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Oldham RLFC v Halifax RLFC

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Club Records - 1998-2005

Trans-Penine Cup
Finalists - 1998

Northern Ford Premiership
Club of the Year - 2000
Grand Finalists - 2001

MOST APPEARANCES: John Hough, 209 - Jan 1998 - September 2005

CONSECUTIVE APPEARANCES: Phil Farrel, 67 - *April 2nd 2000 - March 15th 2002
*John Hough was on the team for every match February 1st 1999 - April 16th 2001 (82)

TRIES IN A SEASON: Nick Johnson, 25 - 2004

GOALS IN A SEASON: Pat Rich, 146 - 2000-2001

POINTS IN A SEASON: Pat Rich, 320 - 2000-2001

DROP GOALS IN A SEASON: Neil Roden, 7 - 2001-2002

TRIES IN A CAREER: Mark Sibson, 60 - 1999-2002

GOALS IN A CAREER: Pat Rich, 254 - 1999-2001

POINTS IN A CAREER: Pat Rich, 576 - 1999-2001

DROP GOALS IN A CAREER: Neil Roden, 18 - 2000-2003

TRIES IN A MATCH: Mark Sibson v Wigan St. Jude's, 4 - Feb 8th 2000 at Boundary Park
Mark Sibson v Queensbury, 4 - Jan 28th 2001 at Boundary Park
David Gibbons v Chorley Lynx, 4 - Jan 30th 2001 at Boundary Park
James Bunyan v Featherstone Rovers, 4 - Apr 12th 2004 at Boundary Park

GOALS IN A MATCH: Simon Svabic v Swinton Lions, 10 - Apr 6th 2003 at Boundary Park

POINTS IN A MATCH: Gareth Barber v Dewsbury Rams, 26 - Apr 2nd 2002 at Hurst Cross (7 goals, 3 tries)

DROP GOALS IN A MATCH: Neil Roden v Workington Town, 2 - Dec 17th 2000 at Derwent Park
John Braddish v Hull KR, 2 - Dec 16th 2001 at New Craven Park

HIGHEST SCORE/WINNING MARGIN: v Yorks Wasps, 70-6 - Apr 1st 2001 at Huntington Stadium
v Queensbury (amt), 64-0 - Jan 28th 2001 RLCC 3rd Rnd at Boundary Park

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

CLUB DIRECTORY

The Roughyeds
Oldham Rugby League
Football Club (1997) Limited

14 Waterloo Street
Oldham OL1 1SQ

Telephone: 0161 628 3677
Fax: 0161 627 5700
Club Shop: 0161 627 2141

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Jack Read 1925-40
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Alex Givvons 1933-42, 1949
Harry Ogden 1940-56
Alan Davies 1950-62
Frank Stirrup 1950-62
Bernard Ganley 1950-61
Sid Little OBE 1951-59
John Etty 1954-59
Derek Turner 1955-59
Kevin Taylor 1962-77
Mike Elliott 1962-79
Bob Irving 1964-74
Martin Murphy 1966-82
Terry Flanagan 1979-89
Andy Goodway 1979-85 & 1993-94

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

www.roughyeds.co.uk



in the chair

with Chris Hamilton

A warm welcome to you all as we once again set off on another weeks journey in the search for our elusive first win of the league season.

It goes without saying that everybody at the club is desperate for that win to repay you our loyal fans for your ongoing support.

Whilst personal pride will drive the players on i know that they are desperate to give you something to cheer about and hopefully that will be today.

last week at Doncaster our small but vociferous band of fans again gave the team great backing and the respomse from the players at the end of the game showed how much they appreciated your encouragement.

As we speak i face another trip to the RFL disciplinary on Tuesday with Ged Corcoran and hopefully we can also get "a result" there as well.

It was very noticeable last week at Belle Vue how they have got the goodwill factor behind them with the impending move to a £33 million stadium due to take place in five months. Everything that they do at the moment is geared towards that and they are certainly looking to make a big impact next season when they too will go full time as they try to get into Super League.

Todays opponents, Halifax, have not so far had the season they, or indeed i, had anticipated and with Martin Hall now in charge and lots of experience in the team they will be looking to finish the last few games of the season with a charge into the

Play Offs and as we saw with them last year anything can happen then!

We again suffered a blow earlier in the week when we were informed by the Inland Revenue that our request for them to consider rebating some of the interest they had already charged us had been rejected and we are now back in a situation where we are fighting for time to pay the final amount of £28,000 (further interest now having taken the figure up). As this piece is written we are waiting to hear from them regarding our proposals.

