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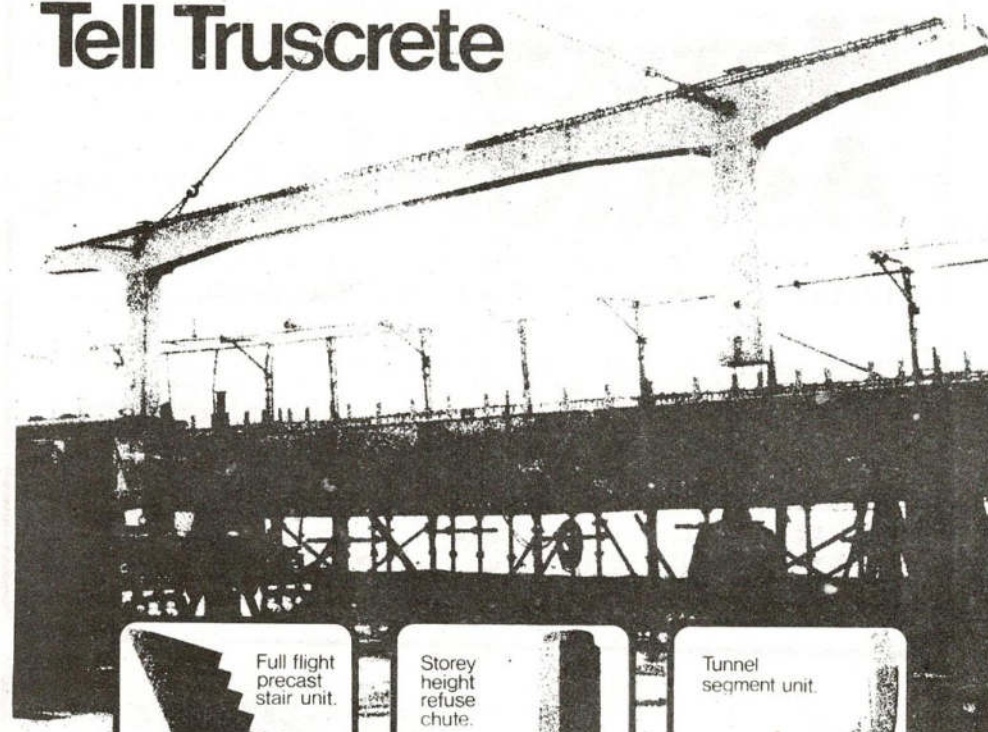
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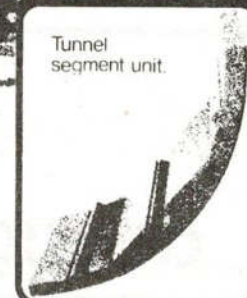
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OLDHAM OUTLOOK

May we take this opportunity of wishing you all a belated Happy Easter. These notes had to be written before the Good Friday derby at Rochdale but we are naturally hoping we managed to pick up a win at the Athletic Grounds, thus making it all the more interesting today. A win against Huddersfield today would certainly keep our slim promotion hopes alive.

Since the last programme notes were written, we have completed the signing of Chris Charles, the big Welsh prop who did so much towards helping us put on a good display against St. Helens in the second round of the Challenge Cup.

We are not in the habit of revealing transfer fees paid but we finally came to an agreement with St. Helens and Chris ultimately joined us permanently at the completion of his four trial matches.

Needless to say, we wish him a long and happy stay here at Water-sheddings and trust that he will help us to make an impact next season no matter whether we are in the First Division or the Second Division.

It is interesting to note that we have been able to keep a very settled pack in the past few games and there has consequently been a big improvement in performances.

Since the side was shaken up for the home game against Leigh at the end of January only seven forwards have been used in five games -- Charles, O'Mahoney, Owen, Hughes, Hall, Herbert, Flanagan.

Understanding is bound to follow when any side is able to keep a regular pack formation like that and providing we did as well as expected at the Athletic Grounds on Friday there is every reason for us to be confident of a really successful run-in to the end of the season.

After today we have four games left - Doncaster home on Sunday, Whitehaven away on Sunday, April 9th, York at home on Wednesday April 12th, and Halifax away on Sunday, April 16th.

