game line-up

OLDHAM R.L.F.C

SWINTON LIONS

OLDHAM SQUAD	Played		SWINTON LIONS SQUAD
PAUL ASHTON			WAYNE ENGLISH
CHRIS BAINES			ANDY SAYWELL
JASON BOULTS			DARREN WOODS
GENO COSTIN			SEAN CONWAY
ANDY CRABTREE			MARLON BILLY
ANDY GOREY			MARTIN MOANA
ALAN HADCROFT			LIAM MCGOVERN
JOHN HOUGH			BRUCE JOHNSON
DREW HOUSTON			PHIL WOOD
SIMEON HOYLE			GARETH HAYES
GARETH LANGLEY			DAVE NEWTON
CRAIG LITTLER			CHRIS MORLEY
RICHARD MERVILL			CRAIG ASHALL
PAUL O'CONNOR			CHRIS HOUGH
MARK OGDEN			JOHN WALKER
STUART OLDHAM			MIKE SMITH
NEIL RODEN			ROD LINE
WES ROGERS			DESI WILLIAMS
IAN SINFIELD			PAUL ALCOCK
KRIS SMITH			MARK BROCKLEHURST
MICHAEL STOUT			MATTY BRYERS
SAID TAMGHART			CHRIS CAMPBELL
ALEX WILKINSON			CRAIG FARRIMOND
LEE WINGFIELD			RICHARD MARSHALL
			STEVE MCCURRIE
			ADAM SHARPLES
			MATT SHEEN

match officials

REFEREE: MR D MERRICK TOUCH JUDGES: R STOKES, I CURZON
4TH OFFICIAL: P TABERNER

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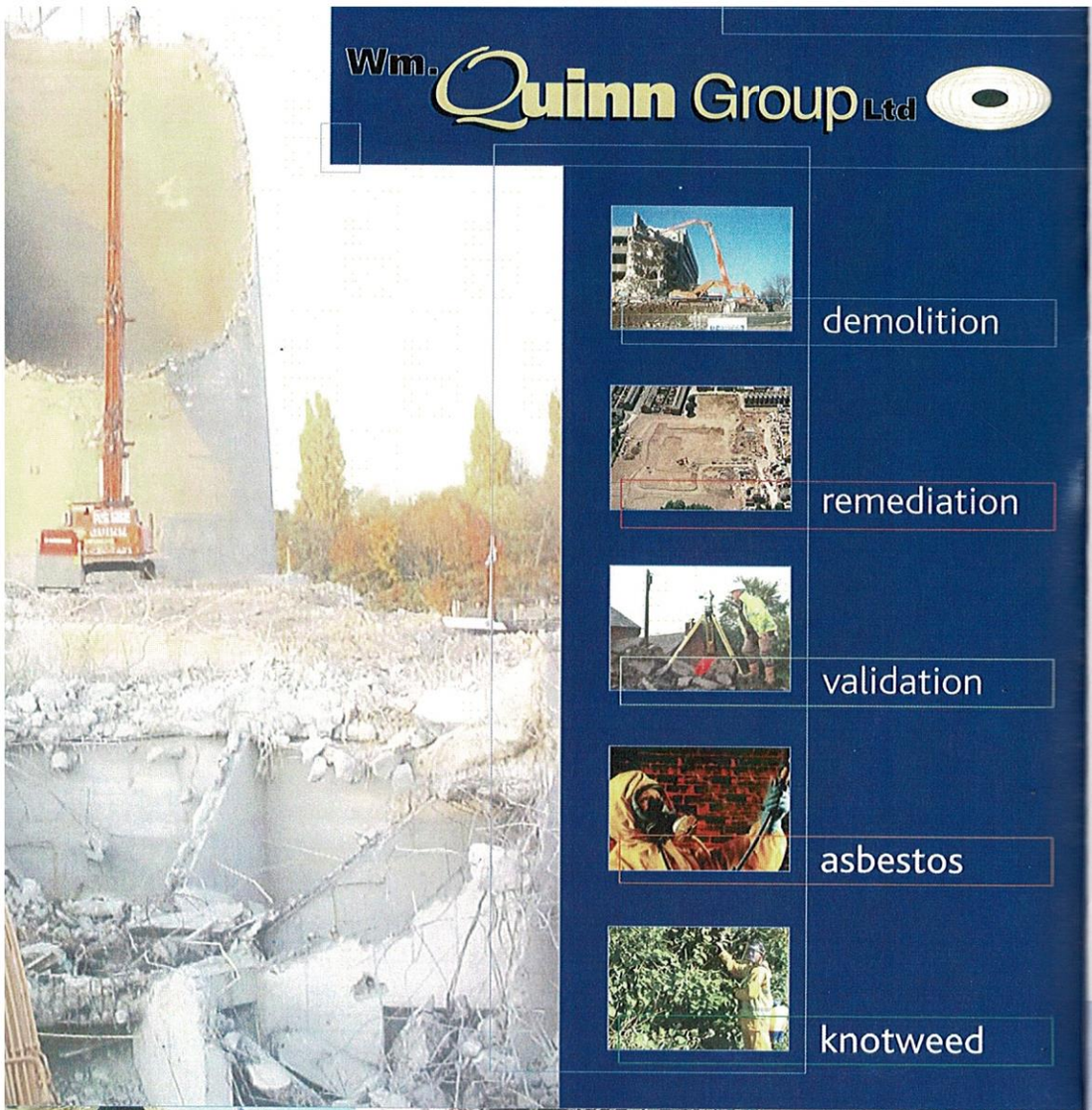
OLD BOYS' REUNION AS LIONS COME TO TOWN

IAN SINFIELD (left) and KRIS SMITH — two of the six players who were at Swinton last year and are now with the Roughyeds. The others are Andy Crabtree, Wes Rogers, Mike Stout and Stuart Oldham. Pictures courtesy of Swinton Supporters' Trust.

OLDHAM RLFC OFFICIAL MATCHDAY PROGRAMME



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Trans-Penine Cup
Finalists - 1998

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Club of the Year - 2000
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MOST APPEARANCES: John Hough, **209** - Jan 1998 - September 2005
CONSECTUTIVE APPEARANCES: Phil Farrel, **67** - *April 2nd 2000 - March 15th 2002
*John Hough was on the team for every match February 1st 1999 - April 16th 2001 (82)
TRIES IN A SEASON: Nick Johnson, **25** - 2004
GOALS IN A SEASON: Pat Rich, **146** - 2000-2001
POINTS IN A SEASON: Pat Rich, **320** - 2000-2001
DROP GOALS IN A SEASON: Neil Roden, **7** - 2001-2002
TRIES IN A CAREER: Mark Sibson, **60** - 1999-2002
GOALS IN A CAREER: Pat Rich, **254** - 1999-2001
POINTS IN A CAREER: Pat Rich, **576** - 1999-2001
DROP GOALS IN A CAREER: Neil Roden, **18** - 2000-2003
TRIES IN MATCH: Mark Sibson v Wigan St. Judes, **4** - Feb 8th 2000 at Boundary Park
Mark Sibson v Queensbury, **4** - Jan 28th 2001 at Boundary Park
David Gibbons v Chorley Lynx, **4** - Jan 30th 2001 at Boundary Park
James Bunyan v Featherstone Rovers, **4** - Apr 12th 2004 at Boundary Park
GOALS IN A MATCH: Simon Svabic v Swinton Lions, **10** - Apr 6th 2003 at Boundary Park
POINTS IN A MATCH: Gareth Barber v Dewsbury Rams, 26 - Apr 2nd 2002 at Hurst Cross
(7 goals, 3 tries)
DROP GOALS IN A MATCH: Neil Roden v Workinton Town, 2 - dec 17th 2000 at Derwent Park
John Braddish v Hull KR, 2 - Dec 16th 2001 at New Craven Park
HIGHEST SCORE/WINNING MARGIN: v Yorks Wasps, 70-6 - Apr 1st 2001 at Huntington Stadium
v Queensbury (amt), 64-0 - Jan 28th 2001 RLCC 3rd Rnd at Boundary Park

The views expressed in this matchday magazine do not necessarily reflect those of the management and staff of Oldham RLFC (1997) Ltd.

CLUB DIRECTORY

The Roughyeds
Oldham Rugby League Football Club (1997) Limited
Lansdowne Road, Chadderton, Oldham OL9 9EF
Telephone: 0161 628 3677
Fax: 0161 627 5700
Club Shop: 0161 627 2141

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Derek Turner 1955-59
Kevin Taylor 1962-77
Mike Elliott 1962-79
Bob Irving 1964-74
Martin Murphy 1966-82
Terry Flanagan 1979-89
Andy Goodway 1979-85 & 1993-94

We would like to express our thanks to the Oldham Evening Chronicle, League Publications Ltd, Phil Burdge and all concerned for the use of photographs.(www.digisport.co.uk)

www.roughyeds.co.uk

WELCOME TO BOUNDARY PARK

in the chair

with Chris Hamilton

Welcome back to Boundary Park for our second home game in a row.

Last week's game against Rochdale was disappointing in so much as we didn't get the result we wanted, but given that we had 15 of the 17 players on show making their debuts it was a performance full of guts and one which for long periods of the game would have had people guessing which of the two teams was from a higher division. We know that there is plenty more to come from this side but one of the most pleasing aspects of the game was the sheer brute force that we showed in our tackling.

I cant remember an Oldham side dominating so much and some of the hits that went in were awesome and set the crowd buzzing. There is one thing for sure there would have been some sore bodies the day after!

Said Tamghart in particular demonstrated what great potential he has and the pleasing thing also was the fact that it was all controlled aggression with virtually no dirty play in the game.

It is a measure of the belief within the camp that we were genuinely disappointed not to have won the game and hopefully we can go one step further today against a Swinton side who already have three points in the bag after beating Hunslet. With several players having swapped between the sides over the last few months the game will be full of rivalry and with the Lions also being in the Second Division with us today's contest is an important one.

We were pleased with last week's crowd and hopefully today will see a similar number of you in attendance. We have announced another major sponsorship deal this week with Capio Oaklands Hospital which will see the club spreading its wings throughout the town in the next twelve months via a new community programme and this is one of a number of initiatives which will be revealed over the course of the next few weeks as we make a determined effort to bring back the good times and increase attendances.

It is important to stress though that no matter what we do off the field we need to have a winning team to get people back to watching us - both old fans and new - and you can rest assured that this group of players, together with the coaching staff, are fully committed to giving you that.

For your part we would ask that you continue to give the team your full backing and be as vocal as possible and together we can make great strides.

Thanks for your support.

Chris

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deeks's coach approach

with Steve Deakin

FIRST of all I would like to give a big thank-you to the fans who turned up for the Rochdale game last week to give us a crowd of 1,145 --- more than 300 up on the corresponding game last year.

That's an extremely encouraging percentage increase and it's the sort of support-base response to things that have been going on at the club, on and off the field, that puts a spring into the stride of everyone who is working so hard behind the scenes.

Speaking on behalf of the players and coaches, I can tell you it helps a lot when fans turn up in force, demonstrate their support for us, get behind us and remain positive. When that happens the players can concentrate on their football in the sure knowledge that the people up in the stand are right behind them.