When you are down you are down and the team on and off the pitch has suffered from that syndrome all season but you cannot accuse the players of hiding.

I thought that although last week was obviously disappointing the team kept going to the end and there is no doubt that the hardship suffered this season will be a big learning curve for all of us.

As ever please get behind the lads today and cheer them on.

Enjoy the game

Chris



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direct from the dug out

with Steve Deakin



In the last home programme I said that we could win with a bit of good luck and a 50/50 call on decisions. I thought again last week we were on the wrong end of some inconsistent refereeing which affected us at important times in the game and our luck was out again losing Faz on the Sunday morning which was a big blow and severely affected our game plan.

We cannot, however, completely blame that on the result for once again we followed that all too familiar pattern of holding our own for most of the first half and then letting it slip in the last 5 minutes before the half time whistle.

With 5 minutes to go we were just 12 - 6 down and certainly holding our own but then we conceded a hat trick of tries by their right centre which certainly highlights our weakness. Injuries again didn't help as it meant we were light on the bench which might be another explanation of the end of half collapse.

But in the end there is no excuse for falling off in the tackle and allowing the opposition to off-load the ball almost at will. The red card for Ged Corcoran with twenty minutes to go was the straw that broke the camel's back and we conceded 5 tries after his dismissal. To be honest I didn't think

it was a sending off offence.

On the positive side I thought David Best worked hard, made good yards and has the right attributes.

Today's game will be another tough one with Halifax determined to secure their place in Division 1 for next season. We will, as ever, have worked hard in training and concentrated on those aspects of our game which keep letting us down, especially our inconsistency. We are now playing for our pride and are determined we will not go through the season without a win.

Unfortunately we were not able to strengthen the squad for the run in so it's now down to the lads we've got to pull it all out, not only for themselves, but their team and you the spectators who, despite the disappointments of this season, have stuck by us.

However dire the situation appears we won't give up and with your support and dare I repeat it a little luck and our fair share of 50/50 decisions we hope to bring you and the team the first league win of the season.

Meanwhile Alan Hadcroft and I are already working towards the off season where we are confident we will get that extra quality and strength in depth in the squad to enable us to have a successful season.

Enjoy the game,
Deaks

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ORLFC PREDICTION LEAGUE

Week 13 Overall		
1	Nigel Marland	8 168
2	Paul Hulbert	12 163
3	Colin & Dorothy Johnston	16 160
4	Peter Buckley	10 159
5	Ian Wilson	10 157
6	Matthew Chambers	12 153
7	Michael Ackroyd	10 152
8	Tim Boycott	11 149
9	Harry Whitehouse	9 147
10	Wayne Halstead	8 146
11	Ashley Baxter	8 145
12=	Chris Hamilton	4 142
12=	Brian Walker	4 142
12=	Geoff Cooke	10 142
15	Steve Baldwin	13 141
16=	Roger Halstead	8 138
16=	Roger Ivens	8 138
16=	Sara Jackson	13 138
19=	Four Red Lions	8 137
19=	Jeff Bates	8 137
19=	David Webster	11 137
22	J Hulmes	10 135
23	Frank Pullen	6 132
24	David Lord	13 126
25	Nick Henry	8 121
26	Terry Bailey	11 120
27	David Stephens	8 119
28=	Janet Yewdale	NR 115
28=	Val Webster	10 115
30	Paul Gough	NR 113
31	John McAndrew	6 104
32	Iain Ashworth	6 99
33	Peter Illing	2 70

Clarice Stevens and Gordon Kent have both paid £20 but will not be taking an active part in the competition.

A pretty even scoring round with the Johnston's continuing their return to form, getting the exact score in the Rochdale - Leigh game. The July month winner is Matthew Chambers with 59 scored and he and Brian Walker tied for round 6 - 12 stage winner on 72 but Brian wins it having moved up one more position in the table. So a signed ball will be going to Matthew and a signed ball and two match tickets to next home game to Brian. Well done everybody as there is everything to play for as we are now in the run in.

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roger and out

by ROGER HALSTEAD

WELL done Huddersfield --- they didn't only do themselves proud when whipping Leeds in that superb Powergen Challenge Cup semi-final, they did a huge service to our sport.

There's nothing worse for any sport when, year on year, the same small handful of clubs contest all the major finals and take all the available honours, stacking up their trophy cabinets while most other clubs merely look on enviously.

Bradford Bulls, Leeds Rhinos, Wigan Warriors and St Helens have monopolised Powergen Cup finals and Super League grand finals at Old Trafford in recent years --- and, to be honest, unless you actually support one of those giants (and, yes, I STILL regard Wigan as giants) it's all getting rather monotonous.

