

OFFICIAL MATCHDAY MAGAZINE £1.50

OLDHAM RLFC

"THE ROUGHYEDS"

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**RUGBY FOOTBALL LEAGUE DIV TWO
v BRAMLEY
MONDAY 4TH MAY 1998 K.O. 3.00 PM**

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Chairman's CHATTER

"THE ROUGHYEDS"

WELCOME to Boundary Park for what, after the postponement of the game against Lancashire Lynx, now becomes our first home fixture of the season.

Having won two out of our first three games all away from home, I think we can be more than satisfied with the start we have made. Those who saw the game at Headingley against today's opponents Bramley, will accept that we lost the game rather than them winning it! A victory would have provided us with a perfect start in a division which appears at this early stage to be highly competitive and evenly balanced.

Whilst warmly welcoming the players, officials and supporters of Bramley today, I make no secret of the fact that their link up with Leeds gives me great concern. My feelings on the matter are well known and I remain totally unconvinced of the arguments put forward in support of their activities. The Rugby Football League is a members club, and, as such, each member has a duty to ensure that, above all else, it protects 'the good of the game'. Once clubs start to do that, the game of Rugby League will advance in leaps and bounds.



I would like to think that you the Supporters, have already identified in myself and fellow Directors a desire to do just that, and if it means standing up and being counted for something that we believe in then so be it, no matter whose feathers are ruffled.

On a separate note, the support we have had at the first three games has been absolutely outstanding and, although it does seem a little monotonous, I make no apologies for once again offering the heartfelt thanks of everybody in making those games seem like home matches. Without your support what we strive to achieve is impossible and we will not forget that either now or in the future. Although the team is generally young and inexperienced, those of you who have seen us play will know that the players are trying to play entertaining rugby and with that in mind I hope that you will once again get behind the team today and be as vocal as usual.

Best Wishes.

Chris Hamilton
Chairman



Oldham Rugby League Football Club (1997) Limited

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THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THIS MATCHDAY MAGAZINE DO NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT THOSE OF THE MANAGEMENT AND STAFF OF OLDHAM RLFC (1997) LTD.



Roger

Oldham Evening Chronicle's HALSTEAD



THE case for the big screen replay was further strengthened by the "no try" decision against Darren Robinson in Oldham's 12-10 defeat by Bramley at Headingley.

I'm not saying the Roughyeds substitute scored. I was far too far away to be sure of that. But of one

thing I am sure...there was sufficient doubt for the incident to become a controversial talking point.

Had this been a Super League game, even if not on Sky, we would have had the benefit of in-goal judges.

Had it been a second division game last season we would have had in-goal judges...so the question must be asked: what's happened to the in-goal judges in division two this year?

Informed sources tell me there are no in-goal judges this season in either first or second divisions. If not, why not? Could it be the result of a shortage of men taking up refereeing? Could it be a case of cutting costs?

Whatever the reason, you can gamble that matches outside Super League this summer will produce a lot of "tries" which were, at best, dubious and a lot of touchdowns disallowed when modern technology or in-goal personnel would have proved them legitimate.

The traditionalists will argue that we managed without Big Brother replay screens or extra officials posted behind the dead ball line for a hundred years.

Of course, we did. But the introduction of the screen, and with it slow-motion action replays, has merely served to indicate how

many wrong decisions must have been made when a referee had to make an instant judgement in the heat of the moment, possibly with bodies all over the place and possibly from 10 to 15 yards behind the play if a fast centre or wing had broken clear.

To be a little more specific let's examine for a moment the incident at Headingley involving Robinson. The teenager put in a low, angled kick from somewhere in the vicinity of the Bramley 20 metre line.

My first impression, to use a tennis term, was that the kick looked "long".

However, Robinson quickly made up ground on defenders who had to turn on a rain-soaked surface. He got ahead of them, no doubt about that, but from my position towards the other end of Headingley the ball looked to be going dead from the moment it left the player's boot.

Suddenly, it seemed to slow up on the wet turf and in the flash of an eye the Roughyeds' youngster was diving on to it and the Oldham fans at that end of the ground rose in unison to claim the try.

The referee glanced across at his touch-judge before giving Bramley a 20-metre tap, but neither official was as well placed as an in-goal judge would have been.

One of the closest people to the point of touchdown was Chronicle photographer Tony Miller and, for the record, it has to be said that Tony believed Robinson got downward movement on to the ball as it actually cut the dead ball line.

If that were the case it was NO TRY and the match officials were spot on, but that doesn't justify the RFL decision to dispense with in-goal judges outside Super League this season.

The case for big screen replays and/or in-goal judges has surely been proven in the last couple of years. To toss the in-goal men of the first and second divisions into the sin bin is a backward step. What about it, FASDA? A push for their reinstatement would be appropriate.