Despite our defeat against Rochdale, there were a lot of positives in our performance: far too many to list them all here, that's for sure.

We will improve in the offensive third of the field when we get two half-backs out there. I felt that, in the derby, we were a little bit predictable and relied too much upon Neil Roden. That said, we crossed the Hornets line five times, but were awarded only two tries so that proves beyond any doubt that we need to be more clinical in our finishing.

Turning to today's game we get an early opportunity to set a benchmark against NL2 opponents who were one of last season's Grand Final teams and who are widely expected to do well again this year.

I am sure they will pose as many problems for us as did Rochdale. Hopefully, having had a week to put the Rochdale game to bed and to prepare for the visit of the Lions, we will have rectified some of the slight problems we had last week and can produce enough to encourage you, our supporters, not only to cheer us on, but to cheer us on to victory.

I would also like to publicly thank, in this column, all our sponsors, old and new. Their backing is much appreciated by the lads in the dressing room because the players know how important it is for the future of the club that support comes in from as many sources as possible. They also feel, and I agree with them wholeheartedly, that as a collective unit ---- directors, staff, sponsors, supporters, coaches and players ---- we can move forward and advance the club to a bright future.

Enjoy the game --- and please get behind the team.

Deaks

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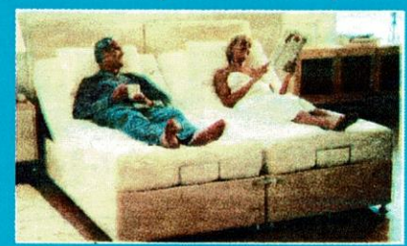

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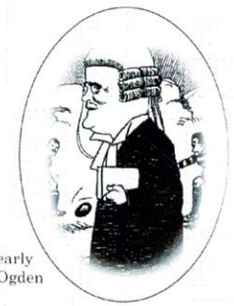

John Armstrong, Clerk Of The Peace, Oldham and Lancashire rugby player, early pioneer of both Oldham Rugby Club and solicitors Armstrong, Whitticker and Ogden forerunners to today's Oldham RLFC solicitors Wrigley Claydon.

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men and matters

with Roger Halstead

Roughyeds have struck a five-figure sponsorship deal with the private Capio Oaklands Hospital in Salford.

It's the tenth deal of its kind to be sealed by Roughyeds in the past few weeks and, as part of the agreement, Capio Oaklands will partner the club on a major Sportsmatch application for a full programme of community work.

The hospital will be secondary club sponsors, named on both home and away kits, but they will be main sponsors of the club's community programme. This will include rugby league coaching in Oldham's schools and colleges and tackling lifestyle issues such as health, fitness, diet, obesity and drug awareness.

Roughyeds will tap into Capio's expertise and have the assistance of their staff in delivering their healthy-living message to schools across the borough.

"Capio will work with us and they will also help us to land, via Sportsmatch, what we hope will be a major new part of our off-the-field operation," said Roughyeds chairman Chris Hamilton. "If the Sportsmatch bid is successful it will double the value of the deal and we will employ development staff to deliver the programme."

Injured Roughyeds players have had operations at the hospital for the past few years, while Capio sponsored Mr Hamilton last October on his 225-mile walk to raise money for the fight against breast cancer.

Their only other sponsorship backing involves support for amateur sports clubs in South Manchester, such as Cheadle Lacrosse Club and Timperley Hockey Club.

Helen Rocca, the matron, said: "We have struck up a good relationship with the Roughyeds in the last three or four years, and we are delighted to cement it with this major sponsorship deal.

"It's our first venture into the north of the region, our first into professional sport and our first into rugby league.

"Oldham is quite close to us, and we hope the deal with Roughyeds will help us to raise public awareness in that area of the services we provide."

The hospital is a leading private hospital, situated in Lancaster Road, Salford -- just off the East Lancs Rd -- and offers a range of treatments for pain relief, physiotherapy and sports injuries as well as a wide range of other services.

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Roughyeds now have a sponsorship and corporate portfolio which includes deals with Wrigley Claydon Solicitors; the William Quinn Group (main club sponsors); First Bus; Better Health gym in Featherstall Road; Totalplus Communications of Ashton-under-Lyne; the Oldham Chronicle; Belvoir (property leasing) of Shaw; Fit4Sport of Lees; Spindles Town Square Shopping Centre; and Capio Oaklands Hospital (secondary club sponsors and main sponsors of the club's new community programme).

THE new system of awarding competition points in NL1, NL2 and the Northern Rail Cup group stages came into effect for the first time last weekend. In our case, Roughyeds were in line to pick up one point from the derby with Rochdale Hornets until five minutes from the end when Dave McConnell's try took the visitors into a 13-point lead.

Under the new system, clubs are awarded three competition points for a win, two competition points for a draw and one competition point if they lost a match by 12 points or fewer.

A club that loses a game by 13 points or more will be awarded no competition points from that particular fixture.

This new system was agreed after productive discussions were held between the RFL and all member clubs in both National Leagues.

Nigel Wood, the RFL's Chief Operating Officer, said: "Following discussions, we are excited to be introducing this new development for clubs competing in the National Leagues and the Northern Rail Cup in the 2007 season.

"We believe this is a progressive move and will generate increased levels of competition and interest in the National Leagues and the Northern Rail Cup.

"The RFL believes it will encourage an exciting, attacking brand of rugby league for spectators to enjoy throughout the forthcoming season.

"The new system is an element of our ongoing efforts to increase the profile of the sport at this level and we look forward to watching this new development helping to continue the vibrant growth of the Northern Rail Cup and the National Leagues."

OLDHAM'S game against Celtic Crusaders at Bridgend in early May will be shown live on Sky --- the first NL2 game to be screened as part of Sky's new deal with the RFL for raising the profile of clubs in NL1 and NL2.

The match was originally scheduled to take place in South Wales on Friday evening, May 4 --- the same weekend as Millennium Magic in Cardiff when six Super League games will be played at the famous stadium on the Saturday and Sunday.

However, fans should note that it has now been changed to Thursday evening, May 3, kick-off 7.35pm.

No doubt Sky's presence in nearby Cardiff over that weekend had a bearing on the decision to televise a National League game from Bridgend on the Thursday. Nevertheless, the Celtic Crusaders versus Oldham game will be regarded by both Sky and the RFL as one that can promote the image of the sport outside the top two rungs of the professional ladder.

It's an honour for the club --- and one that should crate considerable interest nearer the time.

with Geoff Cooke

cooke-ability!

Over the closed season Ray French has been at the forefront of proposing a number of interesting initiatives.

"On the Road" Challenge Cup fixtures is one idea I like. It has the potential to satisfy the objectives of Carnegie College by publicising its value in some neglected areas As with soccer some recent Challenge Cup games have not attracted the levels of attendance that league fixtures have. So, games in the later stages of the competition played in spots like Glasgow, Dublin, Coventry, Ipswich or Gloucester have the potential to attract a whole new audience starved of seeing the game live.

An even better idea mooted by Mr. French was a Bastille Day fixture against France. July 14th is out of season for soccer and rugby union so rugby league has the field to itself as regards team sports at this time of year. The idea has the merit of providing competitive international play in mid-season to weigh up prospective England players ahead of any Autumn competition. If, as is proposed, the number of Super League games is to be reduced because of player overload a free date can be opened up without adding to the burden. Indeed, for those selected it provides a wonderful opportunity to establish their international credentials and, of course, an additional payday. And I'm sure such a game played in Toulouse, Perpignan or Carcassonne would tempt French T.V. companies like Canal+. As rugby union's Six Nations and Heineken Cup demonstrate there is nothing like international competition for creating media interest. Look at the column inches these games generate and then look at Heineken Cup attendances (often well below Super League) to calculate the effect!

SUPPORT GROUP NEWS

As we begin the club's 10th Anniversary season, we have good reason to celebrate with renewed optimism. Our debt to The Crown fullfilled, new and renewed sponsorship, and the announcement of a new major shareholder, have all materialised within a very short period of time.

Chris and Sean have worked miracles to first save, then stabilise the club's future. Many personal sacrifices have been made, and we must never underestimate their achievements.

We now welcome Bill Quinn in the hope that strong foundations have been laid for The Roughyeds to go from strength to strength.

From funds raised at our monthly Quiz Nights, we are to sponsor local lad Paul Ashton. 'Ashy' has worked hard to achieve his ambition of a contract with Oldham. We wish him well.

Our next Quiz Night is this Tuesday, February 20 in the social club at 8.30pm.----

Sheila

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halstead's choice

by ROGER HALSTEAD

FOURTEEN years on, Ian Sinfield is in no doubt who should take the credit for setting him on the path to becoming a professional rugby league player.

From the age of nine he had, in his own words, been no more than "just average" while playing for Oldham Juniors, which later became part of the Waterhead set-up. But when he was 16 he came under the influence of coach Peter Byrne --- and that's when Mr Average began to realise he could be just a little bit more than that!

"I owe Peter a lot," recalls Sinny all these years later. "He spent a lot of time with me, took me under his wing, pointed me in the right direction and gave me a lot of confidence. For the first time I began to think I might make it as a pro."

He wasn't on his own. Almost overnight, it seemed, Castleford, Halifax and Salford were starting to take an interest in the young Oldhamer who, aged 17, was picked for BARLA Great Britain under-18s --- and that was the step-up he needed to move on to even bigger things.

He was still 17 when, in October, 1994, he signed on the dotted line for Salford and their Aussie coach Gary Jack. Ian Watson and Nathan McAvoy, who had played in the same team as Sinny for GB under-18s, also pledged their futures to the Reds.

The ink had barely dried on the contract, however, before Jack was succeeded as coach at The Willows by Andy Gregory --- and Sinny always felt that, with the man who had signed him no longer at the club, it was going to be even harder to push on and break through into the first-team limelight.

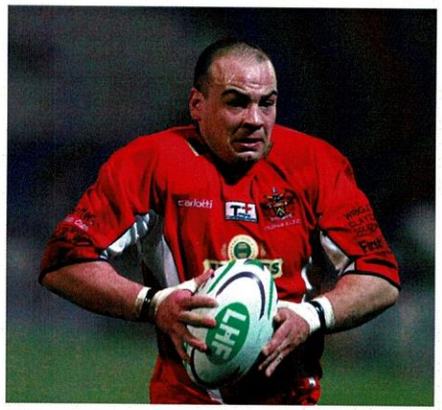
He also found himself in a pecking order behind experienced, international-class back-row forwards so most of his three years at The Willows were spent in the 'A' team and on the fringes of the senior side, although he did win Great Britain academy honours along the way.

Somewhat frustrated, he was reconsidering his future in the game when, one night, he got a phone call from Paddy Kirwan. It was to banish his doubts, restore his self belief and kick-start his career as a pro.

Kirwan had been given the task of coaching the newly-formed Roughyeds and he saw Sinny as part of his jigsaw when building a side from scratch.

