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The Roughyeds



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Up Front

... with Christopher Hamilton



THE normal "Welcome back to Boundary Park" message in these notes is no longer relevant as we never seem to play away from home any more! This is a problem for the Club as well as you the paying customer and the fixture format has to be looked at in respect of the problems it brings.

Today we welcome Whitehaven, who are a club that has experienced problems over the last few

months and despite a poor start to the season are now starting to show some form. Playing against them is never easy but Mike will have the players well prepared you can be assured. This week has seen a round of NFP fixtures and the division is beginning to take shape. The beauty of the competition is that with having a top eight play-off there is much more to play for long into the season for more of the teams.

The Alliance team is also well into its season and it is great to see them in fourth place at the moment. What is particularly pleasing for all of us is the fact that this is being done with a team that is comprised mainly of players who are under 24. This is a reflection of the hard work which has gone on at the club to encourage good, young talent and in the last game against Workington of the 17 players on duty 15 were under the age of 24, 13 were under the age of 21 and 10 were playing in the Academy team last season – that is great progress for a fledgling club like ours and if you couple that with the recent signings of youngsters of the quality of James Wilkinson, Paul Bennett and James Kirkland we have to be pleased with the way the youth policy is progressing. Our Chief Scout, John Jackson, has already put in a lot of work with the local Amateur clubs and we obviously intend to carry this on. "Jacko" has a wealth of experience in recruiting talent and is this Club's future.

Enjoy the game.

Chris Hamilton



The Roughyeds

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FRONT COVER

Oldham RLFC 2000/2001

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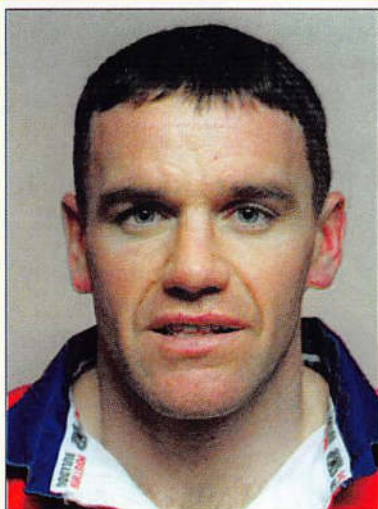
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FORD FOCUS . . . with Mike Ford



IN welcoming today's visitors we are looking forward to a much harder game than of late. As yet Whitehaven have not enjoyed the best of results with just two home wins against Chorley and Rochdale. I know it takes time for a new coach to get across his ideas but Paul Cullen is an excellent prospect and I am certain that with time he will turn Whitehaven into a formidable side, though hopefully not too much so before today.

The Queensbury Cup tie and the Chorley Lynx League game had both plusses and minuses. On the plus side we continued to show disciplined defence and to concede only two points overall was very satisfying. We were able to run in plenty of tries with many of these the result of outstanding teamwork. In addition the young players we introduced like Gareth Barber, Gavin Dodd and Lee Doran all did themselves proud emphasising to me that we now have much

greater strength in depth and that these players can handle first team football. As a consequence the team is full of confidence and we hope to kick on from here with good results in both League and Cup.

On the minus side I thought we got a bit over-adventurous at times, trying to force passes that weren't really there and as a result our ball control wasn't as good as I would like. Relatively easy games like the last two put you in a 'no win' situation because people get frustrated that every attack doesn't put points on the board. Expectations are high and it is not always possible to live up to them. I hope we scored enough points, however, to keep you happy.

The Cup draw is a tough one but we can't ask for more than a home game. The rest is up to us. Hull KR will bring a decent following with them so it should be a good atmosphere. And if we should win there is every prospect of a crack at one of the top sides in the next round.

However, first up there is the little matter of Whitehaven today. As ever, enjoy the game.

Mike

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Michael's Match

... from the pen of Michael Turner



Bernard Ganley - twelve goals in the Lancashire Cup victory over Whitehaven in 1953.

The second leg was played just two days later at Watersheddings on Monday evening September 7th and after the close encounter up at Whitehaven a bumper attendance of 10,142 turned out for the return match, no doubt anticipating another close struggle. But what a difference.! The Roughyeds coasted to a 45-6 victory Oldham scored seven tries from; Frank Stirrup (2), Johnny Feather (2), Alan Davies, Lionel Emmitt and Bryn Goldswain but like many times before and since it was Ganley 'the boot' who stole the show. Bernard being successful with no less than a dozen kicks at goal.

The dubious reward for their endeavours was a trip to Wilderspool to play Warrington in the next round. Again Oldham lost out by a solitary point 12-11 but this time the match was one leg only, and so the Roughyeds were out of the competition.

TODAY we extend a warm welcome to the players, officials and supporters from the Whitehaven club. When 'Haven joined the league for the 1949-50 season, they immediately became something of a bogey club for the 'Roughyeds' whenever they visited Cumbria (or Cumberland as it was then). Indeed it wasn't until their ninth trip to the Recreation Ground on January 19th 1957, that victory was finally secured. On the previous eight excursions five matches were lost and three were drawn.

In and amongst those defeats was a narrow 13-12 reverse in the 1st round, 1st leg of the Lancashire Cup on Saturday, September 15th 1953. A crowd of 5,900 people were at the game when the Oldham scorers were three goals from Bernard Ganley and a try each for Frank Pitchford and Lionel Emmitt.



The team that played against Whitehaven on Monday September 13th was as follows:

Bernard Ganley, Lionel Emmitt, Billy Mitchell, Alan Davies, Terry O'Grady, Johnny Feather, Frank Stirrup; Harry Ogden, Jimmy Mundy, Ken Jackson, Sid Little, Charlie Winslade, Bryn Goldswain.

ROGER



ROGER

IT's Silk Cut Challenge Cup time again – and Oldham fans can look forward to a cracking tie against Hull KR at Boundary Park next Sunday.

On the face of it, a visit by

the Robins isn't the best tie available, but if the object of the exercise is to go as far as possible in a competition that invariably attracts media attention and stirs up interest, then Hull KR at home will do nicely.

That isn't to underestimate the men from east of the River Hull, who will come fired up to cause an upset after the mighty scare they inflicted on the Roughyeds in the play-off match at Spotland last July.

Mike Ford's gang won through 22-14 in the end, but they let slip a 17-0 lead midway through the second half and the Rovers scored three tries in 12 minutes to close the deficit to 18-14 with four scary minutes still to endure.