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Don Yates On This Day

"THE ROUGHYEDS"

DON YATES RECALLS THIS DAY IN HISTORY

THIS afternoon Bramley, tenants at Headingley, visit Oldham exactly 41 years after their landlords, Leeds, visited Oldham for a League Championship semi-final tie. The Roughyeds ended that 1956-57 season as league leaders so were confident of victory when fourth placed Leeds arrived at Watersheddings on Saturday 4th May 1957. The Loiners, however, put up stubborn resistance and, in fact, led 7-2 late in the first half before a Dick Cracknell try put Oldham back on course and able to pull off a 22-12 win. Centres Denis Ayres and Alan Davies (2) scored the other Roughyed tries with Bernard Ganley adding five goals. Scrum-half Jeff Stevenson and centre Keith McLellan scored the Leeds' tries with full-back Lewis Jones landing three goals.



Alan Davies

Six years later, Saturday 4th May 1963, was not as successful for the Roughyeds who lost 15-10 at home to Warrington. Full-back Johnny Noon scored both Oldham tries and scrum-half Brian Fallon landed both goals but it was a more significant afternoon for second-row forward Stuart Whitehead who made his first team debut for the Roughyeds that day. Whitehead went on to make 76 appearances

for Oldham and scored 17 tries before moving on to Salford three years later.

Saturday, 4th May 1996 was an afternoon of mixed fortunes for our local amateur clubs. In the North West Counties League, Higginshaw defeated Wigan St.Cuthberts 50-8 to win promotion to the Premier Division with a 100% record in Division One, 18 wins from 18 matches and neighbours St. Annes also clinched promotion. They beat Walney Central 27-2 at home to move up to the Premier Division of the National Conference League. Saddleworth Rangers, on the other hand, surprisingly lost 19-12 at home to Millom despite leading 12-10 at the interval.

It was on this day in 1934, Friday 4th May, that the Rugby Football League's first attempt to establish professional rugby in London came to an end, albeit in triumphant circumstances. The Wigan Highfield club were moved to the White City Stadium, Shepherd's Bush for the 1933-34 season and their final match of that campaign was played on Challenge Cup Final eve when Bramley provided the opposition. Highfield won 59-11 with loose-forward Welsh, a Scot incidentally, scoring four tries but the club then returned north, renamed itself Liverpool Stanley and continued to play out of the Stanley Greyhound Stadium, Liverpool. For the record, Bramley's points came via a try from winger Telford and four goals from hooker Litt.

Although Britain was at war in 1940, the country's optimists were still confident that it would be over in time for the British Lions to tour Australasia as planned in the summer. For that reason, on Saturday 4th May 1940, a team of '1940 Tour Probables' met the '1936 Tourists' at the Willows, Salford. At hooker for the Probables was Oldham raker Edgar Brooks who scored a try as his team built up a 21-5 interval lead. The 1936 Tourists hit back after the interval but the Probables hung on to win 29-21. It was 1946 before the Lions set sail for Australia and only halfbacks Willie Davies (Bradford Northern) and Dai Jenkins (Leeds) together with loose-forward Trevor Foster (Bradford Northern) of the 1940 Probables were included in that 1946 party. Remarkably, centre Gus Risman (Salford) and scrum-half Tommy McCue (Widnes) of the 1936 Tourists also made the trip.



Comments from THE COACH

THE postponement of the first game of the season, at home to Lancashire Lynx, was a big disappointment to everyone concerned at the club. Given the terrific travelling support we have had since, at Workington, Bramley and Doncaster I am sure we would have had a gate to match many of the Super League clubs.

Missing the first home game has meant that we have had a tough start to the campaign with 3 away games. As a new team just learning about each other I am really pleased to have come through that start with 2 wins out of 3.

The game at Workington was probably the most demanding physically, and going in at half time 14-4 down was a big test of character. Commitment is something this team does not lack and we produced an outstanding 2nd half display, scoring four tries to one, for our first win.

The game at Bramley was played in shocking conditions. I have never been to Headingley and seen the pitch in less than perfect condition, but with so much water on the pitch the game deteriorated into a mistake strewn contest with defences on top. In the event Bramley controlled the ball better in the second half to win 12-10. As well as the conditions, though, we were not helped



by the fact that we had the same referee for the 2nd consecutive game, and I believe the Rugby League has to improve its administration of the game to be fair to everyone. It does not seem

right to me to play 3 consecutive away games, and have the same referee for two of them.

I don't think, and certainly hope, that we will play as badly again with the ball as we did for the first 39 minutes at Doncaster. Again conditions played their part with sunshine, torrential rain, and hailstones during the first 30 minutes. Playing without the ball because of our own mistakes we stood firm on defence, conceded only 3 penalty goals and then scored through Neil Flanagan on the stroke of half time to go in with an undeserved 8-6 lead.

In the second half we gave a much improved performance to run out worthy winners 28-8. The first 3 games have produced impressive performances from Mickey Edwards and Richard Darkes with centres Sean Cooper and Afi Leuila always looking dangerous.

Finally a welcome to Bramley on their first visit to Boundary Park. Today's game gives us an early opportunity to avenge the defeat at Headingley.