Sinny remembers as though it was yesterday. "I jumped at the chance," he said, "and Rougheyds had to pay a transfer fee for me. I don't know what it was, but I don't think it was much. I'll never forget what happened next. Roughyeds were playing their very first game on New Year's Day, 1998 at Rochdale and Chris Hamilton collared me at 10pm on New Year's Eve to get the transfer rushed through.

"I made my Oldham debut in the very first Roughyeds match, and we won. It was a big thing for me to play for



Oldham and I was to have four years there, first under Paddy Kirwan, then Mick Coates and then Mick Ford.

"I enjoyed it, but 2001 was a sad year for me. It was great for the club -- they got to the Grand Final --- but I was overlooked when the squad was announced for the big day. I felt I had had a really good year, but I didn't get selected for the last six or seven games. It was a bitter disappointment not to be involved on Grand Final day and I concluded then that it was time to move on."

The move was down the road to Rochdale under Martin Hall, but much of his one season at Spotland was spent coming off the bench, so Sinny got itchy feet again in his search for a club and a coach who would give him the permanency he felt he deserved.

He discovered it with Keighley Cougars. Coach Gary Moorby assured him he would be an integral part of his plans to take Cougars out of the second division. He remained true to his word. And it was by the side of the Bronte Country in 2003 that Sinny teamed up with Paul Ashton, Richard Mervill and Simeon Hoyle to steer Cougars to promotion to the first division, via a Grand Final victory over Sheffield Eagles.

Said Ian, when I talked to him this week: "It was great for the club, but on a personal note it was a huge achievement for me. At last I had won something. Things didn't work out as I had hoped at Salford or Rochdale and I had the big Grand Final disappointment at Oldham. But at Keighley we had achieved our season's goal, and I was very much part of it.

"I also played that season for a division two rep side against New Zealand 'A' -- and we won that, too.

"The downside was that Keighley didn't seem to be doing enough strengthening to face life in a higher division. There was also a lot of travelling to Keighley, so when Paul Kidd called and asked me to go to Swinton I decided to go."

Sinny was to enjoy three seasons in the Lions' den -- much of that time spent as team or club captain.

"I had three really good years there," he said, "but to be honest I felt we under-achieved, particularly in the second and third years. With the team we had, we should have got out of that division."

They nearly did last year when they won at Featherstone and Celtic Crusaders in the play-offs only to lose to Sheffield Eagles in the final --- yet another disappointment for a player who has been unlucky to suffer as many downs as ups in a pro career spanning nearly 14 years.

One of the ups, however, was a thoroughly deserved selection for Scotland. He played for them against Ireland in Dublin in 2004, against Wales at Bridgend in 2005 and against Wales again in 2006.

Having had three years with the Lions, he was unsure what to do when offered a new deal for 2007. He had also been talking to Roughyeds boss Steve Deakin and in the end the chance to return for a second spell with his hometown club in the autumn of his career proved too tempting to pass up.

Away from rugby, 29-year-old Ian works full time in Salford as an education mentor with excluded youngsters and he and his partner, Victoria, jointly own with another couple Legends of Lees, the well-known wine and sports bar.

What with full time work, training for and playing rugby, doing his bit at Legends and helping to look after and bring up his two little boys, Luke (aged two) and Ben (nearly one), Sinny has more than enough to keep himself occupied.

But he can still find time -- just --- to do a spot of chatting over the garden fence with younger brother Kevin, the Leeds Rhinos captain and Great Britain star. Yes, right first time. The Sinny boys are next door neighbours in Grotton.

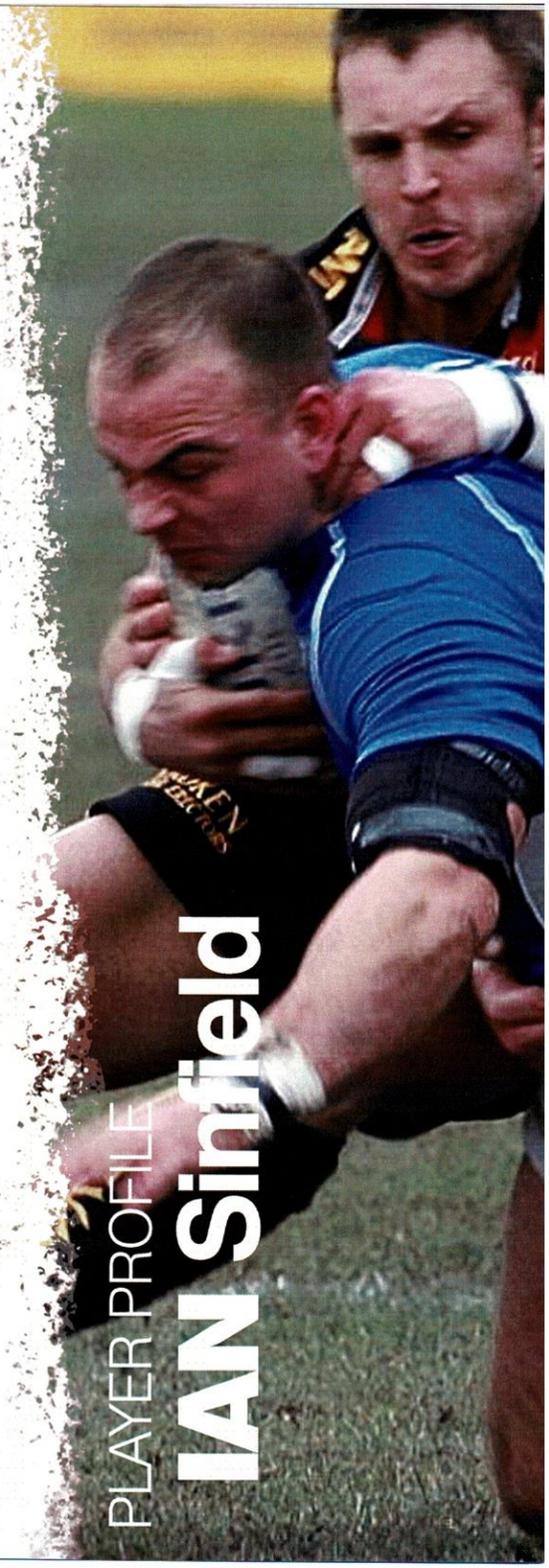
"We're close in more ways than one," said Ian. "I suppose I'll always be known as Kevin Sinfield's elder brother, but it's I who looks up to him. I'm mighty proud of all he's achieved. I ask him about things, rather than the other way round. He's more mature than I am, anyway."

What of the future?

"NL2 is a tough division. Consistency is the key. Promotion is the goal, but first we've got to qualify for the play-offs. That is the absolute minimum requirement. Once there, anything can happen, but you do need luck along the way.

"Our team spirit is first class. We already have a special 'togetherness' and that counts for a lot. I would say it's the best team spirit I've ever experienced in my career, and that's saying a lot.

"There is a buzz around the club on and off the field. And as a bunch of players we will leave no stone unturned in our efforts to produce performances that will bring back the fans. We hope to have a big season . . . fingers crossed."



AROUND & ABOUT

with The Heritage Trust

OLDHAM'S MEN IN SYDNEY!

I mentioned in the programme for last week's match against Rochdale Hornets' that fans will be able to celebrate the centenary of international rugby league later this year with the arrival of the New Zealanders who will play a three match test series plus one other very special match which is still in the process of being organised

Back in 1907, unlike here in England, there were no professional 'rugby league' clubs in New Zealand, only union, which were strictly amateur. Twelve years earlier, after arguments over both wages lost by players taking time off work to play and whilst out injured, 22 northern clubs broke away from clutches of the English Rugby Union to form its own Northern Union (later to be renamed the Rugby Football League). Amongst these were a high proportion of union's strongest and most successful clubs.

Unaccustomed to Maori visitors, the press had ample opportunity to play on British imagination. (Illustrated London News))

In January of 1907 a telegram from the 24-year-old entrepreneurial postal worker Albert Henry Baskerville was received at the Oldham office of the Northern Union's treasurer Joseph Platt claiming that he had the wherewithal to organise a tour to England made up of prominent New Zealand rugby union players. But, that's not where it all started.

There had previously been two rugby tours by New Zealanders to these shores. The first in 1888, by the New Zealand Native Football Team (the Maoris) and the second in 1905 by the first All Blacks. The Maoris played a massive 74-match programme against union sides scattered throughout length and breadth of the British Isles including Oldham. By the time the 1905 All Blacks arrived there were two distinct types of rugby being played over here. There was the old style still being played by many of the clubs that had opposed the Maoris sixteen years earlier and the more crowd-pleasing lineout-free style, played by the breakaway northern clubs. Whilst the All Blacks returned home winning 31 of their 32 matches it was only because they avoided the might of clubs such as Hull, Bradford, Wakefield Trinity, Dewsbury, Halifax, Leeds, Swinton, St Helens, Widnes, Wigan and Oldham.

Nevertheless, it was whilst the 1905 tourists journeyed home that the seeds for the first antipodean tour to the Northern Union were

1907 -08 All Golds. Dally Messenger is in the centre and George Smith on the right.

sown. The chief protagonist was Auckland's star back George (GW) Smith, who was also a successful hurdler and track runner who had also been in England three years earlier when he'd competed in the Amateur Athletic Association championships. He'd been impressed then by what he'd seen of northern rugby and the gate-paying crowds that had flocked to see it and when he'd returned here with the All Blacks it had developed even further as both crowd-puller and money-spinner. He must have impressed them too, having been approached to sign for one of the northern clubs – believed to be Oldham – which he eventually joined in 1908.

Each of the New Zealand players had been allowed just 3 shillings (15p) a day expenses and were paid no wages. Many arrived home penniless and some jobless. Even then there were cries of professionalism by some. The tour had generated a fortune for the NZRU, which erroneously voted its secretary and treasurer bonuses of 75 and 35 guineas respectively! This only served to spur-on the players to spread the news about the huge gate-paying crowds attending matches and the benefits Northern Union players enjoyed as opposed to the pittance received by the tourists.

Later that year Smith was in Sydney with the visiting Auckland team and met with several influential individuals including both James Giltinan, a well known figure in Sydney sporting circles, and test cricketer, rugby enthusiast and astute businessman Victor Trumper. The financial success of the All Blacks' tour to the United Kingdom had already been well publicised in the Australian press but had only succeeded in creating unrest amongst many of the countries leading players as the All Blacks were now due to play in Australia. The recent New South Wales vs. Queensland union game had attracted 32,000 gate-paying customers but the players had got nothing, an experience they didn't want repeating should they be selected to face the New Zealanders. The potential financial gains were also a carrot to men like Trumper.

Like the majority of revolutions it's no single issue that brings about change but Smith's discussions in Sydney coupled with the success of the professional game in England encouraged, not just the first tour of the Northern Union by a New Zealand squad during season 1907-08, but the setting-up of the eight club New South Wales Rugby League and with it a second tour of the Northern Union – this time by an Australian side managed by James Giltinan.

Joseph Platt cabled back Baskerville saying that with the proviso that the New Zealand squad was up to the promised strength, and with one or two changes to the finances, his proposition had been accepted. It's said that more than three-quarters of the 200 plus first-class players in New Zealand registered an interest in joining the tour.