Anthony Gibbons scored deep into injury time to enable the Roughyeds' camp to breathe a huge sigh of relief, but the tie provided a big lesson for Oldham's young coach, who admitted afterwards that he had made a mistake when he withdrew himself, Shayne McMenemy, Andy Proctor and Steve Molloy with his team well in the lead.

"I was already thinking ahead towards next week," said Ford.

Ford's willingness to acknowledge his mistakes and to resolve to learn from them is one of his strong points and a quality that will stand him in good stead as his career unfolds.

Nevertheless, Rovers might just have sneaked it at Spotland if Mark Hewitt, one of the best goalkickers in the NFP, had not bottled it when his accurate marksmanship was needed most.

Hewitt fluffed each of his three kicks at goal before he was replaced by Chris Charles who, incidentally, kicked eight goals as the Rovers walloped French club Toulouse 44-0 at New Craven Park last Sunday.

You can never write off Hull Kingston Rovers

– that's why I think we can look forward to a pulsating cup-tie next Sunday.

The rewards for the winners are substantial. Five clubs outside Super League are guaranteed places in the last 16 thanks to the following fourth-round ties: Oldham v Hull KR, Gateshead v Whitehaven, York v Villeneuve, Rochdale v Hunslet and Doncaster v Sheffield.

And what price, at least one shock from Leigh v Salford at Hilton Park and Keighley v Hull at Cougar Park?

Fifth-round losers are guaranteed £10,000 in Silk Cut prize money, plus a share of what would probably be a lucrative gate – and the Roughyeds have already sampled life in the last 16 when they lost 18-2 at Whitehaven a couple of years ago.

In the new club's first season, the Roughyeds beat Heworth of York 36-14 in round three and lost 48-8 at Widnes in the fourth round.

So to 1999 and a 26-7 defeat of Eccles in the third round, followed by a memorable 18-10 win against Dewsbury in round four and then the fifth-round defeat up in Cumbria.

Ford's first season at the club produced a 44-0 win against Wigan St. Jude's in the third round and then a 30-14 loss at Rochdale Hornets in round four, one of the club's worst performances of the season. Ford is keen to take the club further along the road to Twickenham this year, but he needs no reminding that the Robins can be expected to be formidable opponents next week.

They have won three and drawn one of their eight NFP games, but an indication of what type of team they are is provided by their for-and-against figures: 100 scored and 122 conceded.

They are averaging only 12 points per game in the NFP and 15 against, compared with Oldham's 20 and 17 (figures taken before last Tuesday's rearranged home game against Chorley).

To win at Boundary Park would be quite a scalp for Rovers' new boss Gary Wilkinson, who was given the job at the start of the season after his predecessor, Dave Harrison, was sacked after publicly criticising the Rovers' board.

Wilkinson was delighted with his team's big win against Toulouse, which was a timely tonic for the Rovers ahead of their trip to Boundary Park.

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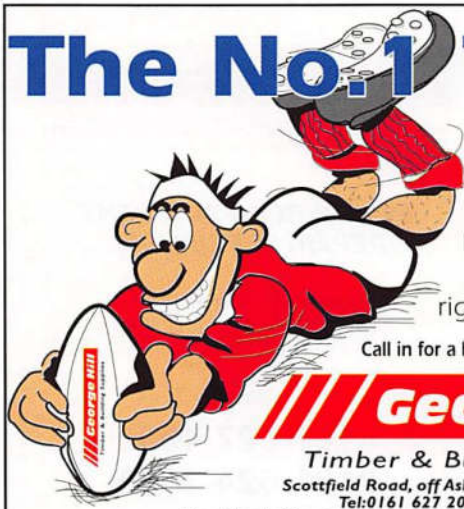
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Alliance Action

... with Haydn Walker

THE ALLIANCE had an excellent home win over Workington last week by 20-4. It was a great performance, not in the quality of our play but in the fact that such a young squad could do so well. We had thirteen under 21s in the team, twelve of whom played Academy rugby last summer. Two of our veterans are still only twenty-two and it must be the youngest team the club has ever fielded at this level.



Lee Doran

On the day Matty Williams who is just seventeen was our stand out performer with an amazing forty tackles. Young centre Danny Naylor managed twenty-eight with some fantastic marker



Alex Peet

defence work. Lee Doran, who was selected to play the following day for the first team was his usual dynamic self, while Alex Peet, Dave Newton and Tony Swift again showed up well.

Another first in

ALLIANCE TEAM FIXTURES

Dec				
6	Keighley	A	7.30	L16-36
21	Rochdale	H	7.30	W24-0
Jan				
3	Hunslet	A	7.30	W26-10
10	Leigh	A	7.30	L36-18
18	Widnes	H	P	
20	Workington	H	2.30	W24-0
Feb				
3	Whitehaven	H	2.30	
15	Hunslet	H	7.30	
22	Batley	H	7.30	
March				
17	Whitehaven	A	2.30	
22	Featherstone	H	7.30	
29	Doncaster	A	7.30	
April				
4	Batley	A	7.30	
19	Doncaster	H	7.30	
May				
3	Featherstone	A	7.30	
10	Keighley	H	7.30	
19	Workington	A	2.30	
24	Rochdale	A	7.30	
31	Leigh	H	7.30	
June				
7	Widnes	A	7.30	
13	Top Five Play Offs			
14	First Division Grand Final			

this game (I think) was the club's first time fielding a Turkish born player in nineteen year old Sellohalladin Aglamaz. Sello played for me in the Hemel Hempstead Academy and is now at Huddersfield University. He is very keen and although he struggled a little with his match fitness, made a promising debut.

Probing The NFP

LAST week's Silk Cut Challenge Cup produced just the one victory by amateurs against professionals when, as I suggested might happen, Woolston Rovers overcame Chorley Lynx. Darren Geritas, Shaun Geritas and man of the match Lee Westwood are all former Lynx players and needed little motivating to pull out all the stops for John Fieldhouse's side to dominate the second half for a 22-8 victory.

My other potential winners in the amateur ranks did themselves proud. Wigan St. Jude's put up a great fight before going down 34-20 at Gateshead. Steve Hall with a hattrick of tries and five goals did the damage for the Thunder, while hooker Shaun Hilton was outstanding for St. Jude's.

