willows.

In 1974 I was fortunate enough to realise every youngster's ambition by turning professional with Rochdale Hornets. Then

trips to Oldham took on a new dimension.

A Law Cup clash at Watersheddings on a baking August afternoon was my first outing to Oldham as a player. A rare Burke try in a career cut short by persistent shoulder injuries, work commitments and most significantly, an absence of pace, couldn't stop Hornets slipping to a 27-15 defeat.

Sadly, that was the last trip to Watersheddings on a day when the temperature climbed above zero degrees!

My everlasting memory of Ice Station Zebra is being huddled around the dressing room under the main stand at half-time on several miserable afternoons and evenings. Mud-splattered and with digits like frozen fish fingers, we didn't pass the oranges round at the interval – it was a swig from a bottle of Harvey's Bristol that was the elixir of life.

A brief stint in the old first division and my 'career' went out faster than Prescott Panthers at the last League annual meeting.

It was time to concentrate on my 'day job' as a scribe. Thankfully, that's lasted longer than my cherished days with Hornets and there have been more trips to Watersheddings and Boundary Park from a different perspective. But this time it's the smell of pressbox coffee and not dressing room wintergreen that's filled my nostrils – and I know which is the most advantageous aroma from an easier 80 minutes!

Well done Chris and Co. for having the courage to step in and save Rugby League in Oldham – I'm sure it will be the start of an exciting new era.

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Congratulations & Good Luck Oldham

Malcolm Lord – BBC, GMR

CONGRATULATIONS on surviving, it looked for a while as if you might go under. Good luck for the future. Hopefully, now you're back in the Silk Cut Challenge Cup and slowly getting back to something like normality, things will take a turn for the better.

In my opinion Rugby League has its problems, but none of these problems can be solved by letting the likes of Oldham go to the wall. I hope you not only survive, but prosper.

I suppose it is a little bit ironic that if you dispense with amateurs Heworth you then take on the once mighty Widnes – another team that has struggled to survive in recent years – survive though they have, and they too have my best wishes.

On a lighter note and first to prove there is still honour in our game, in a recent world club challenge match at Wilderspool, a male streaker ran the full length of the field. After I had spent some time convincing my wife that he was the abnormal one and not me, I heard one wag in the crowd shout: 'That's the best tackle I've seen at Warrington for years'.

Keep smiling, but most of all keep supporting your club and remember – Better to have bad breath than no breath – bad breath can be cured!

A History of Heworth . . .

Club History

Ground: Elmpark Way, Heworth, York

Colours: black and white

Founded: 1922

Chairman: Colin Forsyth

Hon. Sec: John Orange

PR Officer: Ken Sykes

Coaches: Stewart Horton, Keith Loft

Honours

Yorkshire Cup winners 1993/94, runners-up 1983/84 and 1994/95

Yorkshire U21 Cup winners 1952/53, 1953/54

National League winners 1986/87

National Conference League Premier Division runners-up 1994/95

National Conference League First Division champions 1993/94

National Conference League Cup winners 1993/94

Yorkshire Premier League champions 1982/83, 1983/84 and 1984/85

Yorkshire Premier League Top 4 Play Off winners 1984/85, runners-up 1983/84

Profile

Heworth Amateur Rugby League Club was formed in 1922 following a revival in the interest of rugby in York after the Yorkshire Cup final between York and Bramley. In the early days they had no permanent home or ground with the open age side being members of the local amateur league.

The 1930s realised the fruits of much hard work when junior sides were started and a 'base' was secured at the Tang Hall Hotel. Real progress was made in the 50s and 60s when numerous successes in local cup competitions were achieved following Heworth's acceptance to the Leeds & District League. Many players gained county and international honours and the Club had the distinction of winning the Yorkshire U21 Cup in successive seasons – 1950/51 and 1951/52.

Heworth became one of Yorkshire's leading clubs and, spurred on by successes on the

field, went all-out to obtain a ground and clubhouse of its own. That goal was finally reached with the opening of their ground at Elmpark Way in 1971, followed by the clubhouse in 1973. Much more has been done since then including extensions to the clubhouse and changing facilities, a covered stand, ground drainage, floodlights etc. And when Heworth became the first amateur side to play in the Yorkshire Senior Competition Cup, and were drawn at home to Hunslet 'A', Rugby League officials were so impressed with their superb facilities that they allowed Heworth to stage the game. Heworth, nicknamed 'The Villagers', nearly pulled off the result, only losing by 22 points to 14 in the closest of encounters.

Heworth has a strong youth policy and have for many years run junior sides. That policy was a major reason which led to the side reaching the BARLA Yorkshire Cup Open Age final for the first time in its history, losing narrowly to Humberside side Mysons in 1983/84. From 1982 to 1985 Heworth won three consecutive Yorkshire League Premier Division championships, a record which still stands to this day.

Well over 200 players have signed professional forms over the years with some of the most notable being Geoff Wriglesworth (Leeds), Ken Bowman (Huddersfield), Colin Forsyth (Oldham), David Watkinson (Hull KR), and Gary Divorty (Hull). In more recent times Chris Hammerton had a good career with York RLC, and Ken Sykes – current vice-chairman and pro – enjoyed a long career with Hunslet.

Heworth were also one of the founder members of the BARLA national league, winning the championship in the inaugural 1986/87 season. Also in that same season they reached the National Cup final for their first

and so far only appearance; and in a keenly contested game at Headingley just lost out to Thatto Heath, the formidable St Helens side.

Further glory included games against professional outfits – Halifax, Swinton and Mansfield – and they gave a good account of themselves on all occasions.

Success during the reign of coaches David Watkinson (ex-Hull KR and GB star) and Robin Divorty has elevated Heworth to a position in the elite of amateur rugby league. In 1993/94 Heworth won the Yorkshire Cup for the first time in its history, beating Beverley by 21 points to 6 at the Ryedale Stadium. They also went on to record a tremendous treble by winning the National Conference League First Division title and the National Conference League Cup. In 1994/95 Heworth reached the Yorkshire Cup final for a second successive season, losing to Skirlaugh 24-20. And in the National Conference

League, Heworth won 16 out of 22 games to come close runners-up to Woolston, scoring 539 points and conceding 405. In the Silk Cut competition, Heworth overcame fellow amateur sides Littleborough (Rochdale) and Hensingham (Cumbria) to gain a third round tie at Leigh, where in a titanic struggle they just lost out 40-28.

And in season 1995/96 Heworth just lost out, 22 points to 18, at Bramley in the third round of the Silk Cut Challenge Cup. Indeed, the professionals scored the winning try in the 79th minute of a game which Heworth should really have won.

After a poor start this season the side is gaining confidence under coaches Stewart Horton – ex-York RLFC and Keith Loft who has served the club well as a player and coach for over 12 years. Currently Heworth are unbeaten in their last seven matches.



Heworth 1997/98 – Back row: Chris Plowman, Phil Sturdy, Guy Gray, Mark Green, Danny Briggs, Darren Wheatley, Rob Goodall, Jason Gatus, Scott Wrigglesworth, Steve Barnard, Derrick Grange (sponsor).

Front row: Richard Darling, Danny Wright, Anthony Howcroft, Mick Harrison, Andy Gabel, Andy Mercer, Andy Tindall, Nick Potter, Chris Hammerton.

Heworth Pen Pictures

RICHARD DARLING

Aged 23. Full Back. Signed last season from top Hull amateurs Skirlaugh. Elusive runner winning many Man of the Match awards. Pig farmer.

JAMES ALLITT

Aged 20. Wing. Powerful runner and good goal-kicker. Yorkshire County at youth level. Good prospect.

ANDY TINDALL

Aged 32. Centre. Former Yorkshire County and BARLA tourist. First player to score 100 Conference League tries.