The outbound squad, with George Smith as vice-captain, were caustically dubbed the "All Golds" by the NZRU. En-route they played three games against New South Wales persuading Australia's

(cont. on next page)

Tom McCabe

greatest star, Dally Messenger, to join them on tour.

Just prior to the "All Golds" departure a former Widnes and Wigan forward by the name of Tom McCabe arrived in Sydney. Since the 1905 All Blacks tour the game in England had changed for the better once again. The number of players had been cut from 15 to13. McCabe had played under the new structure and talked the departing tourists through how this had further speeded up the game opening it up for the backs to take advantage.

McCabe joined the fledgling New South Wales rugby league side Glebe and despite his place of birth was selected for the 1908 Australian tour to the UK. He stayed on to play for Oldham.

The part that Joseph Platt played in the organisation of the first New Zealand and Australian tours to these shores is well documented, as is the work that he put into the 1910 and 1914 tours down-under. New Zealand winger George Smith stayed after the 1907-8 tour to both play and coach Oldham. He continued to turn out for the club until he was 42 and lived in the town until his death at the age of 80 in 1954. His daughter, Edna, also continued to live in Oldham until her death, just a few years ago. I was lucky enough to be able to meet up with her on a number of occasions to listen to the many anecdotes surrounding her father.

I've no doubt that Joseph Platt offered G.W. (as he preferred to be known) the chance to stay when the 1905 All Blacks returned home. When he didn't accept the offer would have been kept open and I'm as certain as one can be after all these years that it was Platt was suggested that Smith sow the seeds for a New Zealand side to tour here. I've no doubt in my mind either that George Smith had a word or two to say to the Oldham committee resulting in Tom McCabe's signature.

So there we have it, international rugby league up and away with more than just a little help from the town of a million spindles.

And the special match: Northern Union vs. the All Golds. With an Aussie added of course.

Brian Walker

McCabe's 1908-09 tour cap has survived to this day.

Answers to last week's half-time teaser:

1, Cougar Park (Keighley); 2, Recreation Ground (Whitehaven), 3, Craven Park (Barrow); 4, Victory Park (Chorley); 5, Ram Stadium (Dewsbury); 6, Derwent Park (Workington); 7, Huntington Stadium (York); 8, Mount Pleasant (Batley); 9, The Shay (Halifax); 10, Halton Stadium (Widnes).

the boys and their backers

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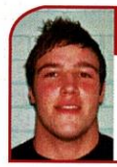

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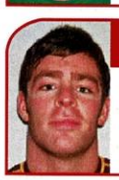

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the bootroom

THE MEN WHO CARRY ROUGHYEDS' HOPES AND AMBITIONS INTO 2007.

ASHTON, Paul (half-back): Son of former Watersheddings scrum-half star Ray Ashton, Paul is fulfilling a lifetime's ambition to play for his hometown club. Though born in Widnes, he was only a few months old when his parents moved to Oldham where his father carved out a career that earned him GB tour honours in 1984 during 212 club appearances which reaped him 72 tries.

Aged 27, Paul learned his trade at Saddleworth before playing for Halifax, Rochdale, Keighley and Swinton. He was in the Cougars side, with his new Roughyeds team mates Simeon Hoyle and Richard Mervill, that won promotion to NL1 in 2003.

He got his big chance at Oldham in 2006, initially on a week-to-week basis, and did enough to earn a full contract for 2007. Will be challenging for both half-back spots as he feels equally comfortable with both No 6 or No 7 on his back.

BAINES, Chris (back-row): A young forward who also did enough for coach Steve Deakin last year, while on loan from Warrington, to win a contract for 2007. He proved to be a good, hard-working forward in his first season with the Roughyeds and the experience he gained will serve him and the club well in NL2.

He was in his third season of under-21s rugby at Warrington when he first got the chance to move on loan to Roughyeds. He had three separate and continuous one-month loan spells and when the Wolves said they would release him he had no hesitation in grabbing the chance to commit himself to Oldham for the remainder of 2006 and then 2007.

A product of Chorley Panthers, where he played until he was 13, and then Wigan St Pat's, he toured New Zealand with Great Britain Young Lions in 2003, also representing his country at youth level against Australia and France.

BOULTS, Jason (prop): One of many new boys in the Roughyeds squad for 2007, 23-year-old Jason arrived on the recommendation of two of his former Halifax team mates, Jamie Bloem and Alan Hadcroft.

Alan, already established here as one of coach Steve Deakin's senior men, wasted no time in tipping off the boss when he learned from Bloem that Boults was ready to leave The Shay to take up a new challenge.

At 16 stone and 6ft 2in, Jason can play his weight in the front-row, as he proved in his two seasons at Fax where he was an ever-present with 30 appearances in 2005 and then added 27 more in 2006 --- statistics which show he is as durable as he is consistent.

Started off at Siddal under-16s, spent four years as a young pro with Bradford Bulls and signed for Halifax in November, 2004.

COSTIN, Geno (prop or back-row): A non-quota Aussie, 22-year-old Geno is in England for the first time and hoping to make an impact in NL2. Former Halifax stand-off Carl Briggs, lined up originally to become Gateshead Thunder's new coach, planned to take Geno to the North-East with him. When that move broke down, Briggs pointed Geno in Oldham's direction, much to the delight of coach Steve Deakin.

Geno first established himself in the Queensland Cup competition with Wynnum-Manly, alongside another Roughyeds recruit Mark Ogden, but last year played in the same comp for Logan Souths. Has long had a yearning to embark on an adventure to England and now that opportunity knocks he intend to make the most of it. Arrived in Oldham with his mate Mark Ogden on Boxing Day --- just in time for his first training session on freezing Oldham Edge two days later.

CRABTREE, Andy (hooker): One of half a dozen players signed by Roughyeds from Swinton Lions for 2007, Andy is eager to fulfil the early promise that earned him not only a spot on the books of Wigan Warriors but also a place in a talented Great Britain academy side that boasted several players who have gone on to big things at the highest level.

At Swinton in 2006 he faced immense competition for the specialist No 9 role, but he made nine appearances, three starts and six off the bench.

A tidy footballer with good hands and a rugby brain, the youngster has the attributes to play loose-forward as well as hooker, but it is with No 9 on his back that he has accomplished most of his achievements so far. He can also kick goals.

GOREY, Andy (winger): A scrum-half in his Royton Tigers days, local lad Andy became a good full-back in the former Roughyeds academy side. He was under contract on the break-up of the academy side, but he pledged to fight for a place in the first team rather than go elsewhere.

In 2006 he became a fans' favourite with gutsy performances, capped off with a couple of length-of-the-field tries. Diminutive, but pacy, he established himself as a regular on the wing, making more than 20 appearances and taking his try tally into double figures to finish the season as the club's top try scorer.

Not many of last year's squad were offered new contracts, but Gorey was and he quickly put pen to paper as he looked to further develop his career with his hometown club.

HADCROFT, Alan (centre): Robust, and renowned for solid defence and strong running, 29-year-old Alan is also vastly experienced. He signed from Halifax for the 2006 season, but his campaign was marred by a series of shoulder injuries. He was the first player, not already on a longer contract, to sign for 2007, but then he dislocated his shoulder again in the final match of the season at Whitehaven.

While on the injured list earlier in the campaign, he served the club well as coach Steve Deakin's No 2, a position he may take up again if it is decided his playing days are over.

Earlier in his career he played many seasons for his hometown club, Leigh Centurions, and it was while he was at Hilton Park that he represented the National League against the touring New Zealand 'A' side.

HOUGH, John (hooker): Cut 'Houghie' in two and you will find 'Roughyeds' running right through him. He was the first player to sign for the 'new' Roughyeds club when it was formed by Chris Hamilton and his fellow directors in the autumn of 1997, following the demise of Oldham Bears.

Currently two seasons into a three-year contract, 29-year-old Oldham-born John will have completed ten years with the club at the end of the 2007 season and will thus qualify for a testimonial.

A product of the Waterhead club, he signed for Warrington Wolves while still a boy, but he carved himself a niche in the history of the new Oldham club when he signed as a free agent on December 2, 1997.

It was the beginning of a long-term relationship in which John has played more than 230 games for the Roughyeds --- most of them at hooker.

HOUSTON, Drew (second-row or centre): One of the two overseas quota men for 2007, 23-year-old Drew comes highly recommended by another new Roughyeds recruit, Simeon Hoyle.

Hoyle played in Australia in 2005 and liked what he saw of the Dapto pair, Houston and a former Keighley colleague Richard Mervill. Houston, once a youngster linked with Melbourne Storm, had two seasons with a Storm feeder club, Norths in the Queensland Cup, before heading south for Dapto, champions of the Illawarra competition.

Drew comes to Oldham with a reputation as a good line runner and a big hitter on the edges of the rucks in defence.

He helped Dapto to the championship of the Illawarra competition last year and he also earned selection in the competition's representative side.

HOYLE, Simeon (hooker): Formerly with Keighley Cougars and Halifax, hooker Simeon was one of the first of the new boys to be signed up by Roughyeds for 2007. He is a hooker of the old school ---- a tough and industrious operator in defence while having enough know-how to make things happen from dummy half.

It was while he was at Keighley that, in 2003, he helped the Cougars to win promotion to NL1 from a third-place finish in the league. Sheffield, Chorley and Keighley finished neck and neck on 26 points, with Cougars third on points difference.

However, with Hoyle at hooker, Paul Ashton at stand-off and Richard Mervill on the bench, Cougars won through to the final, beating Sheffield 13-11 at Widnes with Hoyle winning the League Express man-of-the-match award.

He later headed Down Under for a spell before returning to Halifax, from where he opted to sign for the Roughyeds.

O'CONNOR, Paul (full-back): Had three games for Roughyeds while on loan from Widnes Vikings last season and made such an impression on coach Steve Deakin that the boss didn't hesitate to go for him again when he learned he might be available. His signing takes into account that he will miss June, July and August due to a pre-arranged trip to Australia and New Zealand.

A former Ireland and Great Britain international at Students' level, 22-year-old Paul spent two seasons with Widnes, his hometown club, operating mainly in the under-21s at full-back or on the wing.

He played his early rugby at Widnes Tigers and Widnes St Maries and later, while at university inm Liverpool, he earned his Students' international honours, highlighted by his appearance for GF Students against Australia in 2004.

Pacy, and with an eye for a gap, Paul enjoyed his spell with Roughyeds last year and he went back to the Vikings only because he wanted "one last go" at bidding to get into the Widnes first team.

He should be fit and ready for anything the rugby league world throws at him, given that away from his chosen sport he is a consultant for a company specialising in promoting and advising on health and lifestyle.

LANGLEY, Gareth (winger): Pacy, and a good finisher, 'Gaz' Langley comes to the Roughyeds after five years in one of the most professional learning and development schools in rugby league --- the youth and academy set-up at St Helens.

Born in the well-known rugby league district of Parr, near St Helens, 22-year-old Gareth didn't take up the sport with Blackbrook until he was 15. By the time he was 16 he was playing for Salford under-18s, having been headhunted by the then Salford academy coach Steve McCormack.

He wasn't on contract and it didn't take long for hometown St Helens to take him to Knowsley Road.