There are seven "A" team matches still to play as follows: Saturday, April 1st; Barrow (a); Tuesday, April 4th; Rochdale (h); Friday, April 7th; Widnes (a); Saturday, April 15th; Workington (h); Saturday, April 22nd; Workington (a). The Swinton (a) and Wigan (h) matches have still to be arranged.

Mr. FRED HOWARTH

It is with deep regret that we record the death of Mr. Fred Howarth, a former Oldham RL. club player and trainer, who died recently at the age of 57. Mr. Howarth, a very popular figure in Oldham Rugby League circles, was found dead at his home by a neighbour two nights after he had attended a Parkfield House function organised by the Oldham Ex-PLAYERS Association, of which he acted as secretary.

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OUR VISITORS BY DON YATES

Although the exciting race for promotion promises to continue right up until the final day of the season, no one is in doubt as to the crucial importance of this afternoon's match between Oldham and Huddersfield, two of the clubs locked in the tremendous season long scramble for promotion points.

During the past few seasons Huddersfield have been something of a bogey club to Oldham for one has to go back eight matches to September 1972 for Oldham's last victory over the Fartowners. On that occasion Oldham won 25-7 at Huddersfield but in the return match Huddersfield drew 7-7 at Watersheddings and have since reeled off six successive victories over Oldham starting with their two Second Division wins in season 1974-75 when Huddersfield beat Oldham 15-11 away and by 12-11 at Fartown. The following season Huddersfield came here and pulled off a shock 28-17 victory which they repeated two months later with a 19-14 home win. The clubs did not meet last season but already this season Oldham have made two fruitless trips to Fartown, losing 21-11 in the Players Trophy and 22-15 in the Christmas holiday league fixture, Oldham's two defeats at Fartown, however, were not entirely unexpected for Huddersfield have lost only one home Second Division match this season, to Leigh last September, whilst their recent cup victory over First Division Salford indicates just how capable a side they are.

One of the reasons for Huddersfield's success this season is the tremendous experience of the team which contains no fewer than seven players who at some time in their careers have gained representative selection. Although it is some time since winger Ken Senior and forwards Davie Jeanes, Steve Lyons and Mick Redfeam have enjoyed big time football, both loose-forward Malcolm Branch and scrum-half Mick Shepherd have played in representative football this season while experienced centre Peter Rowe was included in the Welsh squad for the recent European Championship clash against France. The versatile Rowe is a former Swansea RUFC player who turned professional with Wigan in October 1966. He is a former Welsh youth rugby union cap who has played in seven full internationals for Wales at rugby league as well as in five matches for Other Nationalities with the Highlight of his representative career coming in 1975 when he visited Australasia with the Welsh World Championship squad. Rowe also enjoyed a good deal of success at club level whilst with Wigan for he appeared with them at Wembley in 1970 and also played in the Championship Final twelve months later. However, Rowe also knows what life is all about at the wrong end of the league table for he spent two years with Blackpool Borough before joining Huddersfield for £3,000 in January 1976.

Four months after Rowe moved to Fartown, Huddersfield were relegated but a new management structure has led to several signings and a remarkable improvement in the team which now finds itself visiting Watersheddings seeking a victory which would virtually clinch the Fartowners return to their rightful place in Division One.

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- 8 CHARLES, C.
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- 10 HUGHES, B.
- 11 HALL, F.
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- 7 SHEPHERD M.
or GREENWOOD, D.
- 8 JEANS, D.
- 9 SCHOFIELD, D.
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Brian Batty

It is tragic and yet typical that within 12 months the fortunes of the French have suffered a tremendous setback.

Rugby League has lost a lot of ground over there in less than 12 months as we were to discover during England's successful trip to Toulouse.

When the team won the Jeab Galia Trophy admittedly with home victories over Wales and England - the French seemed on top of the world.

They had shown some of their old fire and passion for the international game as well as skill in the exciting shape of talented centre Jean Maro Bourret.

But their hopes for the future were rapidly shattered when they failed so pathetically in the World championship in New Zealand and Australia.