ANDY GABEL

Aged 19. Centre. Broke into York first team at the end of last season. Outstanding prospect with a handful of clubs chasing his signature.

NATHAN WITTY

Aged 18. Wing/Centre. Toured South Africa with Yorkshire Under-18s last season. Retained his place in the County side again this season. Excellent prospect.

MARK GREEN

Aged 28. Stand-off. Hard working player with good ball skills and tight defence. Player of Year last season.

CHRIS HAMMERTON

Aged 34. Scrum Half. On-field general. Ex-York player returned to his former club four seasons ago. Play maker and goal kicker.

DARREN WHEATLEY

Aged 31. Prop. Former Yorkshire County and BARLA tourist. Tall, big stridding forward.

ANTHONY HOWCROFT

Aged 19. Hooker. Ex-Castleford Academy. Broke into first team this season. Good distribution skills.

CHRIS PLOWMAN

Aged 26. Prop. Club captain Yorkshire County. Outstanding forward, arguably the best No. 10 in the conference.

JASON GATUS

Aged 25. Prop/2nd row. Resigned from York pre-season. Former BARLA U23 tourist.

DANNY WRIGHT

Aged 20. 2nd row. Only in second season of rugby. Outstanding tackler/workaholic.

STEVE BARNARD

Aged 24. Loose forward. Good ball handling skills, powerful runner.

MICK HARRISON

Aged 25. Half-back. Signed from York in close season. Elusive player with a good kicking game.

ROB GOODALL

Aged 23. Prop. BARLA tourist at Under 18s and Under 23s.

GUY GRAY

Aged 27. Second row. Hard working forward just established in first team. Outstanding in previous round against Clayton.

ANDY MERCER

Aged 34. Wing. Now in veteran stage. Former Yorkshire and BARLA international. Prolific scorer.

MARK CREGAN

Aged 30. Centre. Returned to Heworth this season after a spell in Rugby Union.

WAYNE FOSTER

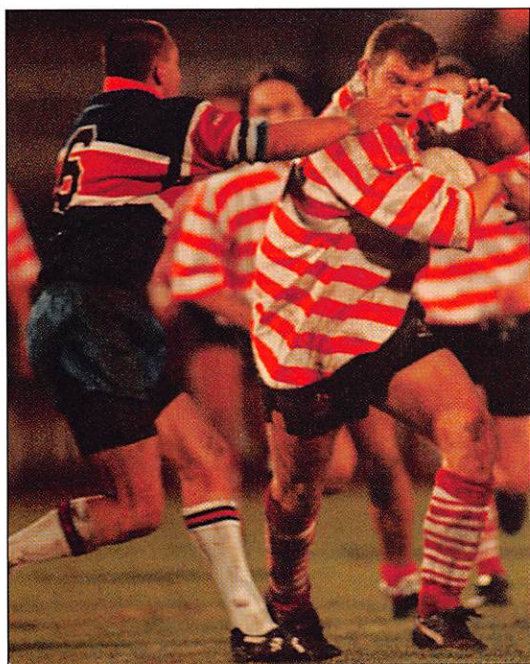
Aged 21. Centre. Former York academy player. Good prospect.

SCOTT WRIGGLESWORTH

Aged 27. Second row. Strong running, aggressive tackler.



'Three Cs' – the coach, captain and chairman with the Law Cup



Martin Maders on the rampage



Ian Sinfield touches down against Hornets

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The Rugby Foot League headquarters at Red Hall, Leeds

The Rugby Football League



STANDING in rolling countryside on the Wetherby Road and home to the staff of the Rugby Football League, Red Hall on Red Hall Lane has been the base of the RFL for two-and-a-half years, since the move from Chapeltown Road.

'It's a beautiful old building and is the envy of many other sports,' said media and marketing director Dave Callaghan.

Dave has been with the Rugby League for two years, after spending the previous 18 years as sports broadcaster and producer with the BBC. He told us: 'I have really enjoyed my move to Rugby League. The game has made a huge transformation. At times it has been a rocky ride but now there is great optimism

with the news that the problems in Australia seem to be behind us. I believe we are in for a great season with a real opportunity to provide stability to the game.'

Dave is one of 28 staff at Red Hall who worked under the direction of chief executive Maurice Lindsay before his move to Super League Europe. Red Hall is a busy place these days as the staff prepare for another season. 'All the departments are really geared up for the season and the Silk Cut Challenge Cup is high on the agenda. My colleagues all have specialist areas to cover and we have a number of real quality people with vast experience in the game,' explained Dave.

'In my own area, we are constantly trying

to get more press coverage for the sport. The hard core journalists who cover the game do a great job for us. However, there are some papers which continue to ignore us in favour of Rugby Union. The papers were recently raving about an 11,000 crowd for a Saracens fixture. We got 16,000 for Wigan against St Helens on Boxing Day when we were not in our playing season. I believe that speaks volumes.'

Dave admits to being delighted at the formation of the new Oldham club. 'I was born and lived in Manchester for 30 years and have covered numerous sporting events in Oldham when I was at the BBC in Manchester. I am pleased to see Rugby League continuing in the area. It would have been dreadful had the game disappeared.

He is also keen to point out that officials at Red Hall were always keen to see Oldham involved in the Silk Cut Challenge Cup. 'For

the record, we all accepted that Oldham's original non-inclusion was because they were unfortunate victims of circumstances. When it became apparent we might be able to get them in, all areas of the game pulled together to ensure that it happened.'

On a final point, Dave had this to say to the critics of the game: 'We must start to speak with one voice and make that voice a positive one. There are too many people in the game who speak negatively about it. They should ask themselves how we can attract new people to the game if we keep knocking it. We should shout the positives from the rooftops and continue to believe in the wonderful product that is put before us week in and week out.

*Dave Callaghan, associate director,
media and marketing, RFL*



Dave Callaghan, associate director – media and marketing, outside Red Hall, the Rugby Football League HQ

The Stalybridge Reporter.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 28, 1876

FOOTBALL MATCH: STALYBRIDGE V. OLDHAM. — This match was played on Saturday, at Oldham, in the presence of some hundreds of spectators. The Stalybridge having won the toss elected to play with the wind, so the ball was started by Oldham. For a little time the play was entirely confined to the forwards, but at length the ball came into the hands of the Stalybridge full-back, who by a long drop sent it behind his opponents' goal line, and before the Oldham backs could return it the Stalybridge forwards (who throughout the game were always on the ball) succeeded in getting up, and a maul ensued, which was decided to be in favour of Stalybridge. The ball was brought out and the try converted into a neat goal by J. A. Garforth. Shortly after this another try was obtained for the visitors by Schofield, but the kick at goal was a failure. Selby then managed to run in, and J. A. Garforth secured another goal. The ball was quickly kicked off, and in a short time H. Garforth, by a fine run, eluded the Oldham

backs and scored another try to Stalybridge. A puntout was tried, but failed. After half-time the fortune of the game slightly changed, the Oldham having now advantage of the wind, which had slightly risen. They compelled their opponents to touch down three times in self-defence. Just before time was called, the ball in being kicked rebounded from one of the home team over the visitors' goal line, and he following it up scored the first try for Oldham. Mallalieu essayed the kick, but failed to obtain a goal. At the close of the game the score stood: Stalybridge, 2 goals, 2 tries, and 1 touchdown; Oldham, 1 try, and 3 touchdowns. For a new club, the Oldham played remarkably well. The following are the names of the players who composed the Stalybridge team: J. A. Garforth (captain), full-back; H. Garforth and T. H. Schofield, half-backs; J. Sutcliffe and Selby, quarter-backs; L. Broadbent, Bates, Clementson, Booth, Webb, Jackson, W. H. Sutcliffe, and Stanley, forwards.