He was the Saints senior academy player of the year in 2005 and runner up to player of the year in 2006, a season in which he made his Super League debut in a young Saints side that took on Catalans Dragons in Perpignan.

LITTLER, Craig (centre): How appropriate that Littler comes next Langley in alphabetical order . . . for that's exactly how they have lined up, as centre and wing partners, in the Saints academy teams of the past four years. A year younger than 'Gaz', at 21, Craig was offered the chance to have another year at Knowsley Road, but he opted to sign for Roughyeds instead --- and one of the reasons was that he could continue his partnership with Langley.

They are said to have built up a good partnership and a good understanding of each other's style of play --- and Roughyeds boss Steve Deakin hopes they will put that understanding to good use in NL2.

A scorer of tries, as well as a try provider, Littler also played in France at Super League level for the Saints in the 2006 campaign.

He didn't rush into putting pen to paper for Oldham but, having sought advice from various quarters, he took the view that there was much to be gained from playing in NL2 under an experienced boss like Deaks.

MERVILL, Richard (prop): Formerly with Halifax and then Keighley, Richard comes to the Roughyeds for 2007 from Australia ---- a similar route to that taken by his former Cougars team mate, Simeon Hoyle.

Mervill played in the 2003 Keighley side that won promotion to NL1, alongside hooker Hoyle and stand-off Paul Ashton, and later jetted off Down Under, where he has been playing for Dapto in the Illawarra competition.

Hoyle, who had also played out there, alerted Roughyeds to the availability of both Mervill and his Dapto team mate Drew Houston and it was thanks largely to Hoyle that Oldham got their names on contracts.

Said to have a high work rate and a good offload, Mervill has experience of the game in both hemispheres and, with Wes Rogers and Jason Boults, he will provide much of the Roughyeds' go-forward from the front-row.

OGDEN, Mark (stand-off): A 23-year-old from Queensland, Mark also occupies a spot on the Roughyeds overseas quota. An accomplished play-maker, he is said to have the ability to guide the side around the park from outside-half.

He was in the Brisbane Broncos development squad as a teenager and in 2000, aged 17, he represented Queensland Schoolboys. Like his mate, Geno Costin, he represented Wynnum-Manly at various levels, building a reputation as a reliable goalkicker and a clever half-back in the modern mould.

As he worked his way up the Wynnum ladder, he picked up several awards as player of the year and leading points scorer, but last year he transferred to Logan Souths.

He has never previously been outside Queensland, so his move to Oldham is an adventure in every sense of the word.

OLDHAM, Stuart (winger): Formerly with St Helens and Swinton, Stuart has good pace and also has experience of the full-back position. While at Saints, he impressed the then academy coach Dave Rotheram, who spoke highly of him to Oldham boss Steve Deakin. He lives at Eccles and played his first serious rugby with Sedgley Park RU club before moving up the ladder in union with Liverpool St Helens.

From there, he was spotted by Saints and it was from Knowsley Road that he moved on to Swinton two years ago.

He comes with a reputation for producing excellent speed on the break with a good kick return --- qualities that Oldham will need in NL2 if they are to challenge for promotion at the first time of asking.

RODEN, Neil (half-back): Neil has rejoined Roughyeds from Leigh after leaving the club initially to go to Batley in 2004. In his first stint with Oldham, after joining from Wigan Academy, he amassed 290 points (68 tries and 18 drop goals) in 142 appearances over four and a half seasons.

No other player in the nine-year history of the 'new' Roughyeds club has totalled more tries than Roden, whose 68 pushed Mark Sibson (61) into second place.

Neil also has the distinction of having played for the Roughyeds in the 2001 Grand Ginal against Widnes at Spotland.

A competent and highly-skilled half-back, whether at No 6 or No 7, he shows all the know-how requried for these two highly-specialised positions.

ROGERS, Wes (prop): At the age of 29 -- and appointed as club captain for 2007 --- Wes brings experience, a cool head and stability to Oldham's front-row. Oldham-born, he first played for the Roughyeds in the club's early days, but he returns, from Swinton, as a much more experienced and matured front-row forward, who is delighted to be coming back for a second chance with his hometown club.

On leaving the Roughyeds last time, he spent three years with Rochdale, followed by three more seasons with Swinton, and he is one of six ex-Lions who will be wearing Roughyeds colours in 2007, the others being Kris Smith, Stuart Oldham, Michael Stout, Andy Crabtree, and Ian Sinfield.

SINFIELD, Ian (back-row): Another vastly experienced forward who is returning to his hometown club. The brother of Leeds Rhinos captain, Kevin Sinfield, Ian played in the first ever Roughyeds game at Rochdale on New Year's Day, 1998. He had come initially on loan from Salford, but soon afterwards he was signed on a permanent basis, with Roughyeds paying out an undisclosed fee for his services.

'Sinny' had four seasons at Oldham, making more than 70 appearances, before moving to Rochdale, then to Keighley, and on to Swinton. While at Keighley he played in the NL2 Grand Final alongside Simeon Hoyle, Paul Ashton and Richard Mervill.

He was club captain for much of his time at Swinton Lions, for whom he appeared in his second NL2 Grand Final against Sheffield Eagles last October.

SMITH, Kris (back-row or centre): Another vastly-experienced player, this 28-year-old has been on the books of four Super League clubs, namely Leeds, Salford, London and Halifax. He has also played in France with Pia and Carpentras and it was while he was briefly at Carpentras that he was a club mate of the Roughyeds' new French signing, Said Tamghart.

He is a big man of 6ft 4in and 15 and a half stones and he has had brief experience of Super League with both London and Halifax. A product of the Eccles amateur club, he was snapped up by Leeds Rhinos while still a teenager.

He then moved to Salford where a knee injury hampered his progress. His French excursion followed before he returned to England to play with London and Halifax before enjoying a four-year stint with Swinton.

He showed his versatility with Swinton last season when he played 14 times in the second-row, five at loose-forward and once at stand-off, coming into prominence with outstanding displays in the second-row as the Lions beat Featherstone Rovers and Celtic Crusaders, both away, to earn their Grand Final appearance against Sheffield.

STOUT, Michael (second-row or centre): Another Roughyeds signing from Swinton, Michael has a good turn of speed for a forward and likes to use it while breaking wide out --- a quality that also enables him to do a stint in the centre.

This Warrington-born school teacher played in the academy squads of both Warrington Wolves and Widnes Vikings before joining Swinton Lions a year ago. In his one season with the Lions he made 19 appearances and scored seven tries. He played four times at centre, once on the wing, four times in the second row, once at loose-forward and nine times as a substitute.

Swinton wanted to keep hold of him and made him an offer for 2007, but he chose instead to sign a one-year deal with the Roughyeds.

Like many other players brought to the Roughyeds this season by Steve Deakin, he will be regarded as a versatile player who can offer much to the squad and to the team in a variety of positions.

TAMGHART, Said (utility): The description 'utility' perhaps fails to do justice to this French international, who has represented his country at every level, including fully-fledged Test matches against Australia and New Zealand. He played prop against the Aussies and second-row against the Kiwis, but both he and coach Steve Deakin have confirmed that he can operate equally well at loose-forward and also in the backs at centre or wing.

On his way up the ladder to full French international honours, he played for Carpentras, Avignon and UTC (better known now as Perpignan-based Catalans Dragons) and it was while he was at UTC that he came under the wing of Deaks, who holds him in the highest regard.

He reached the pinnacle of his career two years ago when he played against Australia and New Zealand, but he has long had an ambition to play in England and he didn't hesitate to take the opportunity when Deaks invited him to come to Oldham.

WILKINSON, Alex (centre, wing): Oldham-born Alex played his early rugby with Royton Tigers and toured with GB schoolboys to Australia in 1999 and with England academy to New Zealand and Australia in 2001. Super League giants Bradford Bulls snapped him up and, while at Odsal, he had a loan spell with London Broncos, where he played six times in Super League. He then moved on loan to Huddersfield, where he added another 13 Super League games to his tally.

He played a similar number while on loan to Hull FC, who offered him a two-year contract. However, Alex wanted to complete his degree and with part-time rugby the only option he chose his hometown club.

Injuries dealt him some cruel blows in 2006, but Roughyeds didn't hesitate to offer him another deal for 2007 and he will hoping the New Year brings new luck.

WINGFIELD, Lee (second-row): This 24-year-old second-row forward, signed last year from amateurs Leigh East, can also operate equally well at centre. He won many honours in the amateur game and played on numerous occasions for Great Britain. He played against France and Russia in Russia in 2003 and kept his place for international appearances against France at Carcassonne and then for the return game at Whitehaven.

Perhaps the pinnacle of his achievements in the amateur game came in 2004 when he toured Australia with GB amateurs and played in every game. He signed a contract to cover 2006 and 2007 and he proved to be one of Oldham's top performers in the early part of the 2006 season until first a ban and then an injury at work kept him out of the side. Although he prefers to play in thme pack, he has also operated well in the threequarters.

with Ian Wilson

roughyeds' roar!

What an excellent start to the 2007 season, in Super League in particular.

Although the one-off first weekend game at Huddersfield got a certain amount of stick in the RL media, I personally thought it was both a good performance by the home side on the field, and an encouraging attendance too, given relatively little build up in the slightly peculiar circumstances. The other heartening aspect, I thought, was that Jon Wilkin got a two match suspension for his unacceptable late challenge on Chris Thorman. OK, the cynics will moan that the suspension makes sure he will be available to play for Saints v Brisbane ; but I prefer to note that at least the disciplinary committee have begun the season with a degree of intent demonstrated . They must now show rather more consistency over the weeks and months ahead than has sometimes been evident in their decision-making.

Then, over the first full round of fixtures proper, a total attendance of almost 70,000 was definitely good to see, and the fact that Saints' contribution to that total was fairly pathetic for a so-called RL town welcoming their champion side to its first home fixture of the year is no bad thing either, in my view. It might make the town's armchair supporters think a bit, and also push the need to replace the ageing Knowsley Road stadium a bit further forward in the thinking of the relevant authorities.

And what about the results? A fantastic performance by Brian McDermott's Harlequins on the Friday night was matched by Hull K.R. on Saturday, and then the Catalans on Sunday. It is only one round of games, of course, but there is every prospect from those three results to acknowledge that the unlikely- to -be - underplayed cry of the Sky chaps that the competition has never been more even has a lot to be said for it.

The other three matches, too, were of no little quality, and ultra competitive. Warrington's proper side certainly showed rather more commitment at the JJB stadium than their youngsters had against us, and it won't do Wigan any harm to lose their first match - I thought there were enough signs that Trent Barrett will become a class act as he settles in to suggest that they will compete towards the top end of the competition this season rather than be in the relegation zone. And given that both Salford and Huddersfield were very competitive even in defeat against Leeds and Bradford again supports the view that the season promises a great deal. Because the one factor guaranteed to keep the spectators coming is for a match's outcome to be genuinely unpredictable.

Finally, what of us, so far? All I would want to say at this very early stage is "encouraging" ; and as soon as news of Said Tamghart's tackling ferocity gets around the town I would hope that gradually there will be a steady increase from 1145 willing to pay to see it live!

