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### *Editorial*

In presenting "Vintage Rugby" the ex-players have tried to give the reader an insight into Rugby League football. They have included "quotes" on the game; pen-pictures of former Oldham Rugby stars, and what happened behind the scenes of matches that Oldham was involved in, giving the laughable side of rugby as well as the tragic one. All this, and more, of what happened in those golden days of the Oldham Club is presented to you, and whilst you are enjoying our booklet, you have,also, a chance of a major raffle prize as described on the last page.

Thank you for donating to our effort. All proceeds go to the Ex-players' fund for subscriptions to those ex-players who are maimed or in ill health, and to various charities.

Edited by Fred Howarth.
For and on behalf of the Ex-Players.


### *Oldham R.F.C. Ex-Players' Association*

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***A 'Cherry and Whites' Presentation***

Published and Produced by Oldham R.F.C. Ex-Players' Association

## *Foreward*

### *by Roger Halstead (Oldham Chronicle Sports Dept.)*

In the history of Rugby League football, a special place will always be reserved, particularly in Oldham, for those glorious post-war years in the early fifties.

"Rugby League" throughout the fifties, in fact, provided thousands of sports lovers in the three counties with superb entertainment; thrills galore and a galaxy of stars on which was heaped the adulation generally reserved now for the so-called super stars of Soccer.

Oh! for those days when Rugby League fans had to miss the match because they were not at the ground early enough to beat the crowds.

"Vintage Rugby" was plentiful in that decade of the code's development and it gives me the greatest pleasure to foreward this booklet, prepared and produced by many of the men who provided us with so many magic moments.

## *Introduction by Arthur Walker.*

### *(Chairman Oldham R.F.C.)*

It gives me great pleasure to accept an invitation to record in 'Vintage Rugby' some of my reminicenses and appreciations of those years in the 'Fifties' when Rugby League enjoyed its greatest days since the war.

At that time I was Chairman of Rochdale Hornets, and I am sure that supporters of both Oldham and Hornets will never forget those great 'derby' tussles usually watched by 15,000 or so fans, which included players of the calibre of Alan Davies, Bernard Ganley, Frank Pitchford and Derek Turner.

However, the game must go on, and next season's two-division Rugby, pitting the best against the best, promises to re-kindle the sparkle left to die after those glorious 'Fifties.

Finally, I must record my pleasure in seeing many of those players retaining their allegiance through the 'Cherry and Whites'. My best wishes to all.

## *Behind the Scenes*

Feeling in a nostalgic mood a short time ago, memories soon came flooding back of great games of the past. One in particular stood out. Spectators, during the 1956-7 Season, may recall seeing the Oldham v. Hull match when, during the second half, both Bill Drake and Arthur Tomlinson were sent off for fighting; but the spectators couldn't see the end of it. In the dressing-room both of them went at it tooth and nail for some ten minutes, with the Staff and Police trying to part them. There they were, two strong men, battling it out, with a table and chairs strewn across the floor. As one policeman said: "The Joe Louis - Tommy Farr fight had nothing on this".

In sharp contrast with the above came the vivid recollection of the tragic Munich air disaster which involved so many of Manchester United's players. It was training night at Watersheddings and deathly silence filled the dressing-room as details of the Munich scene came over the radio. Tears streamed down the faces of many of the players as they stood grief-stricken with sympathy for fellow players of the other code. There was not much training done that night.

Tragedy struck a heavy blow to the Rugby code when Johnny Feather was killed when on his way home from training at Leigh, a few weeks after his transfer there from Oldham. Johnny was always well liked not, only for his great playing ability, but because he never grumbled about anything. The dressing-room was a very sad one the night we heard the news for, as Charlie Winslade said, "He was a great guy; one who will be missed by all of us".

Nothing more needed to be said!

***Who said what:***

Some classical statements have been made by the various Managers, Coaches and Players of the Oldham Club, especially during those glorious 'Fifties. Here are a few of them.

Match Day - Oldham v. Leigh 1954:

Half time and the players not getting much of the ball (and they were puffed out) : Gerry Gilmore, promoted from the 'A' Team, jumps up and says, "Never mind lads, have a fag", and starts to hand them round. I wouldn't like to repeat what Bryn Goldswain said to him.

Workington v. Oldham - 1958:

A scrum down on the half - way line and Jack Keith shouts out "Oh !, my leg", and Rocky Turner shouts out, "Never mind your leg, get the b — ball".

Warrington v. Oldham - 1958:

It's Tuesday training night following Saturday's match in which Bevan had scored five tries for Warrington and half of the players were reporting as having colds. Up quipped Alan Davies, "No wonder ! you were all caught in a draught from Bevan passing you going for the line".

Grif. Jenkins 1958:

"The dawn of a new season and an opportunity to see our team playing at Wembley". Famous words — how often were they said in Oldham ?

Frank Stirrup - 1959:

"I do not propose to make any drastic changes from the methods adopted by Grif. Jenkins — but I won't be wearing his cloth cap"

Frank Stirrup and Frank Daly in the Town Hall after we had beaten Wigan at Swinton in the Lancashire Cup Final: Admiring the medallion on the Mayor's chain, Frank Stirrup asked what the Latin inscription meant. Quick as a flash, Daly replied: "Stirrup and Daly".

Gus Risman - 1960

**"A little more determination and we could hit the jack-pot this season".**

***Memorable Matches***

Oldham v. Wigan Sept. 16th 1958 2nd Rd. Lancs. Cup

Oldham Team:

Ganley, Cracknell, Davies, Noon, Etty, Pitchford, Kellett, Rowbottom, Keith, Dufty, Winslade, Little, Turner.