This atmospheric water colour by Halifax artist Stuart Smith depicts Oldham FC's first ever match versus Stalybridge FC played on a pitch adjacent to the newly rebuilt Glodwick Spinning Mill on 21st October 1876.

The recently consecrated St Marks Church can be clearly seen in the background. Oldham are depicted in their original colours of amber and black. For the record, Stalybridge won narrowly but revenge was gained in the return fixture. — Brian Walker

'Team spirit is important'

Neil Flanagan, captain Oldham RLFC

LESS THAN a month after the launch of the new Oldham RLFC, the hard work and dedication of the board and coaching staff was rewarded. In three weeks Paddy had assembled a squad of 17 and on 1st January 1998, a new era of professional rugby in Oldham began.

The Law Cup match against our closest rivals, Rochdale, proved to be a momentous occasion. All the players involved demonstrated their intense desire to bring success to the club and were rewarded with a superb win. Following this win, further good news was received with our inclusion in the Challenge Cup and we welcome today the players, coaching staff and fans of Heworth for our first home game of the season.

There is no doubt that expectations of rugby success have always been high in Oldham and whilst we begin our campaign in the Cup and Second Division as an unfamiliar side, our commitment to progress into the First Division has not waned. With every training session the motivation and determination within the squad just gets



stronger as we begin to bond as a team. Team spirit is important to the success of any side and with the vociferous support of our fans, in evidence at Spotland, behind us it can only add weight to our forthcoming campaign and hopeful success.

Oldham?

Alan Burke, senior Rugby League referee

FIRST a geography test – where are the following places and what is their sporting connection? Dodworth, Kippax, Seaton and Tyldesley.

All of these are actually the home towns of four current senior Rugby League referees, but when spectators see the names of these towns in their programmes, can they immediately identify from which area of the country the referee has travelled? The problem is that none of these four towns has a professional sports team and therefore the public in general have some difficulty in locating and knowing anything about the areas.

A professional team at any sport helps to give its town an identity with which people around the country can associate – would many people know anything about

Featherstone if it wasn't for having a senior Rugby League team, and would anyone even know that Alloa and Montrose were in Scotland if their football teams were not included on the pools coupon every week? Try asking a teenager to tell you where Accrington is – 40 years ago virtually everybody in the country knew!

The same fate could easily effect the entire town of Oldham if professional sport was allowed to decline within the borough, and it is therefore imperative that local people support the 'new' Rugby League team and by doing so help to promote the town itself.

(Dodworth is near Barnsley, referee Ron Laughton; Kippax near Castleford, Steve Lower; Seaton near Workington, Peter Gilmour; Tyldesley near Leigh, Paul Lee.)

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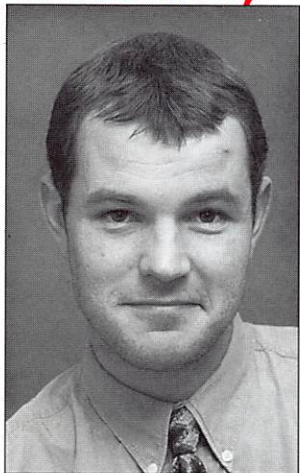
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'Paddy was my hero . . .'



*Michael Yarwood, Oldham Evening Chronicle
reviews the career of John Hough*

OF ALL the players signed by the Roughyeds over the last few momentous weeks, none epitomises the spirit of the new club better than hooker John Hough.

An Oldham lad, born and bred, John made rugby league history on 2nd December 1997 by putting pen to paper and becoming the first man to commit himself to the Oldham crusade. But, even allowing for that special circumstance, this was no ordinary transfer.

For John (21) swapped Super League and all its accompanying razzmatazz for the more modest surroundings of the second division and, in doing so, showed true belief in what the Roughyeds are striving to achieve.

He played 29 games over two years for Warrington and many believed he was capable of nailing down the regular first-team place which was proving elusive.

Instead, the major cutbacks enforced on the Wilderspool board opened up new avenues for John – and the chance to return to his roots proved too strong to resist.

Now, back on his home turf, he is hoping to spearhead Oldham's charge for immediate promotion and, beginning with today's game, a Challenge Cup run which would show the world that the end of the Bears did not mean the end of successful rugby in one of the sport's heartlands.

Open and friendly, but with a burning desire to succeed, John Hough is in many ways a mirror image of the club itself.

His willingness to work tirelessly for the

right result also sums up the Roughyeds' ethos.

John was brought up in Waterhead and, almost as soon as he could walk, was learning the finer arts of the game which would make his name.

At the tender age of six, he began an association with Waterhead – the club for which his uncle, Mick Hough, does valuable work behind the scenes – and was one of the neatest scrum halves in junior rugby.

He had a spell at Saddleworth Rangers and his education continued at St Anne's.

Finally, his work for Seddon Panthers caught the attention of Warrington and he was on his way to join one of England's most famous clubs.

For someone brought up on the terraces, a young man with rugby league blood running through his veins, it was a wonderful break.

He was converted from scrum half to hooker and continued to impress those in the know.

But ask him to recall one of his favourite sporting memories and John will look back on the day Oldham beat Wigan in the 1987 Challenge Cup.

Ask him to reveal the hero of his childhood and he will reply: 'Paddy Kirwan'.

John Hough is Oldham through and through. And he readily admits that playing for his home-town team, the side he idolised as a child from the Watersheddings stands, is the realisation of a dream.

It is the same for so many members of the new-look Roughyeds squad.

They are local, they are proud and they intend to take Oldham RLFC right to the top of the tree.

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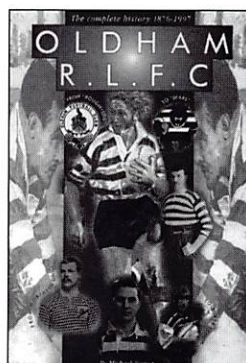
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True Blue!

Robert Gate, Rugby League author

I AM so glad Oldham were not allowed to perish. To me, Rugby League without Oldham is almost inconceivable. It was bad enough when Watersheddings was consigned to the dustbin of history. At least I was there at the last rites and I hope that today I will see the start of Oldham's rapid return to the higher echelons of Super League, or whatever ultimately takes its place in these crazy times.

Although a true blue and white from Halifax, I have always had a soft spot for Oldham. It all sprang from the first league match I ever saw back in August 1956. I was just a nipper that Monday night at Thrum Hall, thoroughly ignorant of the game, its traditions and laws. I cannot remember a solitary thing about the game itself, except the score: 13-9 to Oldham, damn it. I did learn that it was not such a wonderful thing to see your own team lose. On the other hand, I soon cottoned on that it was not the end of the world. Although I cannot remember any detail of the match, the image of men in blue and white hoops and other men in red and white hoops was burned into my mind and I cannot think of Halifax or Oldham in any other colours. Nor can I think of Halifax as B x or Oldham as Ruperts. I know these are just the intransigent ravings of an unreconstructed 'traditionalist' and therefore, inconvenient and illogical to the modernists, but that's how it is, I am afraid.

That magnificent Oldham team won the Championship in the first season I watched League and they hammered Halifax every time we met them for five years –ten losses in

a row. I thought that Oldham winning was one of the immutable laws of nature. In fact, Oldham were so good when I first fell in love with the game, that I probably knew as much about Turner and Ganley and Etty and Vines and Pitchford and Davies as I did about my own local heroes, Freeman and Owen and Palmer and Dean-n-Kielty.

It was a few years before I learned that there was anywhere near as wild and woolly as Thrum Hall on the Rugby League circuit but by the early 60s I knew all about Watersheddings. Despite the climate – it didn't bother folk who were used to Thrum Hall, of course – I always looked forward to trips to Oldham, especially before they threw up the M62. Those Pennines made a hell of a journey if the weather took a turn for the worse, even though Halifax was so near. I remember once taking an hour-and-a-half to get home. On a good day though, win or lose, it was beautiful to see the moors and play dodge-that-flaming-sheep.