Oldham RLFC LAST season's statistics

NAME	PLAYED	TRIES	GOALS	POINTS
A.Bailey	9	0	0	0
G.Barber	17	6	24	72
M.Callan	9	0	0	0
G.Corcoran	14	1	0	4
W.Corcoran	16	3	5	22
C.Dean	6	0	0	0
A.Gorey	22	10	0	40
D.Gorton	23	6	0	24
D.Guest	5	0	0	0
A.Hadcroft	8	0	0	0
G.Hayes	24	1	0	4
I.Hodson	23	2	0	8
C.Hough	12	0	4[+1 d-g]	9
J.Hough	19	1	0	4
J.Kirkland	7	0	0	0
C.Maye	18	3	0	12
D.Nanyn	9	0	0	0
C.Percival	10	8	0	32
M.Redford	8	1	0	4
M.Roberts	14	1	0	4
S.Svabic	22	4	1	18
A.Wilkinson	16	4	0	16
L.Wingfield	15	5	0	20
C.Campbell	4	3	0	12
D.Best	14	0	0	0
J.Best	1	0	0	0
C.Baines	17	1	0	4
P.Ashton	11	3	7	26
C.Redford	2	0	0	0
A.Wallace	2	0	0	0
S.Stephens	2	0	0	0
K.Kerr	1	0	0	0
D.Ligairi-Badham	1	0	0	0
D.Williams	11	4	0	16
T.Kilgannon	9	3	0	12
M.Bottom	13	2	0	8
C.Jones	6	0	0	0
S.Williams	8	0	0	0
A.Sharples	2	0	0	0
P.O'Connor	3	1	0	4
P.Farrell	6	1	0	4

'I'm ambitious . . . and I'm here for the long haul'

ROGER HALSTEAD TALKS TO THE NEW MAN BEHIND THE REVITALISED ROUGHYEDS

BILL Quinn, soon-to-be chairman and majority shareholder of the Roughyeds, knows where he's going --- and how to get there.

His track record in business proves that. At the age of 40, and from relatively modest beginnings, he heads one of the biggest group of companies of its kind across the North of England. The William Quinn Group Ltd comprises four separate companies and turnover this year is projected at between £8million and £10million.

The group's plant, machinery and equipment is valued at £4million and it is involved with property and land valued in excess of £25million.

Based in Ardwick, Manchester, the Quinn Group deals with demolition, remediation, validation, asbestos, knotweed, earthworks and aggregates (only the experts will understand that little lot) as well as the development of commercial, residential and land purchases.

Or, as Bill put it in such a matter-of-fact way at the press conference to announce his arrival at the Roughyeds . . . "anything, in fact, which makes us money."

At this juncture it needs to be stressed that he is starting out in the rough-and-tumble world of rugby league and professional sport with his eyes wide open. He knows he isn't coming to Oldham Roughyeds to make money: I think we can safely assume that rather the opposite will apply.

His financial muscle will be needed to take the club forwards and upwards and on to a bright, new future.

This on the back of the extraordinary work done by Chris Hamilton and Sean Whitehead in keeping the club in business for the best part of ten years despite body blows that would have floored lesser men long ago.

As Bill told Roughyeds sponsors and backers at a pre-season buffet lunch: "The measure of a man is not how he responds to triumph --- it's how he responds to hardships and setbacks. And it's what Chris and Sean have done to keep this club alive that inspired me to get involved."

That involvement means he is lined up to become chairman and majority shareholder of Oldham Rugby League Club (1997) Ltd, with 52 per cent and with the other two shareholders, Chris and Sean, each holding 24 per cent. Chris, chairman since the club was started in 1997, will be full-time chief executive.

As I say, Bill is under no illusions about the role he is to play at what, effectively, will soon be HIS club and his company.

"For the first time in my life," he told me, "I will be involved in an operation from which I am not seeking profit. As far as my life at Roughyeds is concerned 'PROFIT' will no longer be in the dictionary. It will be replaced by 'SATISFACTION' --- the satisfaction from knowing that we are taking the club on to better times."

Bill Quinn was born in Longsight, Manchester. His father was a proud Irishman who had won an all-Ireland medal in Gaelic football --- and, to this day, that medal takes pride of place in the lounge of Bill's home near Chorley.

Divorced from his first wife, he has three boys, Michael (15), Harrison (8) and Ethan (3) and his fiancee, originally from Rochdale, is Suzanne Kettleton --- and if that surname rings a bell among rugby league fans with a knowledge of the sport in the Rochdale area it isn't surprising.

Suzanne's dad, John Kettleton, and the well-known former Spotland Rangers and Rochdale Hornets forward Brian Kettleton --- now there's a forward who could look after himself if ever there was one --- are cousins.

John also played to Great Britain amateur level, turning out many times for Hornets 'A' and even doing a stint with the 'A' team at Watersheddings.

Anyway, back to the beginning. On leaving school in Manchester, Bill worked for a couple of demolition companies until, aged 23, he launched out on his own by setting up a business dealing with reclaimed materials. It was then that, for the first time, he came into contact with Sean Whitehead.

Twelve years ago, and still only 28, he started his own demolition company --- and in those 12 years his business interests have grown, and grown, and grown until, today, the William Quinn Group of companies does work throughout the UK and has land and property all over Greater Manchester and out to Warrington and Chorley.

Away from business, and in his younger days, Bill used to be an amateur boxer "who got leathered every week" while nowadays he enjoys "trying" to play a few rounds of golf.

Goals for the future?

Said Bill: "Promotion this season -- that's got to be the first aim. Our ultimate goal will be a return to Super League, but that isn't going to come easily and it will take time.

"I will make the funding available to give us a realistic chance of reaching these goals and, long term, we also have to be looking at the stadium issue.

"I'm in this for the long haul. And, as I say, for the first time in my life profit isn't on the agenda. Everything we make will be ploughed back into the club so that it can achieve its goals, ambitions and dreams for the future.

"Funds will be made available as and when they are required and in what areas they are required -- there will be nothing haphazard about it. Plans will be programmed.

"We already have ideas to bring revenue into the club and these will be put into place in the next month or two.

"I'm not here to be second best. I want to take this club back into Super League and I want the talented local boys to want to come and sign for Oldham. You can't blame them for looking elsewhere because everyone has the right to aspire to get as far up the ladder as their talents and drive will take them.

"What I want to do is to build a club here that Oldham lads will want to play for and will be proud to play for."

Facing the Press to break the big news. Left to right: Steve Deakin, Bill Quinn, Chris Hamilton, Sean Whitehead.
PICTURES COURTESY OF OLDHAM EVENING CHRONICLE.

LIFE WITH THE LIONS . . .

AND WILL THEY ROAR IN 2007?

Roger Halstead takes a look at today's visitors --- SWINTON

Coach Paul Kidd and everyone involved with Swinton Lions will be banking in 2007 on the club succeeding where they slipped up last term ---- in the NL2 Grand Final.

Finishing in fifth place last year with 13 wins and a draw from their 22 league games, they emerged as play-off surprise packets by beating Barrow at home and then Featherstone and Celtic Crusaders away to book their place against Sheffield Eagles in the final.

To get there, they won a semi-final thriller 27-26 in Bridgend with former Oldham half-back Chris Hough landing the all-important golden drop goal in extra time.

The final against Sheffield at the Halliwell Jones Stadium in Warrington was to prove one game too far for the Lions, who lost 35-10 with two members of today's Roughyeds squad --- Kris Smith and Ian Sinfield -- - packing down in the second-row.

In total, five former Oldham players ---- Hough, Chris Morley, Lee Marsh, Dave Newton and Sinfield -- played in that final.

On and off the field it was a good season for the Lions, who had two players named in the NL2 Team of the Year, namely winger Marlon Billy and stand-off Martin Moana.

Marsh, at loose-forward, also made a big impact, as did speedy winger Andy Saywell, who scored 26 tries in 30 appearances.

On-loan Widnes trio Bruce Johnson, Darren Woods and Phil Wood also proved key to Swinton's late-season successes, as did half-back Hough, who hit the headlines when his dramatic drop goal at Celtic Crusaders in the semi-final provided the first-ever golden point win in this country.

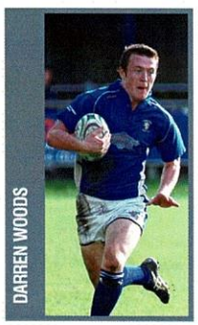
The season ended and before the Lions next ran out at Sedgley Park no fewer than six players were to have signed for the Roughyeds --- Sinfield, Smith, Wes Rogers, Stuart Oldham, Mike Stout and Andy Crabtree.

Young prop Gareth Hayes and winger Desi Williams went in the opposite direction to Swinton, who also signed former Roughyeds youngster Adam Sharples.

There are many similarities between the Swinton and Oldham clubs, not least the fact that both have led rather nomadic existences since the lost of their traditional homes, Station Road and Watersheddings respectively.

The Lions, however, have received confirmation of a proposed new stadium in the borough which, if the dream becomes reality, will house pro rugby league again in Swinton for the first time in more than a decade.

SHOOTING STAR



DARREN WOODS

Like several of the Lions lads, centre Darren Woods knows where the line is -- and how to get there.

In his two spells on loan from Widnes last year he scored more tries than he made appearances, 16 in 14 outings. Now under contract for 2007, he resumed where he left off with two tries under his belt in a 40-34 pre-season win against Salford, and denied a hat-trick when his third touchdown was disallowed.

A product of St Helens amateur club, Blackbrook, he was previously with Leigh and Widnes and already has a reputation as a player opponents need to mark closely.

TOP GUN

BRUCE JOHNSON

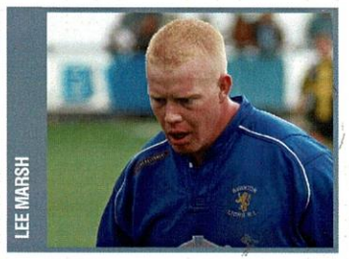
A tough character --- and a real go-forward player . . . that's how those in the know at Swinton describe fans' favourite Bruce Johnson, a 22-year-old prop who has signed a two-year deal for 2007 and 2008 after making a huge impact last year while on loan from Widnes.

This former England under-18 international scored five tries last year -- not bad for a front-row forward -- and it was a measure of the high regard in which he was held that the Lions were keen to commit him to a two-year deal.

ONE TO WATCH

Lee Marsh needs no introduction to Roughyeds fans, having played here in 2004. He moved to Swinton in 2005 and immediately smashed Albert Blan's points-in-a-season record, amassing 310 with 20 tries, 114 goals and two drop goals.

A big, talented loose-foward he moved to Widnes for 2006, but wasn't there long before he returned to the Lions in a move that took Ian Watson to the Halton Stadium.



LEE MARSH

CAPTAIN COURAGEOUS

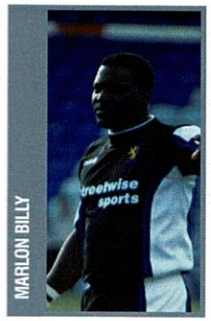
Vastly experienced Martin Moana is the man who, from the pivotal stand-off half spot, holds it all together for Swinton.