Meanwhile Oulton Rangers gave a good account of themselves at York Wasps. Halfbacks Gareth Stephens and Paddy Handley were the inspiration for the Wasps, after Oulton had a brilliant first half hour before the professionals' fitness told for a 24-12 win.

As I also suggested Oldham St. Anne's made life difficult for out visitors today, Whitehaven. With Anne's leading 16-12 at half time a major upset was on the cards, but the Cumbrians then introduced Leroy Joe from the bench. This, and the sin-binning of Steve Mills, had a decisive influence on the outcome as the Cumbrians scored 22 unanswered second half points. Despite this the whole St. Anne's team can take credit for an outstanding performance.

Apart from the above there was no great shocks except perhaps the margin of victory at Hull K.R. where the French visitors Toulouse Spacers might have been expected to do better than 44-0.

However, with several big scores racked up one or two players went on scoring sprees. At Oldham Mark Sibson had four tries, Dave Gibbons three and Pat Rich eight goals. Barrow's Glen Hutton notched four tries in the derby against Askam where there was a good crowd of over 2,000. At Batley Richard Price had nine goals and a try and Craig Lingard scored four tries. Dewsbury's Barry Eaton is always one to take advantage and the scrum-half boosted his points



Martin Wood

tally with eight goals and a hattrick of tries. Hull K.R. loose forward Chris Charles scored eight goals and a try. Another prolific scorer is Martin Wood of Keighley Cougars who had nine goals and a try to his name against Rochdale Mayfield while second row Matt Walker notched four tries.

Meanwhile at Widnes Ian Watson booted nine goals and, finally, for Swinton Mick Nanyin scored two tries and four goals.

Midweek NFP action saw Batley pull off an excellent win over Hull K.R. at Mount Pleasant. It was Jon Sharp's last game as the Bulldogs coach and the players responded by turning on the style for a hard fought 18-16 victory.

Sheffield turned over bottom club Gateshead 38-12 with loose forward Richard Goddard in scoring mood to the tune of a try and seven goals.

Meanwhile at the Autoquest Swinton surprised Widnes to lead 6-2 at half time before succumbing, 16-8, victims of ex-Lions scrum half Ian Watson and a 6-2 penalty count to the Vikings.

As these notes went to print before Tuesday this week's results are unknown. Oldham, Featherstone and Leigh should all have won, and I would expect Dewsbury to come out on top at Sheffield. Whitehaven were due to play Hornets at the Recre a game almost too close to call. But the big game of the week was Doncaster v Keighley and whoever dropped points will be fine by Oldham.

As for today, Doncaster have another big game at home to Dewsbury Rams and the visitors might just pull off a rare victory in the 'House of Pain' after the Dragons midweek exertions. Widnes could also have a tough task at Sheffield. I would tip Gateshead to score their first league victory at home to Hunslet, while Featherstone should have no trouble at York. Keighley (v Batley), Leigh (v Rochdale) and Oldham (v Whitehaven) will all secure home wins, which leaves Swinton v Workington as the poser: expect the inconsistent Lions to win but, in all honesty, with Swinton you can never tell.



Barry Eaton



WHITEHAVEN

AT THE time of writing these notes Whitehaven had just one League victory to their name, although a home fixture with Rochdale Hornets on Wednesday may have added to their points tally. Operating now without the Warriors tag and under the stewardship of the highly respected Paul Cullen 'Haven are hoping to turn around a disappointing 2000.



Paul Cullen

Whether in fact the club should be named Whitehaven, however, is open to debate: on a list of 27 pen pictures the club provided, no fewer than 12 had played for local amateur side Kells, I'm only joking of course, because when you add three players from Wath Brow Hornets and three more from Egremont it serves to underline the fantastic conveyor belt of talent provided by Cumbrian amateur clubs, which is a credit to everyone concerned with rugby league football in that much neglected county by the powers that be.

With a game in midweek it could be that 'Haven will not turn out as per programme as they say but, hopefully, the following run down will not be too inaccurate.

At fullback the highly rated WESLEY WILSON has fortunately recovered from serious injury and is once again able to display the talent that brought him BARLA international honours. Quick and safe, Wilson has real promise. When Wilson was injured last season DAVID SEEDS stood in for him and was a great success. However, it is more likely that today Seeds, a BARLA tourist to Australia in 1993 and a county representative against Australia in 1994, will be in the centre. A strong runner with a liking for scoring tries.

The other threequarters are likely to come from CRAIG WALSH, a graduate of Kells and the 'Haven Academy also with a good scoring record; RYAN CAMPBELL, a Cumbria County Academy representative; IAN DELVIN a promising, raw-boned centre; ANDREW NELSON, a prolific scorer in the amateur ranks, again with BARLA rep honours; and MARK WALLACE, a pacy winger who has featured with the jam-eaters at Workington.

At halfback I would expect LEROY JOE to be back in harness. The Cook Islander represented his

country in the 2000 World Cup, but had a season away from the Recre. at Hull K.R. last year. In 1997 he featured with North Queensland Cowboys and he will undoubtedly be at the hub of every Whitehaven attack. A top class player Joe should provide a lot of the guidance 'Haven have lacked in early season. Joe's return would see STEVE KIRKBRIDE out of the reckoning, but the young scrum-half, an accomplished goalkicker, will still get plenty of outings as the season progresses. Meanwhile, at number 6 LEE KIDDIE will be kicking Oldham back and probing for openings. An electrician by trade I will refrain from comments about sparking attacks, electric pace and lightning breaks.

In the pack big prop MARK COX is starting to make a name for himself after representing G.B. Academy against France in 1997. He complements the hard-working, block busting New Zealander DAVID FATIALOFA. A former junior Kiwi, Fatialofa has experience in France and his go-forward style has made him a big crowd favourite. Alternatives to these two are GEORGE SUAFOA who, despite the South Seas name, is a former Egremont Ranger; and DEAN VAUGHAN a tough young gun who has previously skipped Whitehaven's Academy.

At hooker will be AARON LESTER a player Oldham were keen to acquire. LESTER is a New Zealander who has played for Auckland Warriors. Regarded as one of the best players outside Super League, Lester has always given the Roughyeds problems when previously in opposition to us.

Second-row HOWARD HILL is already well known to Oldhamers where he was a frequent occupant of a centre berth with the Bears. He subsequently appeared with Swinton and Hull KR before returning to his native Cumbria.