One thing that always struck me about Oldham was that it was a rugby town – just like Halifax, in fact. Both Halifax and Oldham got terrific crowds in the 50s when I first got hooked. I am sure that Oldham would be amongst the best supported of all League clubs if ever they got a real whiff of success. Let's hope that today proves to be a stepping stone along the way to an Oldham Rugby League return to the top. Living in Ripponden, I won't know whether to go to Boundary Park or The Shay. Now there's a choice I never thought I'd have to face!

Oldham – Playground of the Stars

RUGBY HAS been played in Oldham ever since the original Roughyeds commenced activities way back in October 1876. Since then, literally thousands and thousands of players have turned out at every level of the game to entertain, thrill and at times disappoint the millions of fans who have flocked to watch them play. It is no exaggeration to state that a vast majority of the greatest players in the world have, at one time or another, played before and entertained an Oldham audience.

This town has always been a hotbed of rugby football so when the era of professionalism arrived, Oldham were one of the clubs who broke away to form the Northern Rugby Union, forerunner of the Rugby Football League. Once the professional code had been established, the next step was the introduction of international competition so when the first overseas tourists arrived in Britain, Oldham figured prominently on their itinerary.

Those first overseas visitors were from New Zealand but their boat journey to Britain included a stopover in Sydney where they recruited the outstanding Australian rugby player of that era, three-quarter Dally Messenger. Messenger played in all three tests for New Zealand on that tour and in another seven tests for Australia during the following three years. He was nicknamed 'The Master' by followers of the game down under and there is no doubt that he was a player of outstanding talent. However, his visit to Oldham in November 1907 ended in defeat. Oldham beat New Zealand 8-7 with 'The Master' landing two goals from the unaccustomed left wing position.

The geographical position of Oldham ensured that it would be a candidate for any Lancashire–Yorkshire confrontation and seven Roses matches have been staged within the borough. Unfortunately only two full internationals have been played here, the first was in January 1912 when England hammered Wales 31-5. Two of the nine English tries that afternoon were scored by blind side prop Doug Clark. He was a member of that great Huddersfield 'Team of all Talents' which dominated the game immediately before the World War I. Clark made eleven test appearances for Great Britain and played in two historic matches in Oldham. He was a member of the Huddersfield team beaten 6-2 by the Roughyeds in February 1912 when 28,000 were in attendance, the biggest crowd to watch a rugby league match in Oldham. Three years later he figured in the Northern Union Cup Final when that was staged in Oldham and Huddersfield beat St Helens 37-3, still the largest winning margin in a final of that prestigious competition.

With the war over, international competition resumed and in 1921 the third Kangaroo tourists visited Britain, and

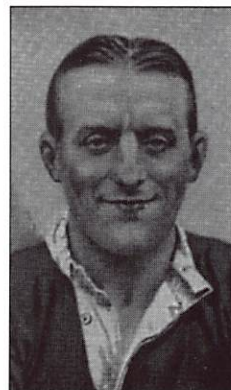


by Don Yates

Oldham. In November of that year they beat Oldham 16-5, their first victory over the Roughyeds at their third attempt but Oldham gained revenge the following January when they beat the Kangaroos 15-5. On the right wing for Australia in that second meeting was Harold Horder, a remarkable attacker who scored 239 tries in a career which spanned 194 first-grade matches, well over a try per match. On that 1921/22 tour he scored 35 tries – but failed to cross the Oldham try line.

Throughout the 1920s Oldham had a magnificent team. They were cup finalists in four consecutive seasons and had four players on the 1924 tour. One was Albert Brough who, in season 1923/24, scored 63 goals and 28 tries. That season Oldham again staged the Roses match which Lancashire won 6-5 to clinch the County Championship. Brough played in the Lancashire second-row that day, surprisingly the only Oldhamer to play in the match.

In 1928 the League Championship Final was staged in Oldham where Swinton clinched a clean sweep of trophies with an 11-0 victory over Featherstone Rovers. In the second-row for the Lions that day was the powerfully built Martin Hodgson who went on to play in 16 test matches for Great Britain. He is also credited with having landed the longest successful goal-kick of all time which was measured at 77.75 yd.



Martin Hodgson

In 1934 a French rugby league competition was established involving 12 clubs. One of those 12 founder members, Cote Basque, visited Oldham in October 1936 when they met a Northern League XIII. The British boys won 32-5 but outstanding in the French line-up was centre Andre Cussac. He made eight appearances for France

during the formative years of the game across the Channel.

The 1950s were boom years for rugby league, not only in Oldham, but also throughout the world. The World Cup competition became established and regular visits were made to Oldham by touring teams. In 1951 New Zealand visited Oldham and a seesaw match resulted in a thrilling 21-18 victory for the Kiwis. At hooker for New Zealand in that match was Lory Blanchard. He appeared in the 1954 World Cup and toured Europe again in 1955. Blanchard played in a total of 63 matches for the Kiwis at all levels and after hanging up his boots he became a respected coach, acting in that capacity for the 1971 Kiwi tourists.

Those 1971 tourists became the first Kiwis to win a test series in Britain since 1908. Prior to the tests, the Kiwis visited Oldham and ran in six tries to win 24-13. One of their try scorers was 17 years-old stand-off Dennis Williams. This handsome half-back went on to make 31 test appearances for New Zealand but on that 1971 tour he must have broken another world record. He received no fewer than 221 letters from a female admirer back home in New Zealand.



When the 1952 Kangaroo tourists came to Oldham, their appearance attracted a crowd of 19,370 and produced what were then record receipts of £2,856. They also produced a thrilling match which ended all square at 7-7. In that match the Oldham public were able

to see Kangaroo skipper and full-back Clive Churchill, the 'Little Master' who is regarded as the greatest player in the history of Australian rugby league.

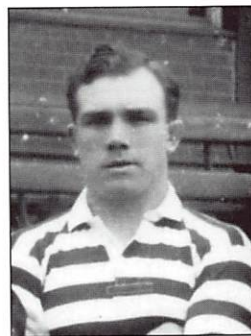
In 1965 floodlit rugby came to Oldham when the lights were switched on at Watersheddings. To mark the occasion, Great Britain's under-24 side met their French counterparts. A fiery yet entertaining encounter ensued with Great Britain winning 12-5. At loose-forward for France that evening was Jean-Pierre Clar, already a full international and a player who went on to represent France in 28 test encounters.

In 1973 the Kangaroos were back in town and they produced an awesome show of forward power in the 44-10 demolition of Oldham. Leading the Kangaroo pack was open side prop Artie Beetson, described as 'a giant with a silken touch' and the most constructive and destructive forward in Australian test history. He also played in 28 test matches.

The 1980s brought new visitors to Oldham in the shape of the Maoris. Those 1983 tourists met only amateur opposition and so ran up some hefty scores. The Oldham Amateurs, however, got stuck in and gave a gallant performance, losing by only 28-16 against a team fielding

nine full internationals. At centre in the Oldham team was Dave Cassells of Saddleworth Rangers. He was an outstanding amateur who holds the distinction of appearing in no fewer than 10 Standard Cup finals with Rangers. The Standard Cup final is an Easter institution in Oldham, the culmination of one of the most prestigious competitions in the amateur game. The competition began in 1904 when Heyside beat Rochdale Rangers 9-0 in the final and it has continued ever since, the most coveted prize in local amateur rugby.

Oldham's professional side enjoyed a successful spell in the mid-1980s, five of their players touring Australasia in 1984. Twelve months previously those same five players were included in the British under-21 side which took on France here in Oldham. Great Britain won that one-sided encounter 48-1 and fighting a lone battle for the visitors was scrum-half Giles Dumas. He graduated to full test status and won 25 test caps for France between 1986 and 1993.