Paddy Kirwan



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The Roughyeds

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"THE ROUGHYEDS"

HI THERE all you Junior Roughyeds,

Well what do you think of our new Roughyed?

Don't forget we need to give a name to the Roughyed - who wants to win that super prize?

We extend a very warm O.R.L.F.C. welcome to all the players, officials and supporters from Bramley. Let's hope we don't have the rain at Boundary Park that we received at Bramley!!

Well, sadly we did not start off our season as we hoped to. We were all very disappointed when the Lancashire Lynx match was cancelled - especially **LAUREN PEMBERTON**. Lauren was chosen as mascot for the day. She attends St Aidan and St Oswalds School in Royton and is 9 years old.

So let's hear you cheering for Oldham "Come on Oldham, come on Oldham"

Someone who was not disappointed was **NICHOLAS WATTERSON** from Greenfield. Nicholas was the Roughyeds mascot at Workington and this is what he thought of the day:-



"WHAT A DAY"

By Nicholas Watterson

WHAT a day! Me, Nick Watterson, Oldham Roughyeds first match mascot! I was really excited waiting for the players before the

game. I could hear them in the dressing room. They sounded 'fired up' for it. I ran onto the pitch with Neil Flanagan and the team. I was asked by Paul Lee to do the toss and Workington's mascot 'called'. They lost and Neil said Oldham should stay where they were and receive the kick. Then I left the pitch to watch the game. It was very exciting but nerve-racking too. The result was great: Roughyeds first League game and first win and I was their mascot. The players all came to the crowd at the end, which was great. I will never forget this day in Workington. A great day for me and Oldham Roughyeds.

For our second match of the season away at Bramley **JAMES PEMBERTON** aged 11 of Royton was very pleased to be the mascot. This is what James had to say....



AFTER waiting for what seemed like ages outside the dressing room listening to Paddy Kirwan they finally came out. I led them out in front of 1069 cheering spectators. It felt great, all my nerves drained away. I then went up for the toss, and I've still got the match coin as a souvenir. I left the pitch with the air of someone well proud. I wouldn't have swapped it for anything.

James Pemberton



Today's VISITORS

ANDY POYNTER

One of several close season signings from the Leeds Rhinos, Andy was a member of their successful Academy and Alliance Championship winning teams of last season. Andy hails from the Bingley area and is equally at home on the wing and at Full Back.

RICHARD STEAD

Signed from amateur rugby league in the Normanton area, Richard has developed into a powerful winger. Big things are expected of him as he continues to improve rapidly.

DAN POTTER

Dan is from the York area and has developed his talent with the Leeds Rhinos. A strong running centre, he joined Bramley in the close season. Formerly with New Earswick All Blacks ARL.

DAVID GIBBONS

One of the most experienced players in the Bramley ranks, David played in a curtain raiser at Wembley when he was eleven. He has had plenty of experience with the Leeds Rhinos first team and has also played at Keighley.

ANTHONY GIBBONS

Twin brother of David, Anthony has played all his rugby with his brother. Played at Keighley as well as Leeds Rhinos, he is equally at home in the full back, half back and loose forward positions.

NEIL KITE

A strong running centre or winger, Neil is in his first season at Bramley after originally joining Leeds from his hometown of Barrow. Was a member of the Championship winning Leeds Alliance and Academy sides last season.

MICKY HORNER

Was tremendously successful as an amateur at both codes of rugby. Micky played representative football from an early age. He can play in either half back role but it is in the hooking position that we should see him most often.

EUGENE CURRIE

One of the most popular of all Bramley players, Eugene has also played professional for Hunslet. A giant of a prop forward Eugene is very much the workhorse of the Bramley pack.

DAVID PITTS

Signed from Stanningley ARLFC after having played at Oldham under Peter Tunks and Tim Wilby. David has been with the Bramley club for three years and is adept in either half back role.

MARK GIBSON

Joined Bramley from Milford ARLFC. Mark is continuing to develop under the watchful eye of Mick Cook and Paul Fletcher.

RYAN MACDONALD

Ryan hails from the Cumbrian area and is instantly recognisable by his red hair. He has a typical Cumbrian attitude to the game and his 'hard as nails' approach is in keeping with the finest traditions of Cumbrian Prop Forwards.

WAYNE FREEMAN



Last year's Player of the Season, Wayne is one of the brightest young prospects in the game today. A strong running second row forward Wayne has attracted interest from a host of top clubs.

GLEN FREEMAN

Brother of Wayne, Glen forms a dynamic second row partnership with his brother. Signed from the Pudsey area Glen has run into some fine form for the Bramley

club. A tough tackling forward who always gives his all.

KRIS SMITH

One of the brightest prospects in the game, Kris hails from the Eccles ARLFC that also included Adrian Morley and Nathan McAvoy. Kris has superb handling skills and a brilliant kicking game. He is assured of a big future in the game.

RICHARD TIFFANY

Richard is a former Dudley Hill amateur player who originally signed for the Halifax club. He is highly thought of by the coaching staff and is someone who always gives 100% for the Club.