Hull FC's breakthrough came like a breath of fresh air, but who would ever have thought that the Giants of Huddersfield would now be preparing for their first Challenge Cup final since 1962.

Hunslet, Featherstone, Barrow, Leigh, Widnes, Hull KR, Halifax, London Broncos (as they were then) and Sheffield Eagles have all graced a Wembley final (some more than one) since Huddersfield last played there against Wakefield Trinity 44 years ago.

Before that you go back to 1953 to find the men from Fartown at Wembley --- and that year, like this, their final opponents were St Helens in the match dubbed in folklore as the "Peter Ramsden final" because of the outstanding show from the Yorkshire side's young and talented outside half.

Ramsden, on that spring day in '53, became the eighth winner of the Lance Todd Trophy on a day that will forever remain one of the finest in the great traditions of the Huddersfield club.

Am I going soft in my old age, or was I not the only old-timer who got a little tear in the eye and a lump in the throat when Huddersfield were surging towards inevitable victory at the Grattan Stadium (no, damn it, I'm going to give it its proper name, Odsal) last Sunday and their fans came up with the chant, "Fartown... Fartown." Marvellous, stuff, bloody marvellous. It stirred me --- and I don't give a jot about Huddersfield, really. But I do have great passions for rugby league. And wasn't this just the best thing to have happened to our sport in ages?

"We're Leeds Rhinos," shouted the fans in blue and yellow. But the Huddersfield lot were not into "Giants" mode at all. No, for them, it was a case of 'where the heart is'. It was "Fartown, Fartown" --- a marvellous throwback to former glories for club and game.

Perhaps our sport is unique. I don't know. But tradition among fans counts far more than a lot of people seem to realise.

Here in Oldham, we've seen what has happened since the loss of Watersheddings. Like Fartown, it was old and falling into disrepair. By the time the end came it was a wreck.

But it lives on in the hearts of thousands of Oldhamers - and, clearly, so does Fartown in the mindset of the Huddersfield faithful.

They might have use of one of the finest stadiums in the north. But their fans demonstrated, in their moment of triumph last Sunday, that the real heartbeat of the Huddersfield club still lies on that plot of land which once was stage to some of the finest players, and some of the most captivating games, the sport has ever produced.

So, good luck to 'Fartown' in their big day out at Twickenham. And let's hope, for the sport's sake, that this upcoming appearance in the final can be the catalyst to continued growth and development in the town where rugby league was born.

Sheffield, shock finalists in 1998, and London, who got to Wembley the year after, were never able to capitalise to any extent on what they achieved in going all the way. Sheffield won the cup, damn it, yet the city of steel never woke up to rugby league.

The Broncos might just as well have played at Chiswick, or at The Stoop, for all Wembley did for them. But 'Fartown' will surely be different. Here is a club steeped in tradition, placed in the heartland of the sport and sitting on the spot where rugby league was born.

I have no doubt the town will go cup-final crazy in the next week or two.

What Jon Sharp and his players pulled off last weekend was a clear message that passage to finals doesn't have to be a closed shop. Until they came up against the best team in the sport on current form, Hull KR did something similarly on their route to the semi-final.

They proved we can live the dream --- but we can't do it if knock-out competitions like the Challenge Cup are to be downgraded, as some would call for, or if we are to end the system of promotion and relegation in the leagues.

So well done Fartown. We can all draw inspiration from your efforts last Sunday at Odsal.

ROGER AND OUT.

with Ian Wilson

I used to comment with a fairly wistful note that my father was one of many who had died before achieving the lifetime ambition of seeing Oldham play at Wembley.

He had been a youthful supporter during the 1920s when we appeared in the final in four successive years, a regular spectator [with me, as a wide-eyed youngster!] through the disappointments in the Challenge Cup of the great side of the 1950s, a hugely disillusioned observer at the 1964 semi-final and finally a resigned disbeliever as we experienced occasional near-misses towards the end of his life.

The past couple of weeks have not been the greatest in the history of the club, and of course have very sadly seen two more added to the list of those who have similarly passed away with their Challenge Cup dream unfulfilled, in Don Yates and Fred Laughton. The fact that relegation to National League 2 has now been confirmed merely adds to the depression.

One great difference now, though, compared with the early '90s, is that whereas then there was still a realistic possibility of a club such as Oldham reaching a cup final, one wonders now, in the Super League era, whether such a dream is even worth retaining in the mind's deep recesses. Given the huge gap which has opened up between the full-time clubs and the rest, should we simply write off our chances for ever, and somehow try to believe that a weekend at Blackpool for a

National Rail Cup final should be the limit of our ambition?!