Hill's partner GRAEME MORTON is an experienced campaigner. He once represented BARLA U19 v Australia and France. Like Hill and Miller he was on the scoresheet against St. Anne's last week. The said Miller is loose-forward SPENCER MILLER, ex-Kells of course, and one carrying the Cullen seal of approval.

Other players who could feature include the PURDHAM brothers, ROBERT and GARRY, members of the Egremont National Conference winning side of 1998, Robert a goalkicking stand-off, Garry a tough back-rower; then there's young second-row MARC JACKSON; and finally the versatile ex-Workington man WAYNE KITCHEN, a quality player with good ball-handling and kicking skills.

Walkerbouts

... with Brian Walker

THE OLDHAM RUGBY LEAGUE HERITAGE TRUST

THIS year Oldham RLFC will celebrate the 125th anniversary of the formation of the old club, which played its first match against Stalybridge on Glodwick Lows on the 21st October, 1876.

Over the years the club

has won many trophies, provided the sport with over 80 internationals, and brought to the club players from all over the rugby playing world.

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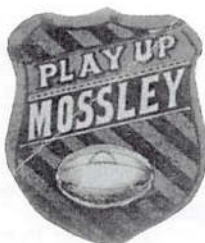
Trustees are Tim Hughes, Michael Turner, Dave Whitehead and myself with Mick Harrop Chairman. The trust will own, maintain, and protect the collection making it available to the people of Oldham for years to come. The collection can never be sold or broken up.

We currently have two displays within the Civic Centre, both of which are changed periodically. When items are not displayed they are deposited with the bank, but of course, when Boundary Park is upgraded hopefully many items will be permanently exhibited there.

We would like to take this opportunity to make an appeal to anyone that has any rugby memorabilia, relating particularly to the Oldham club, or to rugby in the town which they would consider donating to the Trust to please contact either Brian Walker on 01457 875084 or Michael Turner on 0161 620 6005. What we don't want is for any rugby memento to be destroyed or disposed of, so please, however insignificant you might think the item is, get in touch!

Brian Walker

To emphasise the importance of our task just turn to page 22 and a brilliant article by the one and only Stevo ... !



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Cook(e)ing up a storm



LIKE thousands of others I sat and watched the 'comeback kings' St. Helens power their way to a memorable victory in the World Club Championship against Australia's finest, the Brisbane Broncos. The self-belief which characterises St. Helens under Ian Millward is outstanding and is precisely the quality Mike Ford is trying to inculcate in his players here at Oldham. Every Saints player was a hero on the night, but special mention goes to skipper Chris Joynt and stand-off Tommy Martyn who

have won just about every honour open to them in the game of Rugby League. And the reason for this is quite obvious because, if you are like me, these two will forever be 'our' players. If only Oldham ten years ago had had anything like a competent administration able to judge the quality of a player and manage the finances with a modicum of efficiency, just think where we might be now. Aren't they just the saddest words in the language: if only.....?



Featherstone Rover's programme of January 21st contained an outstanding piece of writing by PAUL COX of the Featherstone Rovers Independent Supporters Association. I thought you might like to know that Oldham and its Chairman have friends in places you might not expect and so reproduce the piece in full below. I'm excited about the election of Chris Hamilton to the post of Chairman of the Association of Premiership clubs. I don't know the man, and he hasn't done anything Chairmanlike yet - he doesn't officially take over the post until next Friday, at the first APC meeting he'll chair. But what impresses me is the man's manifest eagerness for the job, which comes despite his full awareness of the mountainous challenges faced by NFP clubs approaching the cliff edge, and despite the poor quality of those who will be sitting around that APC table with him.

What also bodes well is where he's coming from. For here's a man, a passionate Oldham fan all his life, who couldn't bear to watch from the terraces what was happening to his beloved club as it faced extinction after ejection from Super League in 1997. Rather than stand by and cry about it he jacked in his accountancy practice and set about reforming the club. They're now well and truly reformed. Strong and vibrant administratively, merchandising like mad, excellent ground and facilities, rapidly growing support, a loud buzz around the town, and above all a force on the field to be reckoned with - Rovers felt the blast full in the face in our final league game of the season, and Oldham this time will once again be among the serious contenders for a place in Super League.

Hamilton, as Oldham supremo, wants the place in the top flight for his club. And as Chairman of the APC, representing all 19 NFP clubs, he has stated loud and clear that 'no one will fight the case for a path to Super League stronger than me'. But he's also alert to the possibility that it may not happen, that for one

reason or another - be it a franchise set up designed to exclude any club (or franchisee, to use the silly jargon) from a town that still has the whiff of coal dust and racing pigeons about it, or be it Murdoch's sudden withdrawal from Super League, or whatever - semi-professional clubs like Oldham, Dewsbury and Featherstone etc will have to stand alone.

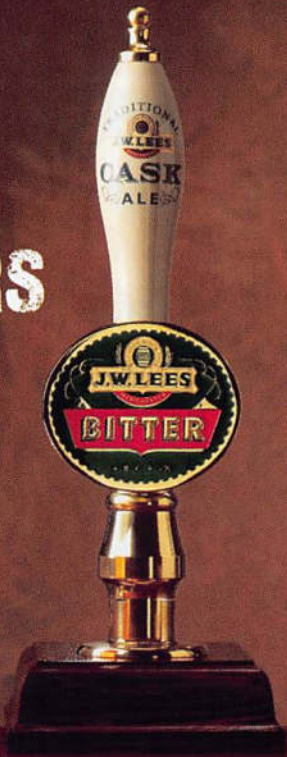
He doesn't despair of this. For under his leadership, at least, our clubs will not stand alone, alone, they will stand alone together. Each NFP club's News Corp money will diminish from the £100,000 they receive this year, to the £50,000 they'll get next year, to zilch the season after that. We can either continue lemming-like towards the cliff edge, or we can turn around as a body and start working to our strengths. Hamilton is a forceful and convincing advocate of the latter, collective, option. Gone will be the 'my club first' philosophy of yesterday (and of today at other levels of the game). What has been done and is being done at Oldham, he believes, we can do together for the future of our clubs and for our competition.