SIMON MIDDLETON

This former Castleford Tiger winger has just returned this week from a spell in Rugby Union.

NICKY RENDER

Nicky is a former Leeds, York and Halifax player who has settled well at Bramley. He is a former Castleford junior and his versatility makes him a vitally important member of the Bramley squad.

ANDY AGAR

Andy has recently returned from Australia where he has been playing Country Rugby League. Since his arrival he has impressed everyone with his enthusiasm to be part of the Bramley squad.

GAVIN BROWN

One of two Leeds players on loan at Bramley, Gavin is an Academy international who should give vital experience to the Bramley team. He has played all his football at Scrum Half and is widely tipped for a big future in the game.

MARVIN GOLDEN

On loan from Leeds Rhinos, Marvin has plenty of Super League experience behind him. Still only twenty-one years of age Marvin has tremendous pace and is a regular try scorer. He will add competition for places to an already strong Bramley back division



Don Yates . . . Statistically SPEAKING

"THE ROUGHYEDS"

FOR the belated first home league match of the new era, Oldham welcome Bramley to Boundary Park. The Villagers have made a successful start to their season but face a stiff test this afternoon against the Roughyeds who, despite last month's defeat at Headingley, have an excellent record against the Reserve Rhinos. These clubs have met on 50 previous occasions with Oldham winning 39 times, their biggest victory coming when Bramley last visited Oldham in the Challenge Cup four years ago. The biggest Roughyed victory in west Leeds came in November 1952 when Oldham won 31-4 at the old Barley Mow ground. Full-back Bernard Ganley scored a try and five goals in that game whilst Terry O'Grady crossed for two of the seven Roughyed tries. Oldham's worst defeat at Bramley was in December 1931 when the Villagers ran in five tries during their 19-7 league win. Bramley's best win at Watersheddings came during their highly successful 1973-74 campaign. In September of that season they won 30-17 with scrum-half Barney Ward scoring two tries and six goals as the Roughyeds lost their opening six matches of the season. We do not anticipate such a drubbing today in what is sure to be a vital and close fought encounter.

RESULTS OF MATCHES BETWEEN THE ROUGHYEDS AND BRAMLEY DURING THE PAST TEN SEASONS

89-90	Regal Trophy	Bramley 16	Oldham 48
90-91	Challenge Cup	Bramley 6	Oldham 38
92-93	Division Two	Bramley 6	Oldham 23
	Division Two	Oldham 36	Bramley 0
	Division Two	Oldham 40	Bramley 20
	Division Two	Bramley 16	Oldham 32
94-95	Challenge Cup	Oldham 70	Bramley 10
98	Division Two	Bramley 12	Oldham 10

DETAILS OF BRAMLEY'S LAST VISIT TO WATERSHEDDINGS

Sunday 12th February 1995

Challenge Cup, round four

OLDHAM 70 BRAMLEY 10

half time 28-4

attendance 2,738

Oldham Tries: Steve Gartland (2), Wally Gibson (2), Darren Abram (2), Scott Ranson (2), Adrian Belle, Paul Topping, Wilson Marsh & Paul Davidson.

Goals: Wilson Marsh (11)

Bramley Tries: Jon Perks & Barry Greenwood

Goal: Dean Creasser



Scott Ranson.

Oldham: Wally Gibson; Adrian Belle, Paul Topping, Darren Abram, Scott Ranson; Wilson Marsh, Steve Gartland; Paul Norman, David Stephenson, Jason Temu, Iyan Green, Joe Faimalo & Mike Kuiti.

Substitutes, Shaun Irwin & Paul Davidson.

Bramley: Ian Wigglesworth; Barry Greenwood, Dean Creasser, Ronnie Sharp, Wayne Freeman; Jon Perks, Gordon Long; Brian Quinlan, Dean Blankley, Andy Agar, Glen Freeman, Roy Jewitt & Paul Garrett. Substitutes, Ray Ashton & Dean Hall.



Iva Slateloose GUEST WRITER

FINANCIAL WORRIES - NO PROBLEM

Here's the Plan!

All Oldham fans will wear saffron robes (an orange duvet cover will do), shave their heads (except for OAP's who may wear red and white pot towels), and put on sandals.

Before and after each game and at half time everybody must turn and face Mecca Bingo and chant in unison:-

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Hare Krishna - Three Divisions
Hare Krishna - He's a Swami
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It can't fail!

Yours faithfully
Iva Slateloose

AND LO! it came to pass that a great gateway to Oldham was constructed. And on the second Sunday the multitude did process down Broadway and did merge with the hordes on Chadderton Way and did pour through the entrances and the management were sore afraid for the safety of the women and children. And the head of administration said "suffer little children to climb over the barriers that they might sit on the grass". And so it came to pass that an attendance of 20,000 was accommodated without trouble. And B & Q did make much money.

*One Division, Two Division,
Three Divisions, Four
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Don Yates. . . Down Memory Lane

They had beaten four First Division sides in lifting the trophy, two of those matches away from home including the final. It looked like the start of something big at the McLaren Field but, sadly for the west Leeds club, it has proved to be Bramley's solitary honour. Nevertheless, the club soldiers on and this season they harbour genuine prospects of adding the Second Division Championship to their lone cup success.