Albert Brough

During this nostalgic look at rugby in Oldham I have mentioned 13 players, one from each of the 13 playing positions. Assembled together they would line up thus: Clive Churchill (Australia), Harold Horder (Australia), Andre Cussac (France), Dave Cassells (Saddleworth), Dally Messenger (Australia), Dennis Williams (New Zealand), Giles Dumas (France), Artie Beetson (Australia), Lory Blanchard (New Zealand), Doug Clark (Great Britain), Martin Hodgson (Great Britain), Albert Brough (Great Britain) and Jean-Pierre Clar (France).

Centre Dave Cassells would never imagine himself mentioned in such illustrious company. But he finds himself there on merit because he played a major role in the amateur game which has been and will continue to be part and parcel of the rugby league scene here in Oldham. It is hoped that the amateur game will continue to flourish alongside the professional club which by its very status will always attract more national media attention. Last August when Boundary Park fell silent prior to Oldham Bears' final home game as the nation paid its last respects to Diana, Princess of Wales, it could so easily have been paying its last respects to professional rugby in this town.

It is only because of the enthusiasm, commitment and courage of Christopher Hamilton, Melvyn Lord, Stuart Hardacre and Sean Whitehead that professional rugby continues to be played in this borough. Long may that be, so that the international stars of the greatest game on Earth will carry on gracing the playing fields of Oldham.

NEIL GIBBISON

—B.D.S., V.U. Manc—

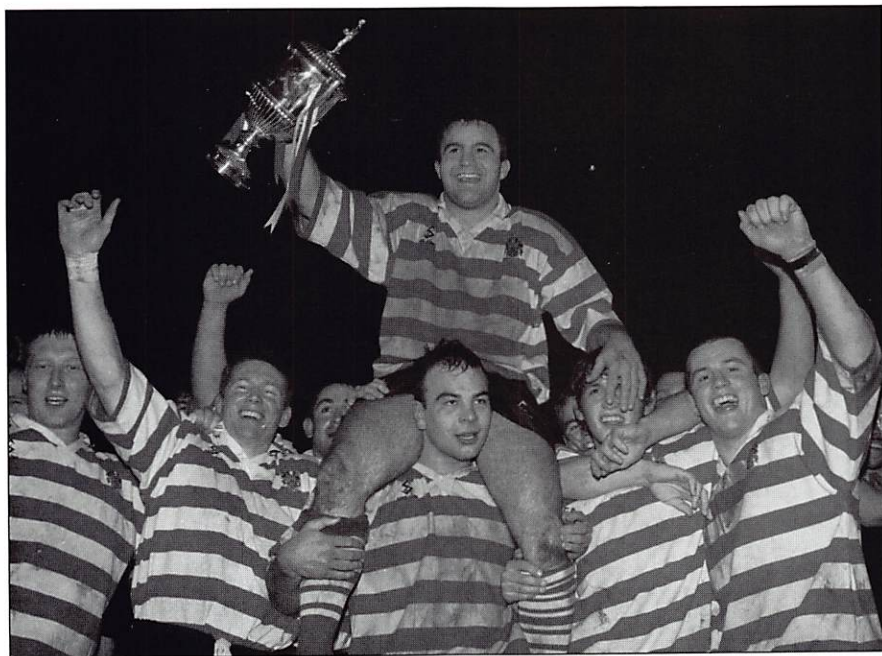
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Triumphant rebirth

Martyn Sadler, editor, *Rugby League Express*



RUGBY LEAGUE is part of the history, culture and folklore of the town of Oldham.

Anyone who reads Michael Turner's magnificent history of Oldham RLFC can have no possible doubt about that.

It's hard to imagine Oldham without its Rugby League club, and thanks to Chris Hamilton and his fellow directors, we won't have to. Being raised from the dead happened first almost 2,000 years ago, if reports are to be believed, so the Roughyeds are following in auspicious footsteps. In fact, we don't have to look that far back in history.

Bradford Northern was a famous Rugby League club that died in 1963. Yet the following season they re-formed, and last year that club won the Super League title.

Who is to say that in a few years' time it won't be Oldham who are the champions, playing in a new stadium?

In my younger days I was a Wakefield Trinity fan, and I still have very fond memories of that great Wakefield Trinity team of the 1960s. Any Oldham supporter who was

around at the time, of course, will tell you that in those days Oldham's loss was Trinity's gain, as Derek Turner, Don Vines and John Etty all left Watersheddings to come to Belle Vue, helping Trinity to win the Challenge Cup three times in the early 60s.

Those were great days, although both Oldham and Trinity have fallen on harder times since then.

But Rugby League is a demanding game, and Rugby League people are used to facing challenges. The Roughyeds faced a challenge on New Year's Day at Rochdale and came through it superbly. I was delighted that my newspaper, *Rugby League Express* was able to record that event.

I sincerely hope that under coach Paddy Kirwan and captain Neil Flanagan we'll be reporting many more Oldham triumphs.



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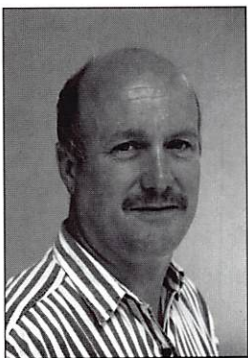
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'There are people for whom Oldham RLFC means everything'

**John Huxley,
Sunday Mirror
& Rugby League
Express**

THERE HAVE been times in the last few months when I have been afraid. Afraid that professional Rugby League was a goner in the town of Oldham.

For those of us who have had anything to do with the sport in Oldham, I worked for the Chronicle for four happy years in the 1970s, the club has become part of our lives while I recognise that there are people for whom Oldham RLFC means everything.

The move from Watersheddings was emotional enough but to lose the club altogether was just too challenging. That is why I was delighted to be asked to write this offering for an Oldham programme. I thought I may never have that privilege again!

Perhaps now that people have seen what happened to the ill-fated Bears they will realise you have to nurture and support a club if it is to survive. Such things as hanging on to membership of the Rugby Football League and even life itself do not remain as a right but it requires work and dedication to keep them going.

We are lucky because there are people in the town who are dedicated sufficiently to Rugby League to put their time and money into the club. They alone have made it possible to save the club. But they can't do it on their own from hereon. In the end the measure of success of any professional sports club is whether they can put out a team of paid players each week and whether sufficient people come through the gate for each match to make the club viable. Take either of these two requirements away and you have trouble, as the Bears discovered. Everything else, such as commercial activities that can be achieved, is a bonus.

I am both a traditionalist (I had a real soft spot for Watersheddings, warts 'n' all) and a progressionist. Rugby League can never stand still and we should never expect the clock to be stopped at any point in time so both Oldham and the game must move on.

Oldham have provided some magic moments in my Rugby League career, like Boxing Day matches where it seemed I knew so many friendly people, Cup disappointments, wins over Wigan and St Helens, and players such as Martin Murphy, Ken Wilson, Kevin Taylor, Geoff Munro, Frank Foster, Mike Elliott, Phil Larder, Paul Topping, Terry Flanagan and so many others who, besides being wonderful ambassadors in red and white, have become close friends of mine in life. That quality has been maintained because the club was re-born. But it was a close run thing.

Now we are able to think about the future, like what happens next to this phoenix-like operation and what can be achieved.

Super League, as far as Oldham is concerned, was an absolute nightmare. There must be a question mark about the management methods that allowed the Bears to fall out of existence but, at the same time, the town as well as its rugby supporters must ask itself whether they really wanted to support a team at that elevated level. The figures do not make pleasant reading because attendances for Super League were far from impressive but that is not to say that the club can't be achievers in the game of Rugby League.