Surely not? And last weekend's semi-finals fortunately seemed to me to reinforce the view that the dream should not be allowed to wither. OK, Hull KR are full-time, but couldn't live with Saints - but that would apply to some in Super League when St. Helens play like they did at Huddersfield. No, it was the superb achievement of Jon Sharp's side which should provide us with the hope. Because, fundamentally, Huddersfield and Oldham are similar clubs. Over their long histories they have both experienced periods of success and others in the doldrums; the towns have a huge amount in common, even though there is a bit of a hill between them; and in the lifetime of most current supporters we have been a stronger side than them.

There is a way to go before we would be in a position to match Huddersfield's present position, of course. But it does not seem an impossible dream. We just need a benefactor in the Ken Davy ilk, and a sympathetic local authority!

40/20 VISIT

in yer face

with Geoff Cooke

While all the pundits are getting excited about the battle against relegation and the fight for top six places in Super League the N.L.1 season has been a big disappointment.

Why? Well first of all I believe allowing full time squads to compete in a league with part timers is unacceptable.

Straight away it means there isn't a level playing field. From the outset N.L.1 2006 was always going to have Leigh, Hull K.R. and Widnes finishing as the top three, the only question being in what order? The task for the rest was to try to finish in the top six then get lucky in the play-offs. I for one think that is not good enough. Secondly, because of cup fixtures the season has been a stop - start affair with no consistent pattern to it. You can't breed loyalty or habit in spectators when you can go weeks and weeks without a home fixture. Again not good enough. And to add to that there isn't enough variety of opposition. I'm sorry but five games against Rochdale Hornets is beginning to pall and devalues the derby atmosphere. And four games against another club (in this case Halifax) is just as bad.

So what can be done? Well, since Super League will become a closed shop after next year with no automatic promotion and relegation it's time to get radical. Outside Super League full time squads should be banned for the benefit of all.

Secondly, if we must play in Summer, the season should start at Easter and not in January and the season should begin with league fixtures. Thirdly, N.L.1 and N.L.2 should be merged. The idea that there will be too many one sided matches is nonsense when we are already getting margins of 40, 50, 60 or more points in the competition as it stands. Any way if 38 fixtures is too many (that's what playing every other team home and away would currently produce) a formula could be devised whereby the stronger teams met

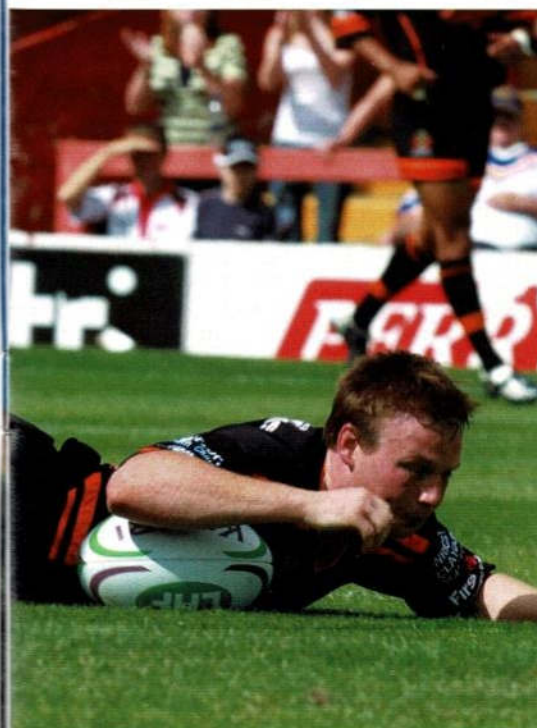


each other and the weaker likewise based on the previous season's standings. Such a format creates more variety and provides more home LEAGUE fixtures to raise much needed revenue. Fourthly, the Northern Trains Cup can then become an end of season competition played on a straight knockout basis. The Final would become THE prestige end of season match as there need not be a play off system to establish the champions. Champions are by definition the team finishing first but, of course, the clubs could insist on play-offs if they wished. Am I wrong? Take a look at some of the attendances in N.L.1 and N.L.2 and tell me how long the game can prosper as things stand. In fact, if I had my way, once Super League has closed its doors I'd sever all connection with News Corporation and look to some creative marketing and broadcasting deals away from one which currently gives clubs outside next to nothing.

In the long run it could even be that a return to Winter rugby would be in everyone's best interests. Whatever, these are all issues that need addressing.

I wasn't a close friend of Don Yates but by virtue of working with him on this programme I did get to know a bit about him.