**All photographs by kind permission of the Oldham Evening Chronicle
whose co-operation we gratefully acknowledge.**



OLDHAM 1998 The Roughyeds

Back Row: Michael Edwards, Chris Eckersley, Brian Quinlan, Nathan Varley, Paul Round, Graeme Shaw, Keith Atkinson, Craig Diggle, Sean Cooper.

Middle Row: Paddy Kirwan (Coach), Darren Robinson, Graig Barker, Richard Darkes, Jason Clegg, Martin Maders, Andy Fleming, Afi Leuila, Steve Wanless (Physio), Mick Coates (Asst. Coach),

Front Row: Michael Prescott, Steven Wilde, Neil Flanagan, John Hough, Ian Sinfield, Aidrian Mead, Joe McNicholas.

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From the Supporters Club

"THE ROUGHYEDS"

MAIN BRANCH

GRAND NATIONAL DRAW

Congratulations to Mrs R Trickett who won the first prize of £200 in the recent Grand National Draw. We would like to express our thanks to all our members who sold tickets, and we congratulate all the other winners. A list of winning tickets can be obtained from the Club Shop, from where any unclaimed prizes can be collected.

RACE NIGHT - 23rd April 1998

We would like to thank all our members who attended the race night at St. Annes ARLFC on the 23rd April and hope that you all had a very enjoyable evening, and did not lose too much on the horses.

AWAY TRAVEL

We will be organising coach travel to all away matches this season, with coaches departing from the Black Horse public house on Ripponden Road, Watersheddings. Seats on the coaches can be reserved by contacting Joyce (665 1832) prior to match day.

Members of the main branch of the Supporters Club receive a discount on the above prices.

Please contact Joyce (665 1832) for details of the departure time and prices for the coaches to future away matches.

These coaches are scheduled to arrive at the match within a reasonable time prior to kick-off and depart for home immediately after the match.

We will also be organising coaches for travel to our home matches to be played at Spotland, Rochdale when Boundary Park is unavailable.

ROUGHYHEAD REWARD

This year the half time draw will be known as the Roughyhead Reward and will again be sold by the main branch of the Supporters Club. As in previous years the winner will receive 50% of the total sales at each match. The winning number will be drawn at half time and the holder of the winning ticket will be presented with their prize on the pitch.

Please look out for the Roughyhead Reward team at today's match and future fixtures (including those taking place at Rochdale) and please buy a ticket or two. Remember the more you purchase, the bigger the prize, the more it helps Oldham RLFC.

FUTURE EVENTS

We are always looking at different ideas for fund raising so watch this space in the programmes for details of future events that we hope you will attend and enjoy. If you have any fund raising ideas please contact either Alice (633 6780), Sue (681 3397), Trevor (628 8006) or any other Supporters Club official.

DUTY FREE SHOPPING

Looking to the future, we are considering the possibilities of organising a special Christmas Shopping Weekend to either Bruges or Paris, including a trip to a Hypermarket on the outskirts of Calais on the return journey. The trip will include a one night stay on the continent and a Channel crossing by Le Shuttle.

If you are interested please contact either Alice (633 6780) or Trevor (628 8006) for further details.

MEMBERS DRAW

Please remember that a free draw will be held for members of the main branch of the Supporters Club attending at any function we organise, so come along and enjoy yourself, you may be the lucky member.

ORLFC SUPPORTERS CLUB- CHADDERTON BRANCH

Fund Raising!

Chadderton Branch Supporters are holding a **Clothes Show** at Mr Wrigley's on Tuesday, 12th May from 7.30pm. M & S plus others. Everyone Welcome.

We are also holding a **Sponsored Walk** on Sunday, 14th June from Boundary Park to Spotland. Anyone interested in taking part contact Sylvia on 284 5127 after 6.00pm. There are four pick-up points and you can join the walk at any of these. We are arranging a get-together and entertainment after the walk. Please join us and make it a day to remember.

Please support our **Car Boot Sales** held on the first Sunday of each month at "The Little Cot" Whitley Street, Chadderton. For further details please ring Sylvia Patterson on 0161 284 5127.



From The EDITOR

ON A couple of recent Sundays I have watched Swinton play Hull K.R. and Hornets versus Whitehaven. Both produced some excellent football in wet conditions. There were of course a lot of ex-Oldham players on show in both matches. For Swinton Steve Gartland and the 'Barrow Boys' (Tony and Paul) took the eye, while for Hornets Richard Pachniuk was absolutely outstanding.