Certain clubs have already accepted that full-time professionalism in Rugby League is beyond them and that they will strive for success at a different level. Could it be that Oldham will have to become one of those clubs? I don't know the answer and for me, like so many others, the jury is still out for Super League as far as clubs outside big cities are concerned. For the moment I'm just grateful that Oldham '97 are back playing professional Rugby League. You have to be satisfied at some point in time and then start working for what happens next.

To the people who had faith in the sport, the club and the town by backing the formation of the new club, can I just say a heartfelt 'Thank You'. There's nothing wrong with Rugby League if people still want to back it with time, money and support, and the idea of Rugby League without Oldham was almost too much to contemplate. Gentlemen and Ladies, you have restored my faith in the game and people by restoring Oldham to life. May good fortune be your constant companion from this moment on.

THE FOLLOWING letter was received from ex-Oldham RLFC player Les Anthony who joined Oldham after winning three full Welsh Rugby Union caps in 1948. A prop forward and occasional hooker, Les played 113 senior games for the club and settled to live in the town.

The warm sentiments expressed in his letter would seem to epitomise the goodwill and sincere optimism felt by everyone who has been associated with Oldham RLFC.

Dear Sir,

I arrived at Oldham in 1948, having played Rugby Union for Neath and Wales, and enjoyed six seasons playing for the Club. My family and I have supported Oldham Rugby League ever since, through good times and bad, and have witnessed many changes resulting in the very sad end of the old Club.

Fortunately, thanks to the hard work and commitment of the new committee members/directors, Oldham 1998 has been formed and I would like to personally thank the new committee/directors for taking on such a task, and congratulate the Club on their recent fine Law Cup win which gives us plenty of optimism for the future.

My family and I would like to take this opportunity to wish the new Club all the very best for the future and, as witnessed with the large turnout at Rochdale, I am sure they can count on the support of the Oldham people.

Yours sincerely,

Les Anthony

Bryn Goldswain introduces fellow welshmen Bryn Day and Les Anthony to the recently arrived Sid Little in February 1952. Left to right: Bryn Goldswain, Bryn Day, Les Anthony and Sid Little



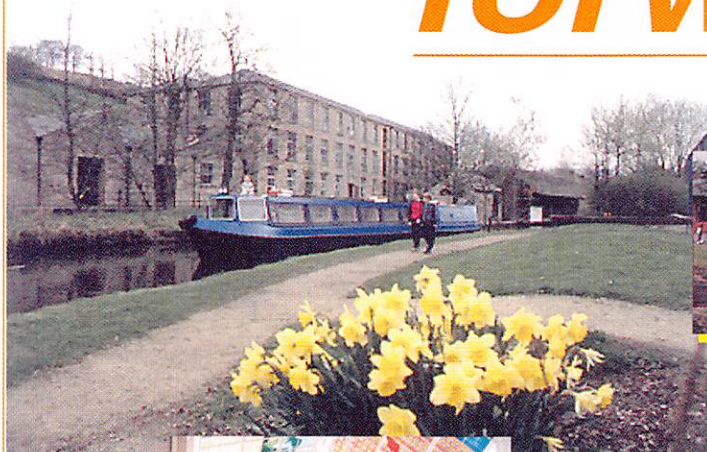


Afi Leuila takes a crunching tackle in the Law Cup match at Rochdale



Wingman Joe McNicholas takes on the Hornets' defence

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OLDHAM against 'non-league' opponents *(in the RL Challenge Cup)*

Rival captains Edgar Brooks of Oldham and Stephen Nicholson of Broughton Moor shake hands before the cup tie at Watersheddings in 1949 under the watchful eye of the referee, Mr Cottam of Wakefield

THE FIRST time Oldham encountered non-league opposition in the Challenge Cup was in the first round of 1899 when **GOOLE** were thrashed 63 - 0 at Watersheddings. The emphatic score included five tries for Sam Williams and four for Tom Fletcher. In all 17 tries were scored with only six goals !

Two years later **OTLEY** proved to be a much sterner test before going down 19 - 0 again at Watersheddings. Tom Fletcher again being the scourge of the amateurs with another four tries.

The following year on March 15th, 1902, a visit to **MARYPORT** in Cumberland resulted in a 27 - 0 victory for the Roughyeds.

On March 13th, 1913, Oldham visited **NORMANTON ST JOHNS** where they were given a tough game before emerging the victors 17 - 4.

ELLAND WANDERERS were defeated by 41 - 5 at Watersheddings in February 1921 and as luck would have it the teams were paired again the following year but this time Oldham made the trip over to Yorkshire to again secure victory 29 - 0.

Into the 1930s and the first Lancashire amateurs to take on the club were our very own **HIGGINSHAW**, very much one of the leading junior clubs of the day, 'Higgy' put up

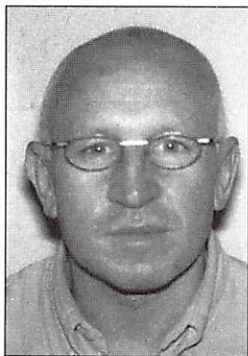
a spirited early show before tiring in the later stages to go down 38 - 2.

The only time Oldham played an amateur team over the two leg system was in 1949 when the Cumbrian team **BROUGHTON MOOR** lost at Watersheddings 30 - 0, with the Roughyeds also winning the second leg the following week 35 - 2. This match was played at Workington.

In 1960 **WALNEY CENTRAL** met Oldham in the second round after defeating fellow amateurs Lock Lane in round one. The highlight of the Oldham victory 54 - 5 was the six tries scored by international winger Ike Southward.

It would be nineteen years before another match against an amateur team. This came to pass when **ACE** of Hull were drawn to come to Oldham. After several postponements the match was played at Salford with the Roughyeds progressing by the score 23 - 5. This was a boom period for the game on Humberside and the amateurs actually suggested that Oldham switch the tie to the 'third port' but Oldham held out for home advantage, albeit to eventually play in front of only 865 spectators at The Willows.

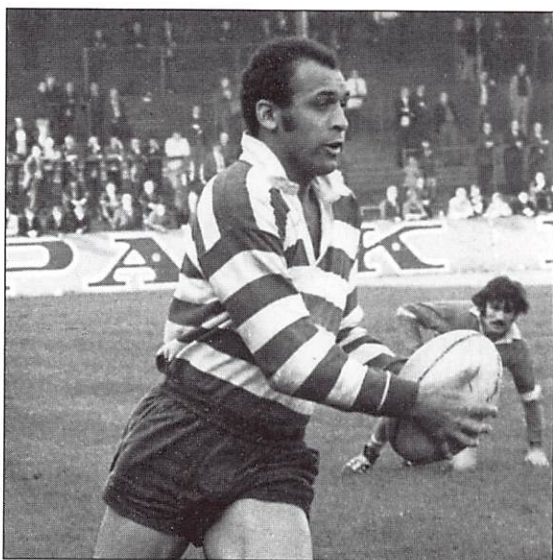
Michael Turner



Endeavour, effort and loyalty

Jack Dearden, presenter, BBC GMR Sport

AND SO they came, not bearing gifts of frankincense, myrrh and gold, but of endeavour, effort and loyalty. They didn't have to travel from as far away as the orient, it was South Wales, Leigh, and from the suburbs of Oldham. Mike Elliott, Kevin Taylor and Martin Murphy played 1,337 matches for Oldham RLFC. It's not the type of thing that appears to happen nowadays, and is fast



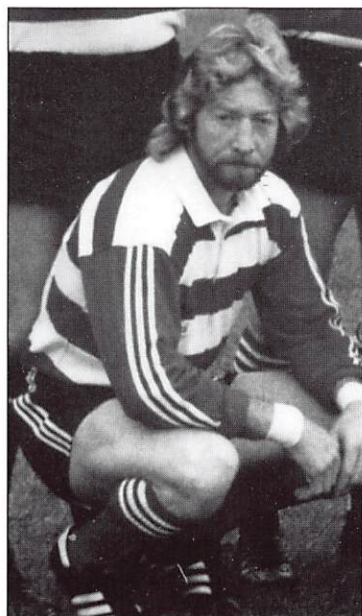
Mike Elliott

becoming a thing of the past in sport. All three have their own memories of the occasions they proudly donned the colours of the Roughyeds. **Mike Elliott** travelled from South Wales, hailing from the village of Blaina, and at first couldn't wait to return, going back to

the valleys at every opportunity. 'After agreeing to join, having been spotted playing Rugby Union, where I was also working down the pit, it came as a culture shock. Cobbled streets and gas lights were not what I had expected, but gradually after about eight months, time turned full circle and I then found myself wanting to remain in the town rather than go back home. Eventually I met and married an Oldham girl at the age of 26 and here I am, a fully fledged Welshman, living in Oldham with great memories of representing the team.'