With 19 tries in 30 games last year, and with the responsibilities as captain as well, it was little surprise when he named player of the year.

Still a player who can threaten the toughest defence, the 30-year-old New Zealander first came to England from Auckland Warriors and has worn the colours of Halifax, Doncaster, Huddersfield, Wakefield and Salford.

He played for New Zealand Maoris in the 2000 World Cup.

BEST OF THE REST



MARLON BILLY

MARLON BILLY: Give this fellow a yard -- and he's gone. Strong and fast winger, he has scored 38 tries in the past two seasons for the Lions and in 2005 he had the remarkable record of 26 tries in 27 games.

In his second stint with the Lions -- after stays at Rochdale and Doncaster -- he is a player the fans love, and he has been in the NL2 all-star team for the past two years.

WAYNE ENGLISH: An attacking full-back, and the club's longest-serving player, 26-year-old English has rattled up 56 tries in 87 games for the Lions in the past three years --- a phenomenal record. A Rochdale boy, he joined Swinton Academy from Kirkholt amateurs when he was 17, and he has never looked back.

He was NL2 all-stars full-back in 2004 and 2005 and has remained steadfastly loyal to the Lions despite huge interest from other clubs.

ANDY SAYWELL: Signed last year from Rochdale Hornets and used his pace and finishing power on the wing to cross for 26 tries in 30 outings to top the club's try-scoring chart and to earn the players player of the year award. Joined Rochdale in 2004 from Widnes amateurs Farnworth.

LIAM McGOVERN: Once one of the hottest properties in youth rugby, stand-off Liam has seen pro service with Widnes, Saints, Warrington, Rochdale and Blackpool, Aged 22, and naturally gifted, he joiined the Lions last year from Blackpool.

DAVE NEWTON: Oldham born, Dave played in the same Swinton academy side as Wayne English and Phil Cushion.Turned pro for Oldham and then had two seasons at Rochdale before rejoining the Lions last year.

CHRIS MORLEY: Another ex-Oldham man and the brother of GB star Adrian Morley, Chris has also played for St Helens, Warrngton, Salford, Sheffield, Leigh and Haligax.

CHRIS HOUGH: Scored nearly 200 points for the Lions in their only full season at Moor Lane. Arrived back at the club last year via Doncaster, Blackpool and Oldham -- and made a name for himself in that memorable semi-final in South Wales.

DESI WILLIAMS: On loan from Hull KR to Oldham last year, pacy winger Williams began his career with London Skolars. Wigan brought him north and he had two Super League appearances in 2004, before moving to Hull KR.

The remainder of the squad comprises Paul Alcock, Craig Ashall, Dave Ashton, Oldhamer Mark Brocklehurst (a young full-back, ex Wigan academy), Matty Bryers, Chris Campbell, Sean Conway, Craig Farrimond, Gareth Hayes, Rob Line, Richard Marshall, Steve McCurrie, Adam Sharples, Matt Sheen, Mike Smith, John Walker, Phil Wood.

PICTURES OF SWINTON PLAYERS SUPPLIED COURTESY OF SWINTON SUPPORTERS TRUST.

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NATIONAL LEAGUE TALK

with GARETH WALKER of RUGBY LEAGUER & LEAGUE EXPRESS

HOPE OR DESPAIR?

IT can often prove foolish to read too much into the first week of a season , especially when it arrives even before the league campaign gets underway. But as always, there was plenty of hope and a dash of despair when the Northern Rail Cup got underway last weekend.

The site of the most contrasting emotions was Mount Pleasant, where the usually tightly contested Heavy Woollen derby ended with Dewsbury running out 49-6 winners.

Few people, if any, saw that one coming. But two tries from talented fullback Ian Preece and a masterful performance from halfback Dean Lawford against his former club saw the Rams record a hugely impressive opening victory.

The Bulldogs will bounce back. They hardly set the world on fire in last year's Northern Rail Cup before coming good in a big way in the league.

But such a heavy opening day defeat will have done little for their early season confidence.

In another big local derby, Whitehaven put paid to Workington Town 44-18, though the fact that those two clubs play in different competitions makes the scoreline more understandable.

Still, Town would have hoped to push their local rivals closer as they aim to build on a disappointing 2006.

The other head turning result of the weekend came at the newly named Chris Moyles Stadium, where NL2 Featherstone Rovers hammered their NL1 opponents Sheffield Eagles 54-22.

Rovers have certainly recruited impressively during the close season, with Super League players Paul Handforth, Jamie Field and Tommy Haughey among their signings.

In contrast, the Eagles were missing several of their key names.

But again, a closer contest was expected.

Castleford Tigers got their National League campaign underway with an accomplished 30-6 win at Doncaster, where another impressive crowd of 4,180 turned up to the Keepmoat Stadium.

Rochdale Hornets edged out local rivals Oldham 24-8 with a much improved display to their only pre-season friendly match, a defeat at Hunslet.

In turn the Hawks went down 38-20 at Swinton Lions, while York City Knights - after being held 12-all at half-time - ran out 58-12 winners at Gateshead.

Leigh Centurions recorded a 52-8 win at London Skolars, and Halifax a 44-18 victory at Keighley Cougars.

On Friday night, Barrow Raiders started their year by beating Blackpool Panthers 44-14, and Widnes Vikings left South Wales with a 56-6 win at Celtic Crusaders.

Notice anything interesting about the opening weekend's results? Not a single bonus point was earned under the RFL's new system.

In contrast, all six Super League games that weekend would have yielded one. Is there any reason for us to be playing under different rules?

THERE is much to be excited about after one of the most eventful close seasons in recent memory for clubs outside the top flight.

Most notably, clubs are playing under a new, controversial points system ---- three for a win, two for a draw and one for teams losing by 12 points or fewer.

It's a move that has split supporters, some labelling it as pointless, others feeling it will bring more excitement.

Personally, I'm doubtful, but I'm prepared to give it a chance. My main gripe is that if it's such a good idea, why isn't it also being used in Super League at the same time?

Time will tell how successful it will be, and announcements over club annoys should help avoid any confusion among supporters.

Next up was news that the National Leagues will be covered regularly on Sky Sports, with live matches taking place every Thursday night throughout the regular league campaigns.

That is tremendous news for the clubs that have been striving for such a move for years, and the RFL deserve credit for finally making it happen.

There is no money involved in the new deal, but forward-thinking clubs will use the added exposure to their advantage, creating new sponsorship deals and attempting to attract new supporters to Thursday night games. It starts on Easter weekend with Widnes Vikings versus Leigh Centurions.

The season should be another cracker. Castleford's relegation from Super League was a blow to the top flight, but their return to the National Leagues will provide tremendous interest for clubs at that level.

With Terry Matterson at the helm and a host of Super League players in their ranks, the Tigers will start as favourites for both the NRC and NL1, but there will be plenty of clubs waiting to ambush their ambitions.

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(Roll call of members -- fancy joining them?)

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J Aubrey
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Dorothy M Johnston
Mortgage Solutions (Dave Bassett)
Lansdowne Trading Services (Chris Stanley)
Michael Ackroyd
Clifford Bardsley
David Whitehead
David Lord
Janet Yewdale
Nigel Marland
Christopher Hamilton
Jeffrey Bates
Iain Ashworth
Roger Halstead
Steve Deakin
Nick Henry
Interior Door Systems (Joe Collins)
James Rochford
Noel Brady
Gareth Owen
Roy Wood

Denise Buckley
Moorside Electrical Contractors (Neil Haughton)
Valerie Wynn
Brian Tranter
Thomas Joyce
Mick Harrop
Terry Bailey
John Barrie Gallagher
Terry Kelly
Cheshire Telecom Ltd (Sean Lynch
Robert Nixon
Derek King
Frank Taylor
Colin Pyke
Ernest Mayall
I and C Kershaw
Personal Tyres and Exhausts (Pete Beswick)
Savvas Eleftheriou
Total Plus Communications
Total Plus Communications
Clarice Stevens
Sue and Mike Kivlin
William Hannen
The Bs
Promotional Print (Eric Bradley)
Tracey Bradley
Michael Bradshaw
Shirley Mullaney

Keith Mullaney
John Barrett
Raymond Sankey
Cyril Farnworth
John Heap
Mick Slicker
Terry Flanagan
Dave McGealy
Noise Killer Acoustics (Steve Bithell)
B Giddens
Gerald Fitzgerald
Nany Fitzgerald
Jack Buckley
Ultan McGovern (Oldham Electrical Supplies)
Mark Antony Kitchens (Mark Harrington)
Martin Hunter
David Macauley (Chartered Surveyors)
David Foden
Matthew Chambers
Oldham Advertiser
Paul Robinson
Mick Kilgannon
Ray Broadbent
Iain Taylor
Joseph Lawrence Perrins
Costin Electrical Services Ltd (Phil Costin)

Business man Mark Harrington got hooked on the Roughyeds when he saw how enthusiastic his step-daughter Natalie Clarke was --- and how committed she and her friends were to dancing with the Roughyettes.

"They were, and are, so determined to do their best for the club that I thought I had better do my bit as well," said 50-year-old Mark, who manufactures kitchens and bedrooms under the Mark Antony Kitchens label.

He sponsored the Roughyettes, the club's official dance troupe, last season and this time round he has joined Five Alive. And guess what? In the third of Five Alive's monthly draws he won first prize to walk away with £500.