However what struck me more than anything was the attendance at each match. Hull K.R. arrived at Gigg Lane as undefeated League leaders, yet a crowd of only around 1,300 saw the game, of whom I would guess around 200 had travelled from Humberside. At Spotland just over 700 saw Whitehaven Warriors run away with the game in the last quarter. I estimate that, again, about 200 fans were from Cumbria. During the game I counted the crowd behind the posts at the Sandy Lane end and at no time were there more than 25 people in the enclosure (plus between 4 and 7 stewards). Now the point I am leading up to is how short sighted was the decision to put Oldham in the second division. On the evidence so far at Rochdale on New Year's Day, at the various friendlies, at Widnes in the Cup, and in the League games at Workington, Bramley and Doncaster - Oldham have the best away following of any club outside Super League. What this means to me - and it is my opinion not that of the club itself - is that the first division clubs have thrown away potentially their best gate of the season, a strange

situation when every club needs all the money it can get.

And what all this leads up to is to put on record how fantastic Oldham's supporters are. The loyalty, enthusiasm and noise generated by the fans is brilliant, so much so that a casual observer would judge Oldham to be the home team rather than the visitors at many of their fixtures. There is no doubt that vociferous support and a sea of red and white helps to lift the players, just as the commitment of the directors and players and 100% effort on the field sustains the fans. Long may it continue. But let's keep our feet on the ground as the Bramley result - and wasn't that the best team ever to turn out in the name of that club?, amply demonstrates. The season will be difficult and competitive but if dedication and sheer bloody mindedness ever reaped a reward then Paddy Kirwan and his players and the whole Rugby fraternity of Oldham will deserve to celebrate at the end of it.

TALKING POINT

THE RULES of the game constantly change and in many respects the reason why Rugby League has survived and expanded is it's willingness to change with the times. But are all the changes advantageous?

Back in the sixties R.L. introduced the 4 tackle rule, an experiment doomed to failure and subsequently abandoned. Leaving aside the debate as to whether 6 tackles is any better, there is one current rule which



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From The EDITOR

Continued

"THE ROUGHYEDS"

constantly frustrates me, the ten metre rule at play the ball.

Now I know I am likely to be swimming against the tide here, because the rule is clearly aimed at producing a more open, flowing game of football. No doubt some people like to see end to end football, but stick-in-the-muds like me still believe yardage should be earned not handed to players on a plate. And where the outcome of fast open play is a scoreline of 60-48, that's too much like a basketball score for my liking.

Furthermore, let me point out two major disadvantages of the ten metre rule. Firstly it puts referees up to 20 metres away from the team in possession. Result: forward passes

go undetected or are awarded when the pass is in fact legitimate. Spectators find this totally frustrating. Secondly, I would contend, the wide open spaces have killed off the ball playing loose forward or prop. Think of Terry Flanagan or Harry Pinner, Steve Norton or Mick Morgan or, from different eras, Johnny Whiteley or Ken Traill, the kind of players who could take a ball up and slip a pass round the body of a would-be tackler.

Now I am not saying modern players are totally devoid of this skill, but the consistent ability of the players named to create breaks for their support players has definitely declined. Or am I alone in this view?

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From the Pen of . . .
Michael Turner

Welcome to 'The Villagers'

TODAY we welcome Bramley for what is our first home game of the season following the postponement of the match against Lancashire Lynx.

The first encounter between the "Roughyeds" and the "Villagers" was on the 9th of March 1901, in a second round Challenge Cup tie away at the old Barley Mow ground. This was when the game was still 15-a-side. Oldham emerged victorious after a tight battle by 10 points to 7. The Oldham scorers were a try each for Tom Fletcher and Viv Huzzey who also kicked a goal, as did Joe Ferguson.

Included in the Bramley team were two players who would eventually become well known to the Oldham supporters. First there was the legendary Cumbrian Jim Lomas, who later in the year became the first player to be transferred for a three figure sum when Salford paid £100 for his services. Ten years on and Jim would again be the subject of a record transfer fee when Oldham forked out £300 to bring him to Watersheddings. He had by this time assured his place in the history of the game by being captain of the first touring team to Australia and New Zealand in 1910. Also in the team was Harry Topham who so impressed the Oldham officials that he was signed for the following season. A robust forward, Harry went on to play in 231 senior games for the club and scored 33 tries in the process.

After the first match between the sides it would be thirty years until



*Former Bramley, Salford and Oldham legend,
JIM LOMAS*

Bramley paid their first visit to Oldham. This was in a league match on October 24th 1931 when a home victory was recorded by the score 33 - 4. Tommy Rees landed six goals to compliment the seven tries scored by Cliff Mills, Les Lewis, Joe Houghton and two each for Fred Ashworth and the evergreen Sid Rix who was playing in his last season for the Club.

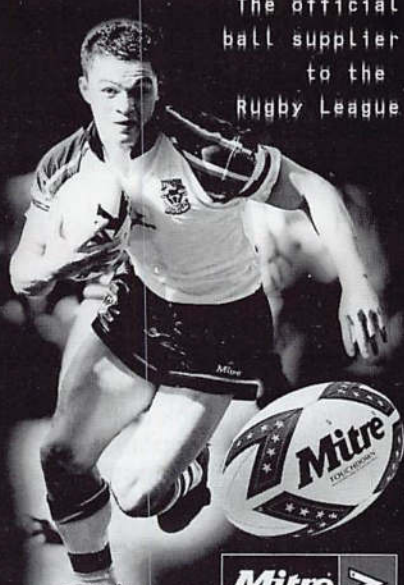
Over the years Oldham have had by far the better share of the spoils against today's Yorkshire rivals. However, I recall on my one and only visit to the old Barley Mow ground, in the second division 1963/64 season, Bramley cut the eventual Champions down to size by inflicting on them their first league defeat, by nine points to nil, on the bitterly cold afternoon of December 7th, 1963.