'I recall Phil Larder as my playing centre, who always fancied coaching, so it comes as no real surprise to see him involved, although it did raise an eyebrow when he switched to the Union code.'

Full back
**Martin
Murphy**



Martin Murphy

arrived in 1966 from Astley and Tilsbury Colliers, and has no hesitation recalling his best ever moment in an Oldham shirt. 'I scored a length-of-the-field try in the semi-final of the 1972 Floodlit Trophy and it was selected as the BBC Try of the Season, and even though we lost the game it was a great honour, but I've never seen the try since. My wife tried to get a copy of it from the BBC for my 40th birthday but they wanted about £60 a minute for the copy so in the end we didn't bother.'

Wages in those early days were hardly massive: 'Mine were six quid a loss and nine if we won,' he said. Another highlight for Martin was his testimonial season. 'Even now I'm still grateful to the people who worked so hard on my behalf, and I'm pleased to see that genuine people now seem to be involved with the club.'

Murph, as he was affectionately known, also remembers a memorable game for England in France when he scored the match-winning try. 'We played in Perpignon and won 11-9, and that saved a bollocking from a certain Alex Murphy.'

Hooker **Kevin Taylor** was another stalwart who actually turned down the chance to sign for Wigan to play for his home town club: 'I recall going to Central Park with my dad to sign for them, but then Oldham stepped in at the last minute and the fact that they were on my doorstep swayed it, but I've never had any regrets'. Kevin was also quick to praise the help he had from Tug Wilson in those early days: 'He was my mentor as well as being a great player himself'. Kevin perhaps surprisingly also remembers being an

advocate of summer rugby even in that bygone era. 'I always thought that the idea of playing summer-time rugby could turn out to be a winner and I do enjoy watching today's top teams playing exciting open rugby, and even though I don't get to many live games, it's still a great sport, ideal for TV coverage.'



Kevin Taylor

And the mention of TV coverage prompts more fond memories from the former hooker. 'Mike Stevenson played for a Great Britain team at Watersheddings against Oldham and we beat them, and I was lucky enough to grab two tries.'

These days it's hard to imagine the same type of loyalty which these players, and others like them, displayed. It is rapidly turning into a thing of the past. And you know, I'm not entirely convinced that it is good for the game.

A view from the amateurs by Brian Walker

FOR SOME 20 years the relationship between both the amateur and professional codes of our beloved sport have been nothing short of crass. Spectators, players and the majority of most club officials, amateur and professional alike, have been at the very least confused at the continual breakdown of talks to talk about talks by BARLA and the RFL – boneheaded, moronic attitudes prevailed.

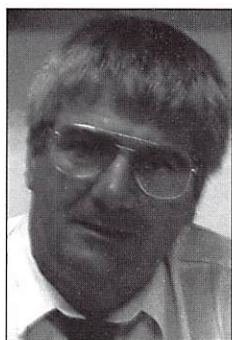
In recent months, though we have seen on both sides the emergence of bright, level-headed, sports-minded administrators resulting in, at last, the formulation of a ten-man joint policy board. Sensible, level-headed reasoning has become the norm. It's good to talk!

BARLA chairman and vice-chairman Michael Morrissey and Stuart Sheard, FASDA officers Bob McDermott and Bob Scott, Lord Lofthouse of Pontefract (former Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons) and RFL chairman Sir Rodney Walker and the rest of their colleagues will certainly now force the issue.

Whilst locally, amateur and pro relationships have not been as strained, neither have they been rosy! Resulting, I believe, in too many talented kids moving out of town to play the pro code.

Times are now a changin' with the new Oldham board determined to forge a strong amateur–pro relationship and I am convinced with the reciprocation of the amateurs.

To judge the mood and reactions within the amateur camp, St Anne's secretary John Fitzsimmons, Phil McLean (youth chairman North-West Counties and chairman Waterhead Youth), Frank Walsh (Saddleworth Rangers committee man in charge of youth development and chairman of the Oldham Junior League), were invited to air their views:



MANY people thought the demise of Oldham Bears would be a blessing in disguise for the amateur clubs of Oldham, especially Saddleworth, Waterhead and ourselves, who are involved at the highest levels of the amateur game. But whilst accepting that many more people would

aren't always there. So the need for a comfortable stadium and the chance to watch professionals playing the game at the highest level is paramount for the advancement of their skills and enthusiasm.

The foresight and commitment of Chris Hamilton and his fellow directors has not only given us back 'Our Team' but has ensured that the youngsters of this town have the opportunity to advance to the senior ranks of this great game of ours.

The first game at Rochdale on New Year's Day proved the point, as an Oldham team made up predominantly from 'local' lads who made their names on the fields of our amateur clubs, did the town proud against all the odds to take the A. J. Law Cup. They were a credit to our town and themselves, but most of all they were a credit to the many amateur clubs who persevered with them as youngsters and gave them their chance of glory.

Perhaps the misty-eyed of us in that crowd – remembering Neil Flanagan, a former St Anne's player, raising his first trophy aloft – harbour that Wembley 'dream'. It's early days yet, but dreams eventually do come true.

John Fitzsimmons, secretary St Anne's ARLFC

watch us, it was generally felt that a professional club in Oldham was vital for the continued development of rugby in the town.

Most of the amateur clubs boast youth sections ranging from Under 7s to Under 18s when as many as 150 children (both boys and girls), from one club alone, would practise through the week, perfecting their skills for the masses of keen and eager parents on Sunday mornings.

But how can they monitor their own progress and compare their efforts with the top players in the game? Many will watch their own open-age teams but the facilities to provide suitable vantage points

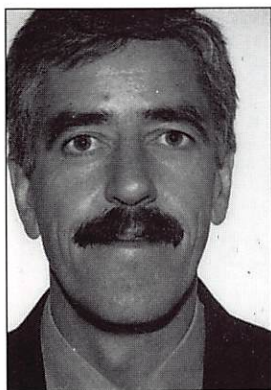
PROFESSIONAL Rugby League in Oldham has a long and varied history. The Oldham Club, was a founder member of the league and instrumental in the set up and running of The Northern Union in its formative years, all this is well known and well documented. Less well known is the massive part that the Oldham club played in the formation of the amateur game in this area. The financial help was second only to the practical aid given by far sighted committee members of the Oldham club, who made a point of going to amateur clubs to advise on coaching methods, fund raising, and advice on the day to day running of clubs. By the turn of this century the people of Oldham had taken professional rugby to their hearts. The local school's had 20 teams playing to a very high standard. Most of the amateur club's playing in this area today have roots that stretch back to this early school's system. One of the earliest associations to develop out of the school's system was the Scholars Northern Union. The aim of this league was to enable young people to play a character building sport that would keep them off the streets and out of mischief. The age group of this league was 14 to 17 year's old. The Oldham club backed this league to the tune of ten pound's for every club who formed and joined the league, a massive amount of money for the time. The thinking behind this decision by the Oldham club was that it would help create a pool of ready-made players for them to tap into in the future.