Wales dealt them another crushing body blow at Widnes in January and now England's success appears to have kicked the legs almost completely from under them.

President Rene Mauries was highly critical of the French players and officials at the reception after the Toulouse game against England.

The outcome was that their coach Yves Begou and the six-man selection committee all resigned a sad reflection on a run of six defeats.

It was apparent that trouble was brewing when only half the French team turned up to collect their losers' medals at the reception.

Those who did were bitterly upset at also receiving only £18 to cover pay and expenses for the weekend.

But both codes of rugby have been slipping in popularity in Toulouse with only a 10,000 crowd attending the visit of the New Zealand All Blacks early in the Union season.

Fortunately the decision to revert to the inter-change system of referees in League for next season's Triangular Tournament was made and should prove beneficial to both countries.

'The French officials certainly feel they will have less pressure on them handling games in England. They always seem so tense and keyed up before home crowds and put it down to their officials seeking prestige from success,' says League secretary David Oxley.

MAN IN THE MIDDLE

This afternoon's vital league clash is refereed by Grade Two official John Entwistle from Whitley Bay, an insurance administration supervisor with the Automobile Association who celebrates his 31st birthday this coming Wednesday. He is a single man who has been refereeing since 1969 being promoted to Grade Two in July 1975. Mr. Entwistle is interested in all sports especially squash and cricket and he is also a keen boating and music lover.

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With the Amateurs ALAN BURKE

Yesterday, the Great Britain open-age team were due to play France at Derwent Park, Workington, in the first of this season's Amateur Internationals, which would give the BARLA International selectors an idea of how their choices would fare when they go on the first open-age amateur tour to Australasia later this year. Many people were surprised when, two weeks ago, the selectors not only chose the team to meet France but also decided on the squad of players who would represent Great Britain on the 6-week tour of Papua New Guinea, Australia and New Zealand, which begins on May 2nd.

On that date, the party of thirty, 26 players and 4 officials, will leave Heathrow Airport and will arrive in Papua New Guinea two days later, having stopped at Hong Kong and Manila. After playing four games against district sides, the Great Britain team will play their first international match of the tour against Papua New Guinea on May 21st. A day later the touring side will leave the country to fly down to Australia where two matches will be played, one against a district side and an International game against the Australians at Sydney Cricket Ground on May 28th.

The party will then go to New Zealand where they will firstly play Wellington before taking on the Kiwi national side in Auckland on June 4th. The tourists will then leave New Zealand two days later, and will complete their round-the-world tour by arriving back at Heathrow on June 7th via Los Angeles.

Approximately £10,000 is needed to be raised by BARLA to Finance the tour, the Sports Council having already provided a similar amount, and shortly "£1 Pioneer Sponsor" forms will be available, with each sponsor, as last year, receiving a souvenir brochure of the historic tour when it is completed. Although the Oldham League will not be represented on the tour, there are two Oldhamers in the party which will be going to Toulouse on April 8th when the French Under-18s side plays hosts to the Great Britain Youth team. Terry Flanagan, the Saddleworth loose-forward, has been chosen as forward substitute, whilst the team manager will be Stuart McDonough, who although he now lives in Bury is the Oldham League's representative to BARLA.

Moving away from the International scene and onto more domestic matters, it has been announced that the Pennine Cup, due to the recent spell of adverse weather, will not have been completed in time to stage the Final here at Watersheddings on the originally scheduled date of April 9th. Therefore, the Final will now take place on this ground on Sunday, April 30th. April will be a busy time on the local amateur rugby league scene, as on the 16th of that month the Oldham League's Albert Edwards Memorial Sevens will be staged at Watersheddings, with the Oldham League Championship Play-off also taking place throughout the period.

It is hoped that the draw for the opening rounds of both these competitions will take place during this Wednesday's Oldham Amateur Rugby League meeting, with the seven-a-side tournament including many top-class teams from all over Lancashire, and with the Championship play-off culminating in the Final again being played at Watersheddings on Friday, May 5th. Another date now pencilled into the Watersheddings Diary will be two days later on May 7th, when, for the second consecutive season, the BARLA National 7-a-side Finals will be staged.

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