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The Roughyeds

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George Worthington GUEST WRITER

"THE ROUGHYEDS"

MY DOORMAT is 260 miles from Oldham, yet every Tuesday the postman drops a package on it containing every word on Oldham Rugby which appeared in the Chronicle the previous week.

Having supported Oldham since 1919/20 you will understand why I am so keen to keep up to date with news of the Club. My family connections go back even further as my grandfather was a member in the days when Oldham played on the old Pot Market in Glodwick, roughly where Gordon Avenue is now. He and my father had seats in the old 'E' stand (oh blessed memory!) at Watersheddings and they used to lift me over the turnstile so that I could sit with them.

One of my earliest recollections is of taking a note to Hathershaw Infants School asking to be let out early so that my grandfather could take me on the tram to watch a midweek match.

On Saturdays my father and I would walk from Hathershaw over Glodwick, through Greenacres Cemetery, down the steps and up Sharples Hall Street to Watersheddings to watch either the first team or the 'A' team. After the match we would walk home again. Then, on the Sunday morning, my grandfather would come round for an inquest on the previous day's game.

In the slump of the '20s 'E' stand became un-affordable, so we transferred to 'A' stand near the Pavilion. Here you could slide back the shutters to watch Oldham Cricket Club. When Mr Pollard, an ex-Mayor, gave the land for the new Cricket Club ground – the Pollards – Greyhounds came to Watersheddings.

Later, about 1937, Baseball took place on the ground and the 'Oldham Greyhounds' team, including a good number of the Rugby Players, joined the National League.

My first away game was at Batley in the mid 20's. We boarded a char-a-banc at Paragon Garage on King Street (where Halfords is now) and went over the tops via Nont Sarah's. The match, a cup-tie, was played in a snow storm. One Batley player, called Mulvany, was a bit of a handful for Oldham's halfbacks until Albert Brough, Oldham's England loose forward 'attended' to him. Apparently, according to my close friend Fred Humble who died in 1995 at the age of 90, Brough always 'attended' to any player who tried roughing-up an Oldham half-back.

On the return journey we stopped at Nont Sarah's to celebrate Oldham's victory with a Ham and Egg Tea. I can still remember the hams hanging from the pub beams!

The twenties was a great era for Oldham with great players like Ernie Knapman, who kept the Grapes at Hey, Bob Sloman, Landlord of the Globe on Huddersfield Road (both, incidentally from Torquay), Sid Rix, Reg Farrar, Jack Scaife, Jack Read, Fred Ashworth, Joe Corsi, Billy Hall etc.

One of my most abiding memories of this era was when Oldham played Australia. There was a massive crowd and even Minder's Hill from which impecunious cotton workers could watch for free, was packed. (Minder's Hill was

Continued on Page 26



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George Worthington GUEST WRITER

Continued from Page 25

behind the posts at the Watersheddings end before the stand was erected in 1958). Anyway I was jammed in the penny rush at the Waterhead end where we were delighted by a Jack Oster try after 5 minutes (though we lost in the end). Since then I have been peed on from a great height many times, though never quite so literally as that day, for so tightly packed was the crowd above us that people relieved their bladders where they stood. I'm afraid our cries of 'shake it about a bit!' were of no avail.

In the thirties, despite having good loose forwards like Ted Sadler, Emlyn Watkins and Norman Pugh, Oldham first developed the habit of losing Challenge Cup semi-finals. In 1934 at Swinton. Widnes half-back Tommy McCue was awarded a try after kicking through even though Tommy Rees touched the ball down before the Widnes man. Even Harry Sunderland, the Great Rugby league journalist, said on the radio that Oldham were robbed. Since then I have seen Oldham beaten in seven semi-finals.

Shortly after this Oldham signed one of their best ever servants from Cross Keys. Originally a half-back and later a loose forward this was Alec Givvons, God bless him!

Early in the war I was stationed with the RAF at Doncaster and well remember cycling to Wakefield to watch Oldham. A posting to the Middle East, however, put paid to that.

My memories of the fifties will be common to many other Oldham fans, but until Don Yates mentioned it in the

Lancashire Lynx programme, I thought I was the only person to remember Oldham beating Wigan on fourteen consecutive occasions.