Wigan Team:

Cunliffe, Chisnall, Ashcroft, Ashton, Sullivan, Boston, Bolton, Barton, Sayer, McTigue, Collier, Cherrington, Evans

Oldham 19 Scorers: Ganley 5 goals. Tries: Keith. Davies, Pitchford, 1 each

Wigan 7 Scorers: Cunliffe 2 goals, Sayer 1 try

Referee - R. Gelder Attendance - 20,000

What can be said of this match, except that it was Rugby League at its best? - a classic not easily forgotten.

Oldham v. St. Helens Oct. 25th 1958 Lancs. Cup Final played at Station Road, Swinton.

Oldham Team:

Ganley, Cracknell, Davies, Noon, Etty. Pitchford, Kellett, Rowbottom, Keith, Jackson, Winslade, McKeown, Turner

St. Helens Team:

Fearis, Vollenhoven, Greenall, Large, Carlton, Howard, Murphy, Terry, McKinney, Brown, Briggs, Delves, and Karalius. Oldham won 12-2

Oldham scorers: Goals — Ganley 2, Kellett 1

Tries — Kellett 1 Davies 1

Referee R. Gelder Attendance 38,000

Oldham's superiority was obvious from the start, but it was a hard game with good football from both sides.

Oldham v. Liverpool - April 4th 1959, a memorable game for Bernard Ganley who kicked 14 goals. A Club record

***Representative Honours 1958-9***

Alan Davies- Gt. Britain, Lancashire; Derek Turner- Yorkshire; Alan Kellett- Yorkshire; Charlie Winslade- Gt. Britain, Wales. Ike Southward- Gt. Britain.

***Notable Signings 1958-9***

Ike Southward - Workington Len McIntyre - Barrow

Sean Quinlan - Blackrock R.U. (Ireland)

## *Personalities of the 'Fifties*

FRANK DALEY: What does one say of this player, a great character on the field and off it? Frank gave his best to the Oldham club, and was rewarded by a handsome benefit match. Although Frank had a great knowledge of football; coming from that hot-bed of Rugby League — Wigan — he was also a connoisseur of classical music, and when the team was coming back from an away game would often give us a rendering from the classics.

ALAN DAVIES: A great player who achieved International honours whilst playing for Oldham. This big bouncing centre was feared by most of his opposing centres. He was also a personality off the field, and, being well read, was never at a loss for words, either humorously or politically. Alan was a constant source of humour both in the dressing-room and in the coach when we played away. He was a wonderful tonic to the rest of the team.

JACK KEITH: He was dubbed the No.9 extraordinary of Rugby League. He never gained many honours but was a hooker with an uncanny knack of always getting the ball, and his name usually appeared in the lists of try scorers. He now lives with his family in Australia.

BERNARD GANLEY: A product of the Leigh area, whose father had played for Huddersfield. Famous for his goal scoring feats, he still holds the record for the most goals kicked in one Season. He was a great asset to Oldham in those days. He came to Oldham as a College student originally.

FRANK STIRRUP: All I have to say about him is that he was Mr. Football himself who will never be forgotten for those memorable games too numerous to mention.

CHARLIE WINSLADE: A giant of Rugby League, giving everything he had in every game, commanding great respect both on and off the field.

## *'The Wind of Change'*

'Rugby League must live with the times'. 'Bigger clubs need and want a better league'.'Second Division is a must for the Rugby League'. These are but a few of the criticisms levelled at the game during the 'Fifties, but rugby was in its heyday, and, with other clubs, Oldham was enjoying having packed terraces of spectators watching tbe brand of football served up by stars of the calibre of Turner, Davies, Winslade, Ganley etc. so why change it? Weren't we satisfied with a perfect blending of individual skills and team spirit which was giving us rugby at its best?

But times have changed and, who knows?, next year's experimental two leagues may give the stimulus that the game needs.

### *Comment by John McCallum (Ex-President of the Supporters' Club — 1958)*

'I know the skilful games far outnumbered the disappointing ones'.

### *Cup Honours:*

Although we achieved many honours whilst Cup chasing, including taking the Lancashire Cup and the League Cup, the glamour of treading Wembley's famous turf in the Challenge Cup Final always eluded us. We came near it many times, only to disappoint officials, players and spectators alike by failure, even at tne last hurdle.

***Mention*** has been made of players and managers, but others who have striven to make the Club 'tick' are no less important. One such 'everlasting' official, Percy Carter, will never be re-paid for his unfailing efforts, and thanks are due to him and those other workers who have tried so hard to build a successful team.

We thank you for your contribution to the Ex-Players' Fund by virtue of our presentation of 'Vintage Rugby'.

Whilst tragedy has been mentioned in earlier pages, one particular event has so far been omitted, but which I feel needs special mention.

Disaster struck our own David Goddard who, whilst playing in a League Match suffered a neck injury which has now left him resigned to a wheel-chair for life. It is David and players like him who have suffered injury playing the rugby game that we, the Oldham Ex-players, try to help by giving some measure of financial comfort. So to all those Rugby League fans who donated, as it is your help that makes our funds possible, we, the Ex-players, say, "Thank you".

***The Raffle Draw*** will be made on Monday, 3rd Sept. 1973 at the Parkfield Hotel, Moorside, and the winning numbers will appear in the Oldham Chronicle on Wednesday, 5th Sept,

***Winners must present the front page of 'Vintage Rugby' when claiming prizes.***

***PRIZES:***

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| 3rd | ... ... | Parcel of Groceries |
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We thank all those who have helped in our effort. Roger Halstead and Arthur Walker for their contributions; those people who kindly donated the prizes for the raffle and last, but not least, our advartisers for their generous help.

Oldham R.F.C. Ex-Players' Association

*Fred Howarth*

Secretary


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