By the end of the First World War, there were dozen's of leagues in the Oldham area and the age limit for amateur players had risen to 21 years. The only player's who could play after this age were professional's. The general consensus of opinion was that if a player had not signed professional by 21, then he should spend his time working and bringing up his family, and not playing rugby. It would be ten years or so before the amateur code became truly open age. From the start of amateur rugby in the town until the mid 1960s, the Oldham club paid a stipend to all

amateur club's in the area, on more than one occasion the professional body paid extra funds to amateur club's to help stave off bankruptcy. The Oldham club has always supported the amateur's locally as the amateur players and spectators have supported the Oldham club, with the notable exception of the last few years. One could write a book about the reasons for this, but the major contributory factor has to be that for one reason or another Oldham managed to totally alienate it's fan base, not an easy thing to do when one considers that in this area there are in excess of 500 young people between the age of 5 and 12 who all play rugby league on a regular basis, in a proper structured league. Almost all these young players have the same ambition that is to play professionally for Oldham RLFC. These young players need the Oldham club as an example of what can be attained through playing the game. Oldham needs to keep these players interested in Oldham for as players or spectators they are the future of the club.

I've managed to flit through 100 years of history in a few paragraphs and I am proud to say that I have been a supporter of Oldham for almost half of that time. That time has given me some wonderful memories and some sad regrets. But it has to be said that the most exciting time in all those years is now. Oldham in the past was never afraid to try new ideas, now is perhaps the time to go back to the roots of our game. Committed local committee members who have the interests of the club and the town at heart, local coaches in tune with the committee, and a team made up of mainly local players who really want to play for Oldham. The rugby league world is focused on the Oldham experiment, and all the big guns are wondering if this could be the way forward for our great game. Well, if Oldham can restore the nucleus of what is potentially a huge fan base then the next 100 years will be very special indeed.

Francis Phillip McLean, youth chairman North-West Counties and chairman Waterhead Youth



OLDHAM RLFC has over the years acquired, rightly or wrongly, a reputation for ignoring home-grown talent. With the exception of Paddy Kirwan and Terry Flanagan it is difficult to remember any other local lads who have signed on for Oldham and stayed the course.

Amateur clubs, meanwhile, often stand accused of fostering an

anti-Oldham attitude amongst their youth teams, and of actively encouraging their talented prodigies to join out-of-town clubs.

rights and wrongs of both camps could be argued forever. What is apparent, though, is that neither Oldham RLFC nor the amateurs gain from the situation as it stands. The professional club rarely gets local players on its books; the amateurs rarely get the benefit of players with professional experience returning to play for them.

The re-birth of Oldham RLFC gives everyone the chance to make a fresh start. A cohesive policy for the filtering of talented players to Oldham RLFC can and should be adopted if the professional is to make any real progress over the next few years.

Oldham youngsters always say they would love to play for their home town team. Oldham RLFC tell us they would like to sign the town's most talented players. So where's the problem?

Frank Walsh, Saddleworth committeeman in charge of youth development and chairman of the Oldham Junior League

The discord is long standing and deep rooted and the

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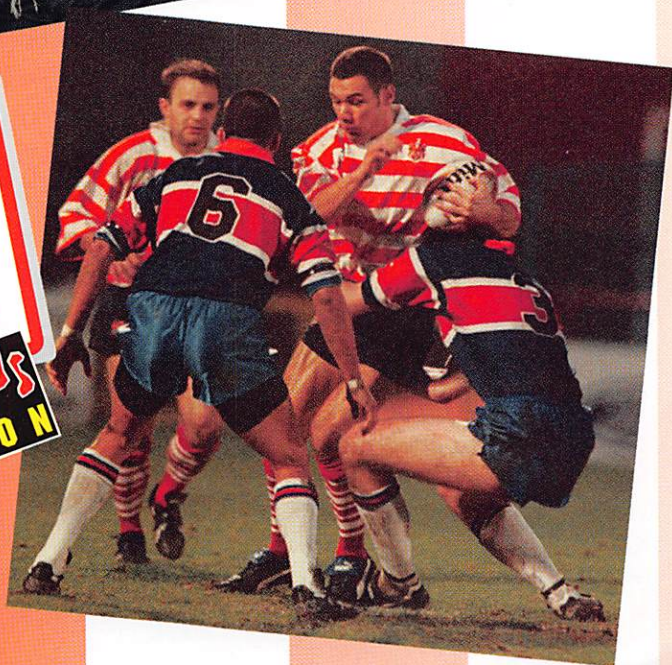
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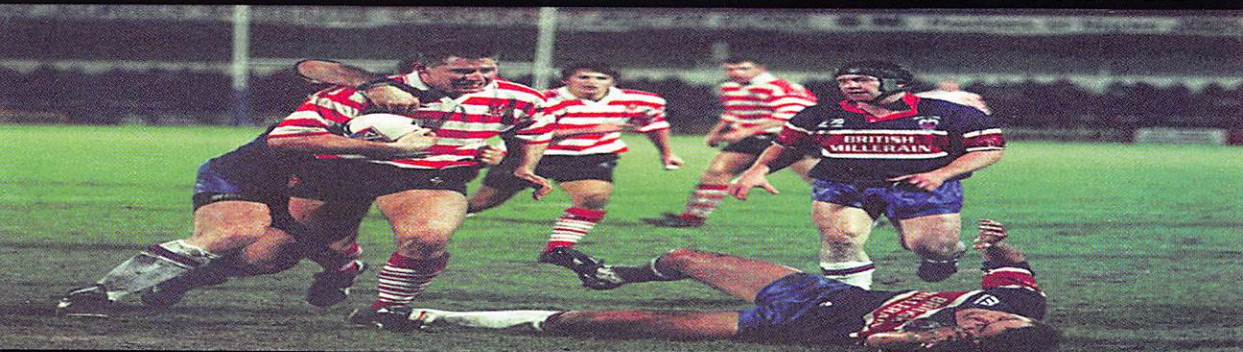
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BASICS**

The Roughyeds
BACK IN ACTION





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OLDHAM RLFC

1. Steven Wilde
 3. Chris Eckersley
 3. Adrian Meade
 4. Shaun Cooper
 5. Joe McNicholas
 6. Craig Barker
 7. Neil Flanagan
 8. Danny Guest
 9. John Hough
 10. Martin Maders
 11. Brian Quinlon
 12. Mike Prescott
 13. Ian Sinfield
 14. Darren Robinson
 15. Craig Diggle
 16. Paul Round
 17. Keith Atkinson
- Coaches: Paddy Kirwan
& Mick Coates
- Colours: Red and white
hooped shirts, navy blue shorts,
red & white socks.

HEWORTH ARLFC

1. Richard Darling
 2. James Allitt
 3. Andy Tindall
 4. Andy Gabel
 5. Nathan Witty
 6. Mark Green
 7. Chris Hammerton
 8. Jason Gatus
 9. Anthony Howcroft
 10. Chris Plowman
 11. Danny Wright
 12. Guy Gray
 13. Steve Barnard
 14. Mick Harrison
 15. Darren Wheatley
 16. Andy Mercer
 17. Scott Wrigglesworth
- Coaches: Stuart Horton
& Keith Loft
- Colours: Black and white
hooped shirts, white shorts,
black socks.

Officials

Ref: Ivan Crabtree (Leeds)
Touch Judges: Steve Wright
Ian Muir. Reserve Ref: Alan Burke

The Roughyeds
BACK IN ACTION

**BACK
TO
BASICS**