However I have a couple of memories others won't know about. For about 20 years I was chairman of Oldham Schools RL and one day we played a curtain-raiser at Warrington before an Oldham v Leigh Lancashire Cup Final. Peter Marner played that day - his father, Sam, had played for Oldham pre-war. Anyway after the match Fred Humble and I went for a drink. We got talking to some Leigh fans and said how well Norman Harris (lestyn's grandfather) had played. As we had just transferred Harris to Leigh they were greatly amused and informed us that the player we had taken in part-exchange was a real 'duck egg'. That player went on to prove them wrong many times over - the great 'Dan' Daley. Shortly afterwards Oldham put fifty points on Wigan at Central Park and Daley waltzed round Jack Cunliffe as though he wasn't there. 'Cyclone hits Central Park' was the headline in the Wigan press. On another occasion Wigan, in the Lancashire Cup Final tried to mark Daley with Billy Boston but abandoned the move after 20 minutes because Boston couldn't cope.

Since then I have watched Rugby League in many strange places from Penzance to Maidstone, and from Nottingham to Brisbane. I've even seen Oldham play at Fulham, Chiswick and Crystal Palace though not yet at Wembley, so come on Oldham and make an old man happy!

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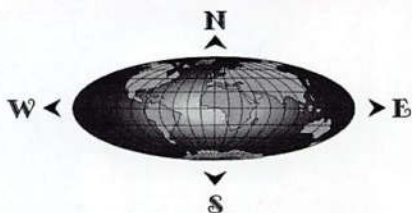
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"THE ROUGHYEDS"

THE heavy rain which washed out the Roughyeds' opening league match of the new era also caused the postponement of the local amateur league's showpiece event, the Standard Cup Final. This match has now been re-arranged and will be played here at Boundary Park next Friday evening, 8th May, kick-off 7.30pm. The finalists are both from just over Oldham Edge, neighbours Higginshaw and St. Annes.

Along with Saddleworth Rangers, these clubs have dominated both this competition and indeed the Oldham amateur scene ever since the war. Rangers have won the Standard Cup a record 14 times from a record number of final appearances, twenty-six. Higginshaw and St. Annes have both lifted the trophy 13 times with Higginshaw having appeared in 23 finals and St. Annes twenty. Either one or both of the Conference League giants, St. Annes and Saddleworth, have appeared in eleven of the last twelve finals and, in fact, met each other in five consecutive finals between 1987 and 1991. However, it is Higginshaw who hold the record of eight consecutive Standard Cup Final appearances. Between 1929 and 1933 they won the trophy five times, beating Chloride Recs of Swinton, Salem Hornets twice, Saddleworth Rangers and Strinsdale. They then appeared in the next three finals but ended up on the losing side in those three which were won by Saddleworth Rangers and Greenacres twice. It is surprising that from their combined total of 42 cup finals, Saints and Higginshaw have only met in one previous Standard Cup Final. That was in 1977 when St. Annes won 30-0. The last occasion that these clubs met in the competition was at the first round stage two years ago. On that occasion Higginshaw

won 26-10 at St. Annes.

It has been a troubled season for Higginshaw who face relegation from the Premier Division of the North West Counties League and, as a result, will be looking for some consolation from the Standard Cup. They do have the players capable of causing what would be something of an upset. Fast and elusive winger Des Ashton scored four tries when Higginshaw beat Middleton Rhinos 40-2 in the quarter-finals and he grabbed another in the 16-6 semi-final victory over Hollinwood. Higginshaw's other stars, back-row forward Simon Howe (two tries) and full-back/stand-off Nigel Lyons (two goals) were the other two semi-final scorers.

St. Annes will field a side brimming with talent and also brimming with confidence after another season mixing it with the big boys at the top of the National Conference League. Uncharacteristic and frustrating league defeats have resulted in Saints slipping down into third position in the Premier League table, in itself no mean feat, whilst the Challenge Cup and National Cup draws saw Saints having to travel over to Woolston Rovers who have not lost a home game all season. But Saints have looked particularly impressive in the Standard Cup and especially in the semi-final against Waterhead up at Saddleworth. They gave a tremendous display that evening when they swept Waterhead aside to lead 24-0 early in the second-half before coasting to a 24-6 victory.

That display probably makes Saints favourites on Friday but do not write off Higginshaw. Anything can happen in a final and what a final is in prospect at Boundary Park next Friday. Be there!

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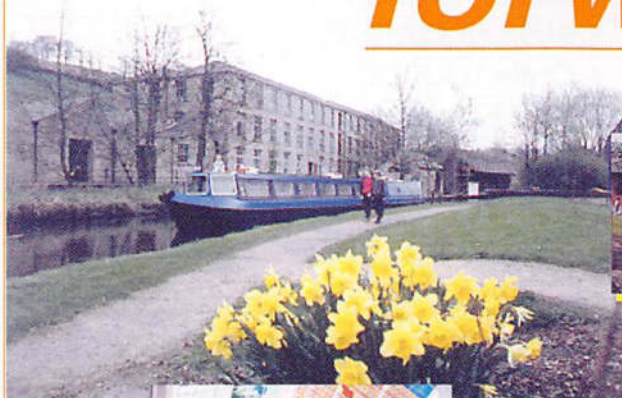
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