For the NFP is where 'genuine rugby' is played, he says. The game played at places like Boundary Park and Post Office Road is honest, open, skilful, passionate, and above all competitive. Unlike in other leagues, and indeed in other sports, no one in the NFP knows who is going to win in the majority of matches. No one knows who is going to finish in the top half of the league, never mind who the Grand Finalists are likely to be. That is attractive to spectators, both live and on tv. Regional television's foot in the water towards the end of last season - Rugby League Raw - was a great success. The tv producers loved it (not least because it drew in higher than anticipated audiences) and the fans, old and new, loved it. I believe Hamilton is the man to build on that, to push for fuller, national coverage; to pull in the big sponsors; to bring the benefits of that to all our clubs. But he can't do it alone.



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..... Kevin Mannion

**Q. How did you start playing Rugby League?**

I started playing rugby at St. James in Wigan when I was about 7 years old, and stayed playing with them until I was about 16. When I was about fifteen I went to Australia with a group of North West Counties Schoolboys to play rugby against some of the schoolboy club sides: it was a real education and I thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

Q. What happened then?

I signed a contract with Rochdale and was looking forward to starting my professional career. After maybe 2 - 2½ years I became a bit unsettled and finally decided to go to college and concentrate on getting a degree. It was whilst at college I was given the opportunity as a student to represent Great Britain and play in France, in a student test match.

This was a tremendous opportunity and really kick-started my rugby again. From France I was chosen to be part of the Great Britain students tour of Australia, where I played in games against New South Wales and in two test matches in Brisbane. I finished my degree which is B.Science (Sports & Exercise Sciences) and am now here at Oldham where the team spirit is high and we are all very focussed.

Q. Where do you see your future?

I try not to look or plan too far ahead; my aim now is to help Oldham get to the Grand Final and win. As a player I find I am constantly learning. I find self motivation can mean extra work in the gym or going early to training which has its own rewards in the games we play, and if it helps the team that's great, because rugby league is a very hard game to simulate and you sometimes have to find a way around problems.

Q. Any past and present players you admire?

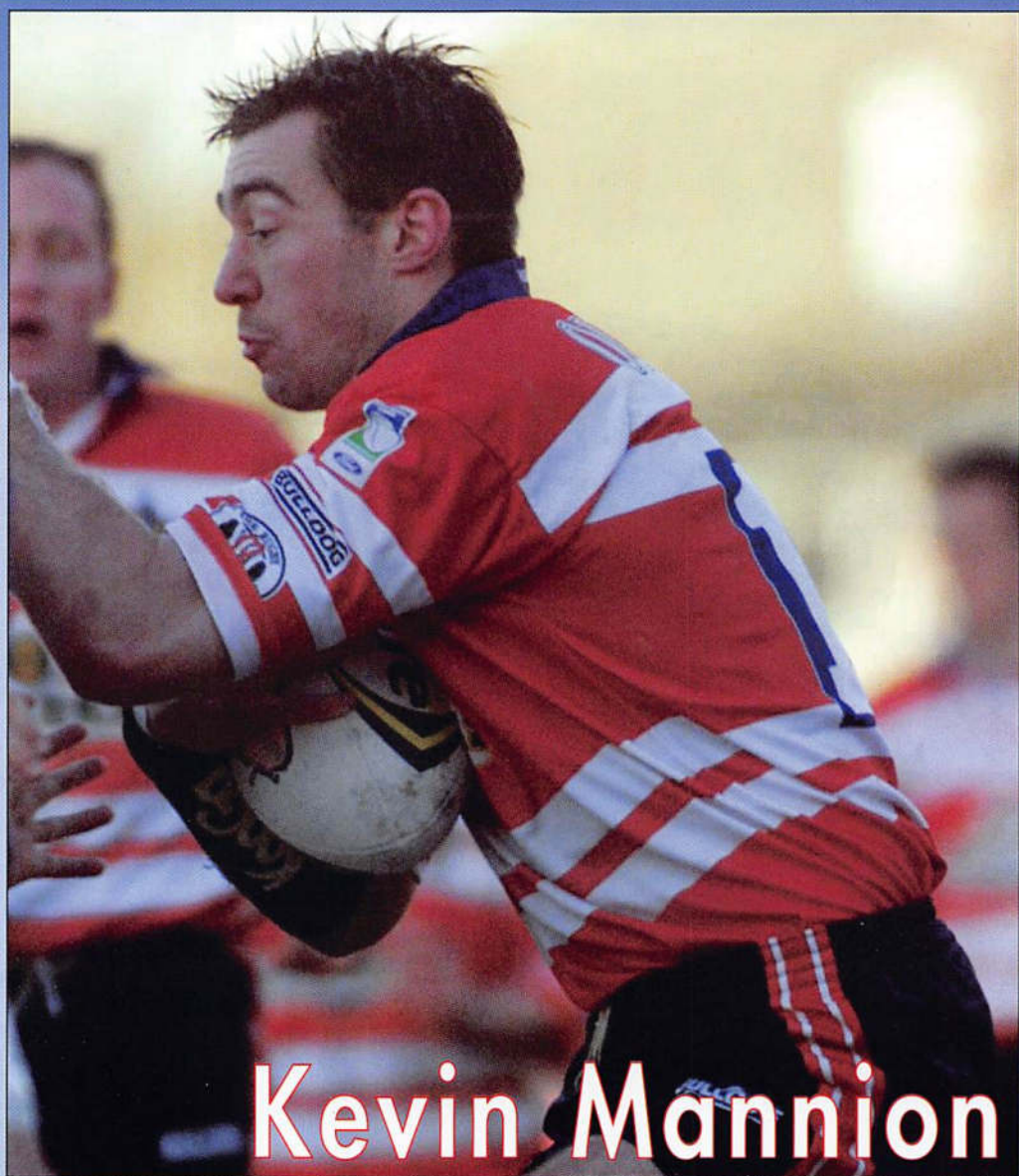
Brett Kenny without a doubt. He has been one of the greats and he's a good commentator as well as he reports on games on Channel 9 in Australia.

One of the toughest opponents I think I've played against is Peter Edwards the hooker who plays for Doncaster; he is very hard, very tough and he gives as good as he takes.

Q. Is Oldham a good club to be at?

Definitely. We have a great squad with terrific spirit and belief. Our coach is always prepared and Haydn Walker is a guy you can rely on. But most of all we love the supporters; even up at places like Hull they are there for us, it's wonderful.