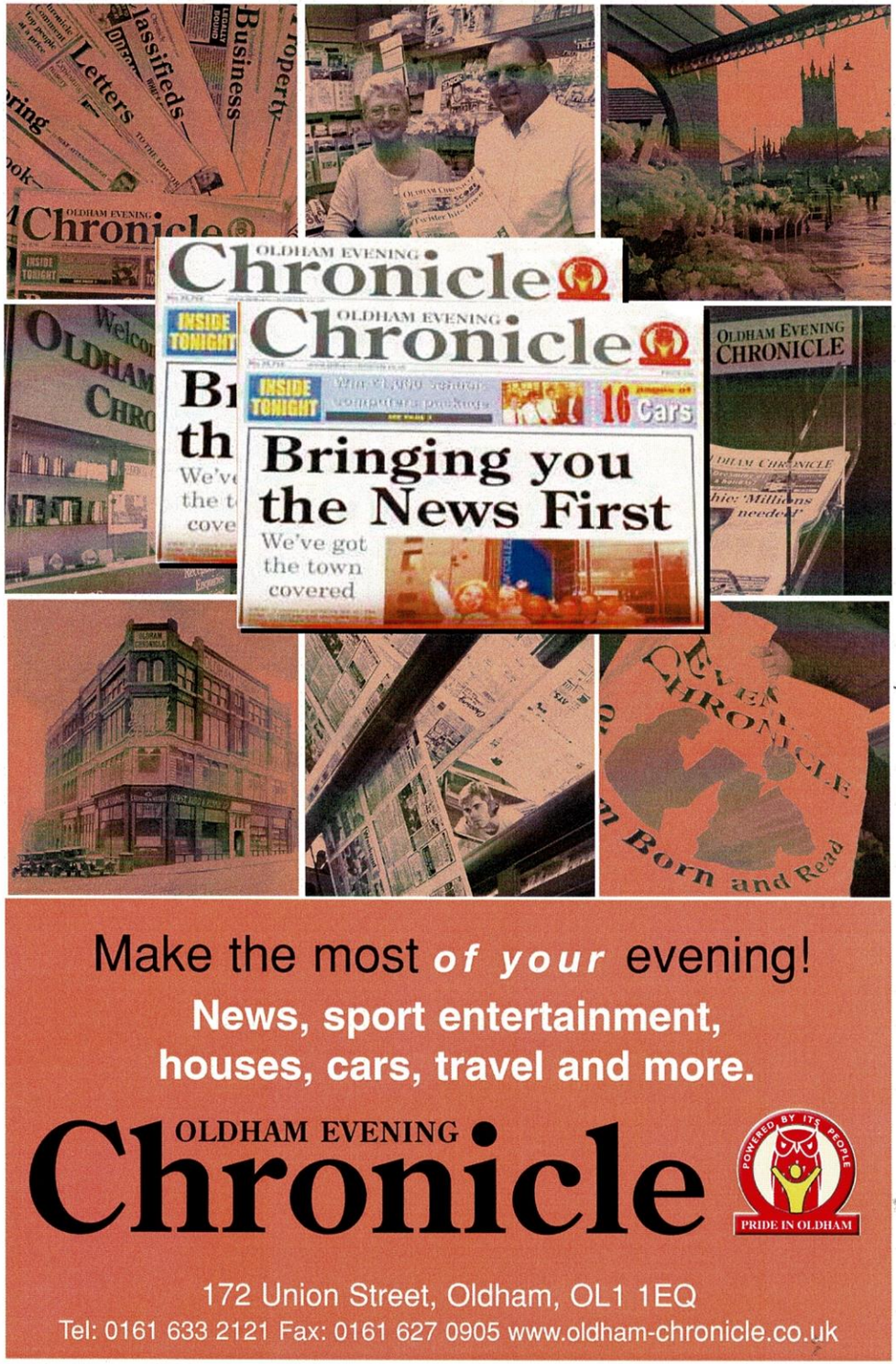
Amateur football, swimming and local cricket have provided Mark with his lifelong sporting interests. At one time he was a qualified coach for both swimming and football and, more recently, he was chairman of Heyside Cricket Club for four and a half years up until last summer.

But now, as a member of Five Alive and with more than a passing interest in how the Roughyettes are doing, he is becoming increasingly interested in starting to follow the Roughyeds as a spectator.

"I haven't had time previously," he said, "but I'm really going to make the effort to get down to Boundary Park a few times this year. I got caught up in the infectious enthusiasm of Natalie and her friends after the Warrington game.

"From what they tell me, the lads will soon get the spectators coming back if they continue to play like they did against the Wolves."

*Latest £300 winners in the sister lottery, Club Cash, included Mr Giddens of Oldham; Mr F Taylor of Oldham; Mrs Hulme of Shaw; Mr Kerr of Failsworth; H Jones of Oldham; and M Booth of Oldham.



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journalistic license

by Matthew Chambers

A DEFEAT to Rochdale at the start of a new season would not usually be thought of as encouraging, but then these are unusual times at Oldham.

Last weekend's 24-8 defeat was harsh on Steve Deakin's men, who were knocking on the door for the majority of the second half.

Resolute Hornets defence and some indifferent ball movement were all that separated the Roughyeds from at least a bonus point — which was the least they deserved. (Incidentally, not one team managed to land the point on offer for losing by 12 points or less on the opening weekend. So much for revolutionising the competition!)

When Mark Ogden and Paul Ashton return to help give the team guidance, Oldham can only improve on solid foundations.

The pack, for example, flourished against higher-division opponents.

Other overseas recruits Geno Costin and Drew Houston both impressed, putting in a lot of hard work against the Hornets, while tackling machine Ian Sinfield already appears to be a vital cog at loose forward.

Said Tamghart, meanwhile, crashed into tackles as if his life depended on it. It was little wonder that he began to tire during the second half after an all-action show in the opening period.

Word will begin to spread around National League Two about the huge Frenchman soon. Once he gets up to full speed in terms of fitness, Tamghart can have a huge influence for the Roughyeds in whatever position he happens to be playing.

Today's game will give the best indication yet as to Oldham's credentials for this season. Swinton, last year's grand finalists, are sure to provide a stiff test and the Roughyeds will have to put on a polished performance if they are to come out on top.

They will be guaranteed plenty of inside information, with a total of six players — Wes Rogers, Stuart Oldham, Andy Crabtree, Kris Smith, Michael Stout and Sinfield — switching to the club from last year's Lions squad.

With ex-Roughyeds man Gareth Hayes likely to start in Swinton's front row, the game will feature familiar faces all round.

Coaches will always tell you that the league campaign is the all-important aspect of the season. But even if this clash between two ambitious, promotion-chasing clubs is something of a phoney war it is no less intriguing for it.

* THE deal arranged between Sky Sports and the RFL to show National League rugby on Thursday nights is one that promises to add extra prestige to the competition.

No longer will it be the sole preserve of the die-hard fan, as was the case previously given the blanket lack of coverage up to the end of season play-offs.

Now the casual rugby league viewer — of which, looking at Sky's rugby league viewing figures, there are many — has the chance to take an interest in the game. The regular time slot of 7.30pm will certainly help, as will the fact that there is rarely any competition on that night of the week.

True, no money is being given directly to the clubs and it isn't ideal for supporters, or indeed players, making long trips on work nights.

But factoring in the huge cost of live outside broadcasts taken on by Sky, plus the additional revenue clubs will be able to generate as a result of the increased exposure, it is still a big step in the right direction.

Should the innovation prove to be a success, no doubt the RFL will be able to negotiate an even better deal for National League clubs next time around.

Matthew

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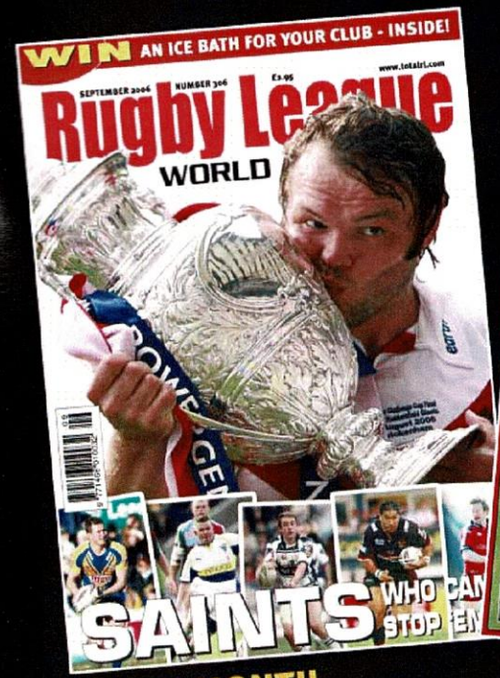

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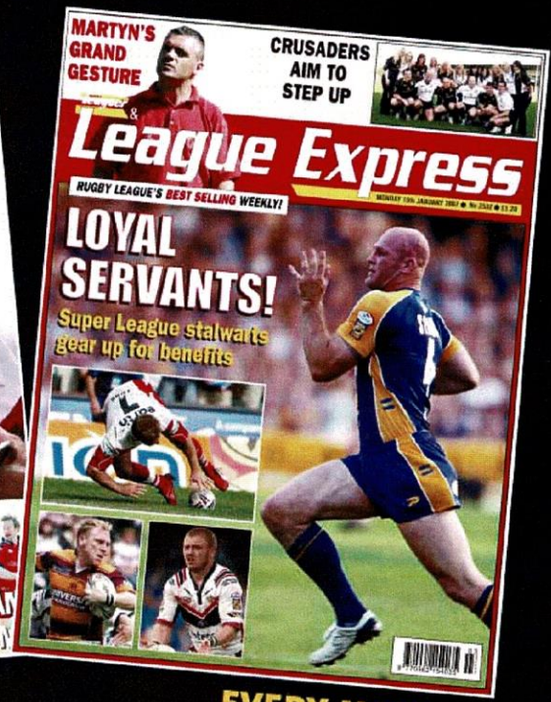

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2007 fixtures

DATE	OPPONENTS	CUP	VENUE	K. O.	RESULT	W/L	ATT
31/01/07	**Warrington Wolves**	**Friendly**	**Home**	**7.45pm**	**42-6**	**W**	**789**
11/02/07	**Rochdale Hornets**	**NRC**	**Home**	**3.00pm**	**8-24**	**L**	**1,145**
18/02/07	**Swinton Lions**	**NRC**	**Home**	**3.00pm**			
25/02/07	Dewsbury Rams	NRC	Away	3.00pm			
04/03/07	Rochdale Hornets	NRC	Away	3.00pm			
11/03/07	Carnegie Challenge Cup 3						
18/03/07	**Dewsbury Rams**	**NRC**	**Home**	**3.00pm**			
25/03/07	Swinton Lions	NRC	Away	3.00pm			
01/04/07	Carnegie Challenge Cup 4						
06/04/07	**Featherstone Rovers**	**NL2**	**Home**	**3.00pm**			
09/04/07	Hunslet Hawks	NL2	Away	3.30pm			
15/04/07	Blackpool Panthers	NL2	Away	3.00pm			
22/04/07	NRC quarter finals						
29/04/07	**Keighley Cougars**	**NL2**	**Home**	**3.00pm**			
03/05/07	Celtic Crusaders	NL2	Away	7.35pm			
13/05/07	**Swinton Lions**	**NL2**	**Home**	**3.00pm**			
20/05/07	**Barrow Raiders**	**NL2**	**Home**	**3.00pm**			
26/05/07	London Skolars	NL2	Away	3.00pm			
03/06/07	Workington Town	NL2	Away	3.00pm			
10/06/07	**York City Knights**	**NL2**	**Home***	**3.00pm**			
17/06/07	Featherstone Rovers	NL2	Away	3.00pm			
24/06/07	Keighley Cougars	NL2	Away	3.00pm			
01/07/07	**Gateshead Thunder**	**NL2**	**Home***	**3.00pm**			
08/07/07	Swinton Lions	NL2	Away	3.00pm			
15/07/07	Barrow Raiders	NL2	Away	3.00pm			
22/07/07	**Hunslet Hawks**	**NL2**	**Home**	**3.00pm**			
29/07/07	York City Knights	NL2	Away	3.00pm			
05/08/07	**Blackpool Panthers**	**NL2**	**Home**	**3.00pm**			
12/08/07	**Workington Town**	**NL2**	**Home**	**3.00pm**			
19/08/07	Gateshead Thunder	NL2	Away	3.00pm			
02/09/07	**Celtic Crusaders**	**NL2**	**Home**	**3.00pm**			
09/09/07	**London Skolars**	**NL2**	**Home**	**3.00pm**			

Play offs will take place on Sundays, September 16, 23 and 30 with the Grand Final on Sunday 7th October.
Home* venue to be arranged.

Key
NRC – Northern Rail Cup
NL2 – National League Division 2

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