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DEALERS

Iwa Slateloose



NEW on the market this week is the Alexei Fairperson's Book of Excuses, a snip at only £24.99 for 52 pages of mind-boggling reasons why Melchester Unigate should not have lost a single match in the last twelve years. Written by the soft spoken, calm and unflappable referee's friend Sir Alexei, this pocket-sized tome can be carried at all times for easy reference and can be whipped out for ready reference whenever confronted by the probing microphone or questions from foul inquisitors such as Barry Davies, that evil genius famous for unearthing the truth behind sporting double dealing. The socialist multi-millionaire, who famously discovered North Sea Oil single-handedly thereby reviving the fortunes of that eastern Scottish shangri-la Aberdeen before setting out to rescue the fortunes of a football club previously run by a cartoon budgerigar on behalf of BT (Buzby, geddit?), has promised to donate all his takings from the sale of the book equally to the Peter Mandelson Centre for Psychotic Politicians and the Research Institute for Indian Brothers Passport Control.

So, to whet your appetite, here are a few little gems from which we can all learn:

- The referee blew his whistle to start the match ten seconds early during which time the visitors established a 5-0 lead.
- The linesman was attacked by a swarm of bees and the flapping of his flag indicated his state of panic, not that Benny Sherryburn was offside.
- The Groundsman walked across the pitch two months ago ruining the surface such that it became impossible to play good football.
- As Rory Beane went to shoot, his wage packet fell on his toe rendering him incapable of kicking the ball.
- Fabian Berty saw an Air France jet flying over Old Scaffold and stopped to wave at his mother-in-law who was arriving from St. Tropez.
- The referee added on too much overtime: the ball never goes out of play when Melchester are on the park.
- The referee added on too little overtime because East Pork Scratchings invited members of the crowd to take it in turns to take their goalkicks after goalkeeper Shakin' Dunlop pulled a Hamstring.
- The referee tripped over his white stick and missed the incident.,
- The referee was so out of condition he didn't have enough puff to blow his whistle for a foul.
- Kevin Keegan's comments upset us.
- It rained
- It was windy.
- The sun was in our eyes.
- The shirts were the wrong colour.
- The prawn sandwiches were off.
- The rail strike meant our supporters couldn't get here from Portsmouth, Dover, Truro, etc. etc.

BOOTS 'N' ALL

Former Great Britain World Cup hooker MIKE STEPHENSON now a top broadcaster with BSkyB, recounts the pain and pleasure of collecting Rugby League history.....

The first time I heard the word memorabilia I was nine years old...and it proved to be a painful incident in more ways than one! One of my mates proudly informed me that his Uncle in the next street had a rugby ball perched proudly on, of all things, a side-board in the front room.

"Funny place for a ball...balls are for passing and kicking," I said...his nod of approval giving us the green light to borrow the article. After several hours of sheer delight in kicking the living daylight out of this superb leather specimen we were suddenly clipped round the ear and booted fair and square up the backside by Uncle George who rushed away ranting and raving. "Bloody ruined...don't they realise it's memorabilia!!!"

Ignorance is often bliss...in this case it was hurting like hell...and not even the realisation that each kick and bounce of his memorabilia was slowly removing the immortal signatures of Jim Sullivan, Gus Risman and the rest of Britain's heroes of the day, helped ease the pain in the backside. Today, of course, that ball would be priceless, a dream item for any Rugby League collection.

Sadly, such incidents have robbed us of many jewels of our game's history. Little did I know that several years later I would become an avid collector of League memorabilia. Having amassed probably one of the world's largest private collections, I can speak with authority about the hazards and hassles that collectors endure.

I was fortunate enough to unearth an old scrapbook - in a bookshop in Oxford of all places - which contained the signature on a newspaper photo of the great Albert Goldthorpe, a legend for Hunslet at the turn of the century.

Few players have had as much impact on our game and he was treated like a god by the Hunslet fans of the day.

Another find came whilst rummaging through a market bookstall close to Tower Bridge

in London four years ago, - two good condition sepia postcards of the first Australian tour in 1908. Seek and ye shall find, that's my motto!

I shudder to think of the amount of hours I've spent wading through cobwebs and dust in my quest for remnants of Rugby League's past glory but, there is no better feeling than to unearth some relic, be absorbed by its character and to dream of bygone adventure.

It's amazing where memorabilia crops up. Whilst visiting friends in Jakarta, Indonesia, I noticed one expatriot guest at a party wearing a British jumper. After much debate and research it turned out to be a jumper from the 1979 tour Down Under. Several beers later and an exchange of local currency, the prize was mine.

Dubbo, in the outback of Australia produced a Lancashire cup medal of 1927, kindly offered by a little old lady who didn't want the memory of that occasion to be ever lost. I once raced after a young kid on a bicycle who was wearing what I thought was a rare shirt - and so it proved. His grandfather, evidently, proved to have been a close friend of the great St. Helens winger, Alf Ellaby, who had kindly presented him with his Great Britain jumper from the 1928 Lions tour.

It is hard to describe the emotion of touching a Great Britain cap, especially one worn by the great Billy Boston, surely the most loved League character ever. Mick Sullivan's blazer from the first ever World Cup in France in 1954 sends you dreaming away of the great deeds from yet another great winger. Joe Egan's touring badge when he was vice-captain of the 1950 Tour to Australia is another item that evokes the feeling of past success and achievement.

One wonders whilst looking at the great Daily Messenger's cap of the tribulations he and his fellow inaugural 1908 Kangaroo tourists had to endure before reaching these climes. And to

revel at the blazer badge of the first ever All Golds touring side that created international history by crossing the world a year earlier.

And what joy I've experienced in holding the NSW State and Sydney representative jumpers worn by Reg Gasnier, who to many fans was the best centre ever to tread a Rugby League pitch. Or the smug feeling I get when holding the jumper and telling the story of that famous red and white hooped jersey worn at the SCG in 1962 by the great St. George side who took on the touring British Lions. The Saints were classed as unbeatable, but our boys, with the likes of Ashton, Murphy, Bolton and Fox on tour, hammered them off the park. There is still blood on the collar to prove it!

Like myself, there are many collectors who can boast thousands of programmes and photographs from yesteryear and I'm sure they feel the same excitement such memorabilia evokes. The glory...sadness...tears...conquests...battles...will always be remembered when you have memorabilia freaks tracking down our past.

I shudder to think of the hours wading through cobwebs



Behind the Scenes

... with Dave Roberts

STEPHANIE GREGORY

How long have you worked for the club?

I'm in my second spell, I was here for four months in 1998/1999 and have just come back, hopefully to stay.

People think we do nothing all day but it is a really busy office, I start at 7.00 in the morning.

What is your rugby background?

My Grandad Ernest Foote played for Oldham in the 1926 Challenge Cup Final (Chris Hamilton presented the medals) so I have always had an interest.

What are your interests?

Keeping fit

What is your favourite Sport?

Athletics

What is your favourite drink?

Tea

What is your favourite holiday destination?

Crete

What do you hope for OLDHAM RLFC?

To get into Super League when we are ready for it.

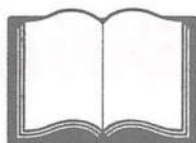


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Amateur Album



.....WITH DON YATES



Ray Broadbent

THE Oldham Amateur Rugby League fraternity contains a number of talented and successful personalities from many walks of life who meet up at matches and social events to talk about the game and about life both now and in years gone by. One such personality is Ray Broadbent, outstanding schoolboy prodigy,

successful businessman and respected exponent of his other hobby, sub-aqua diving.

Ray sprung to fame during his schooldays at Clarksfield when he was skipper of the school side which dominated local rugby league throughout the 1950s. Broadbent also skippered the Oldham town team which reached the Lancashire Cup Final only to lose narrowly to St. Helens. A powerful centre, he also made a couple of appearances for the Lancashire County side during a busy sporting adolescence which also brought success in local swimming circles.

Despite this success at schoolboy level, Broadbent was unable to continue that success when he moved into local junior rugby. He played briefly with Greenacres, Oldham Technical College and Saddleworth Rangers but most of his amateur rugby was played with Ferranti. 'They weren't a very good side, in fact we had some poor seasons, but they were a good set of lads, Kevin Tucker, Ray Navesey and others, so I stuck with 'em.'

Anyone who saw Ray play as a schoolboy would be surprised to learn that he never played professionally. He was invited to train up at Watersheddings with the 'A' team but had the misfortune to suffer an ankle injury. That put him out for six months and he never returned to Watersheddings as a player although in later life he was a frequent visitor as spectator and businessman-supporter. With his brother, the late Keith Broadbent, a former Watersheddings committeeman, he set up Geometric Furniture Ltd which specialised in the manufacture of pub and restaurant soft furnishings. He refurbished the upper lounge at the old pavilion at Watersheddings as well as helping out the Roughyeds in many other

ways. In the meantime Ray was spending more and more time in his other hobby, sub-aqua diving. He has travelled the world in pursuit of that hobby and, in so doing, has had to join three different navies, the Merchant Navy, Royal Navy and Polish Navy. He joined the Polish Navy whilst surveying for the shipwrecked Wilhelm Guslaff, torpedoed in the Baltic Sea in 1944 with the loss of 8,700 lives. Ray now makes over 20 diving trips each year all over the world which leaves little time for rugby. However, he gets along to as many Roughyeds games as possible and he is a regular at local amateur fund raising functions. 'I'm sure I've bought Barrie McDermott's Wembley shirt three times over,' he says about his generous financial contribution to amateur rugby.



Ray maintains his affinity with rugby league, following on from when he was first the star schoolboy, then the reliable team mate and now the enthusiastic spectator who is still determined to enjoy and play his part in local rugby league.

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I would like to thank you and everyone else including the ex players for making my Sunday at Boundary Park such a momentous occasion.

I have to admit that the presentation of the framed photograph of the Hall of Fame brought a lump to my throat. It is an honour I will always cherish.

I wish you every success in the coming seasons, you deserve it for keeping the name of Oldham RLFC alive.

Frank Stirrup

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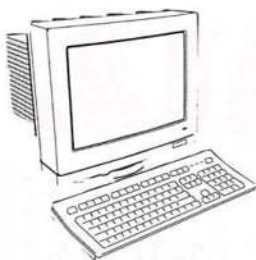
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... with Simon Winnard

With the recent NFP fixture programme decimated by severe weather conditions, the whole debate of winter versus summer rugby league has been revisited. The Northern Ford Premiership clubs, headed by APC and Oldham Chairman Chris Hamilton, have formed a working party to discuss the options for the game outside Super League in the next few days.

One thing is for sure, the matter is far from cut and dried and there are likely to be no easy answers. NFP clubs look to be exercising sensible caution in thoroughly investigating all the options before making any rash decision which they may later regret. We can ill afford any mistakes if the NFP is to continue its recent progress in the right direction. Whilst we have established a vibrant, competitive and expanding competition it is vital that this positive momentum is continued.

A lively debate is certainly on the cards with many different opinions already expressed by key NFP figures. Workington coach, Gary Murdock believes a return to summer rugby is a must as his side have only been able to play four games so far this term. He was recently quoted as stating, "Its an absolute nightmare and financial suicide . . bring back summer rugby." Indeed his Cumbrian neighbour, today's visiting coach Paul Cullen, supported his stance by remarking, "The sequence of events from late December until mid-January is a great advert for summer rugby."

However, of the pro-winter lobby, former Oldham coach and current Swinton chief executive Tony Barrow has publicly stated his belief that a full return to Winter RL is a must for survival, "I am speaking about money, and winter rugby is where we can make more money. If we don't get our act together we are going to have clubs going out of this league.in summer we can't compete with Super League." Barrow is firm in his belief despite his Swinton side suffering similar early season

disruption to Workington at the start of their NFP campaign.

A pre-occupation with the weather, which is a typically unhealthy British trait, I feel has somewhat clouded the issue here. Games can be postponed and re-arranged and, whilst this undoubtedly causes cash flow problems for clubs, we have coped successfully with this for over a hundred years.so why is this suddenly an insurmountable problem now ? The real issue is the survival of the clubs outside the top flight. With News Corporation backing withdrawn and the Northern Ford Premiership in the summer failing to compete with the media exposure of SL, emergency action simply had to be taken.

It was a hasty decision but happily a correct one. A partial return to winter, re-establishing a grass roots return to many RL communities, has undoubtedly proven a real success. Crowds are up, particularly for the traditional holiday fixture dates. Oldham for instance have now really started to entice a solid base of support back through the turnstiles. Crowds so far this season are better than the former club saw in its brief and ill fated flirtation with Super League. However, statistics for last season show that crowds significantly dropped off following the start of Super League. Can the NFP compete with SL during the summer months or does its survival depend largely on the ability to attract paying customers desperate for some quality RL action during the SL closed season ?

With a guaranteed captive RL audience, a full return to winter RL would logically seem on the cards. However, clubs aspiring to SL then face the problem of this timetable accommodating promotion to the top flight.

As the season stands, all seem to agree that there is far too long a closed season at present. As opposed to a complete switch back to a winter season, is the likely compromise an earlier start and a full 38 game league programme ? All will become clearer in the next few weeks.



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'THE DON'



ON THIS DAY . . .

Don Yates looks back to February 4th yesteryear

IT WAS on the is day in 1911, Saturday 4th February, that Oldham visited Salford in a vital League Championship match. Adding further spice to the occasion was the appearance in the Oldham line up of international centre



James Lomas

James 'Jumbo' Lomas, transferred from Salford the previous month and making his debut after being signed for a World record transfer fee of £300. Although Lomas was tightly marked by his former colleagues, who prevented him from scoring, it was the Roughyeds who came out on top, winning the

match 16-11. Oldham won the Championship during that 1910-11 season when the contribution of Lomas in the second half of the campaign was immense. He went on to make 80 appearances for Oldham and scored 38 tries and 37 goals before moving on to York during the summer of 1913.

Seventy-nine years later, on Sunday 4th February 1990, another local rugby league character made his debut when Chorley entertained Workington Town in a Second Division match. That character was hooker Gary Ainsworth who had joined Workington from Swinton. Town won the match 17-14 and Ainsworth went on to make 30 appearances for the Cumbrians, scoring nine tries, before moving on to Trafford Borough in August 1991.

On Sunday, 4th February 1996, Oldham entertained Warrington in a fourth round Challenge Cup tie which was staged at a snow covered Watersheddings. At half-time the teams were level 4 apiece after former Waterhead junior Paul Sculthorpe had opened the scoring for Warrington. The star of the match, however, was another local boy, hooker John Hough, who played superbly for Warrington as they pulled away in the second-half to win 26-4. Hough was a try scorer in that

second period, as was substitute Mike Ford, whilst also included in the visiting line up were two more local youngsters, stand off Iestyn Harris and second row forward Ian Knott.

At noon on the day of that Warrington cup-tie, Sunday 4th February 1996 the BARLA young Lions, under 18s, entertained France across at Dewsbury. France, not for the first time, fielded a mature looking side which proved to be just a little too powerful for the home nation. Loose forward Jerome Guisset, who is currently with Warrington in Super League, was the French star, scoring a couple of tries in their 26-14 victory. Included in the British line-up were a couple of young Cumbrians who have since joined Whitehaven. They are scrum half Tony Dimotrowski, then with Wath Brow Hornets, and substitute forward Dean Vaughan (Kells).



Paddy Kirwan

One of the most famous and emotional nights in the recent history of the Roughyeds occurred on Wednesday 4th February 1987, the night when mighty Wigan were beaten at Watersheddings in that epic first round Challenge Cup-tie. The all star Wigan team were arguably the better side on the night

and just about deserved their 8-4 lead as the match moved into stoppage time. At that point scrum half Paddy Kirwan dived over from acting half back and full back Mick Burke, cool as a cucumber, slotted over the conversion unaffected by the pandemonium which was going on all around him. Oldham won 10-8. The defeat was the kick up the backside which Wigan needed to enable them to reorganise and record eight consecutive Challenge Cup victories in the following years. For Oldham it had the reverse effect. They won only four more matches that season and tumbled down into the Second Division.

Fixtures

Date Opponent Result Att

DECEMBER	F - A
3 Barrow	28-16 1,294
17 Workington	22-6 1,295
24 Rochdale	10-6 3,402

JANUARY	
1 WIDNES	20-12 3,471
7	
14 LEIGH	18-44 4,747
21 Swinton	A P
28 Queensbury (SCCC R3)	64-0 1,559
30 CHORLEY	56-2 1,210

FEBRUARY	
4 WHITEHAVEN	H
11 Silk Cut Challenge Cup	
18 GATESHEAD	H
25 Silk Cut Challenge Cup	

MARCH	
4 HUNSLET	H
11 Dewsbury	A
18 SHEFFIELD	H
25 Featherstone	A

APRIL	
1 York	A
8 BATLEY	H
13 ROCHDALE	H
16 Widnes	A
22 Batley	A
29 KEIGHLEY	H

MAY	
6 BARROW	H
13 Chorley	A
20 WORKINGTON	H
27 DONCASTER	H

JUNE	
3 Gateshead	A
10 SWINTON	H
17 Whitehaven	A
24 Keighley	A

JULY	
1 Hull KR	A

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(as at 29.01.01 midweek results results not included)

	P	W	D	L	For	Agst	Diff	PTS
Keighley Cougars	7	6	1	0	274	78	196	13
Leigh Centurions	6	6	0	0	220	62	158	12
Doncaster Dragons	7	6	0	1	164	76	88	12
Dewsbury Rams	6	5	0	1	167	70	97	10
Featherstone Rovers	7	3	2	2	191	80	111	8
Widnes Vikings	6	4	0	2	120	97	23	8
Oldham	5	4	0	1	98	84	14	8
Batley Bulldogs	8	4	0	4	102	142	-40	8
Hull Kingston Rovers	8	3	1	4	100	122	-22	7
Sheffield Eagles	6	3	0	3	105	113	-8	6
Swinton Lions	6	3	0	3	80	110	-30	6
Rochdale Hornets	5	2	0	3	88	68	20	4
Workington Town	4	2	0	2	71	66	5	4
Barrow Border Raiders	5	2	0	3	91	101	-10	4
Hunslet Hawks	7	1	1	5	72	187	-115	3
Whitehaven	6	1	0	5	68	100	-32	2
York	6	0	1	5	48	158	-110	1
Chorley Lynx	5	0	0	5	56	204	-148	0
Gateshead Thunder	6	0	0	6	30	227	-197	0

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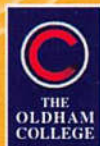
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The M60 Motorway



Town Centre Shopping

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Enquiries about projects being undertaken by the Council, or any of its policies, to the Marketing and Communications Unit, PO Box 160, Civic Centre, West Street, Oldham OL1 1UG,

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