And my admiration of him was total. His love of rugby league was boundless, especially for the youth and amateur game. His knowledge was without parallel, as his regular "On This Day" feature proves. And he had an unmatched knowledge of bus and train times because most of his travels were on public transport. But what struck me most and stays with me is a comment he made when I offered him a free programme in return for his literary efforts. In declining Don said, "there are too many people taking out of rugby league and not enough putting in." Don Yates was a proud man who always paid his way. It was a privilege to have known him.



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chit chat

from around the club

with Roger Halstead

(for fans who don't see daily bulletins on the club's official website at www.roughyeds.co.uk)

Roughyeds directors Chris Hamilton and Sean Whitehead were dealt another blow this week when they were instructed to pay a final tax demand of £28,000 "sooner rather than later."

Having paid £230,000 to the Crown Authorities in tax and interest charges over the past 13 months, the club had been hoping to be granted some concession on the final payment of £20,000.

They were turned down, whereupon they turned for help to local MP Phil Woolas, who was in turn in contact with the Paymaster General.

These approaches were rejected, however, and when the final demand came through this week it had gone up to £28,000 because of further interest and charges.

Said Mr Hamilton: "We felt we had done enough to be given a bit of leeway on the final payment, but it wasn't to be. We are disappointed, but probably not surprised."

"The Revenue have asked us to put proposals to them regarding how and when we pay this final £28,000, but they have made it clear it has to be sooner rather than later."

Roughyeds boss Steve Deakin has confirmed that he already has one eye on next season in the second division.

With a contract to the end of the 2007 season and with the public backing and support of owners Chris Hamilton and Sean Whitehead, Deaks can plan for the future with confidence.

"It's all about building for the future -- and I can reiterate that I am here for the long haul, as are some of the players," he added.

He and his assistant, Alan Hadcroft, have been busy for some time now on the long and painstaking business of examining the current squad with next year in mind.

John Hough, Lee Wingfield and Carl Jones are already contracted for 2007 and Chris Baines has since joined them on a permanent deal for next year.

Warrington released him and Deaks wasted no time in taking up the opportunity to tie him up for 2007.

"Chris is now a fully-fledged Oldham player for the rest of this season and next and we are delighted to welcome him as such," said club chairman Chris Hamilton.

"Chris has shown in his time on loan with us that he has a great attitude and Deaks regards him as a player who will be a beneficial addition to the squad for next year."

"We are pleased the lad is happy to join us permanently and we also appreciate the assistance Warrington have given us, first for letting him come on loan and then for releasing him."

While Baines has extended his stay, however, Chris Hough has moved on.

Explaining the sequence of events which led to Hough signing for Swinton last week, initially to the end of the season, Deaks said he and the player had different opinions on how best he could serve the club.

Said Deaks, who has sole charge of team selection and all matters relating to the playing side: "He wanted to play half-back -- he didn't want to play hooker."

"I felt his best role for us was at hooker. When I initially named the team for the Batley game I went for four forwards on the bench. When I told him he was not among the four he said he would rather not play for the club again."



Sarah Robinson of Shaw, a dedicated Roughyeds fan, won the £300 prize in last week's Club Cash draw. The money will come in handy because Sarah, who works in the club shop on Saturday mornings, recently gave birth to twins. Her winning numbers were B2349.

J Broadbent of Moorside (A7022) won the second prize of £100.

Each week there are prizes of £300, £100 and five at £10, plus an accumulator which goes up by £50 each week if not won.

The accumulator which went forward for the most recent draw -- too late for results to be included in this programme -- amounted to £550.

Last week's five £10 winners were A Lee of Fitton Hill; E Kennedy of Oldham; E Thornton of Shaw; M Davis of Stockport; and Mrs Britain of Fallsworth.

It costs £1 a week to join, so if you're not in it why not ring John at the Roughyeds office on 628 3677 or check out the Club Cash link on the internet at www.Roughyeds.co.uk

NOT all golfing roads led to the recent British Open -- at Crompton and Royton there was the little matter of the Roughyeds annual golf day on the day Tiger Woods was embarking on the first round of his latest triumph.

The Roughyeds event didn't quite net as much lolly as the Open, but it was successful nevertheless with around £5,000 going into club funds. Winners of the first prize were a four-man team from Oldham Electrical Supplies.

The weather was kind throughout the day and a pleasant evening was spent in the clubhouse afterwards when Michael 'Braddy' Bradshaw acted as MC -- and a very polished and professional MC he was too. Evening meal and prize presentations were followed by entertainment from the comedian.

Said chairman Chris Hamilton: "The day went with a swing and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves. On behalf of the Roughyeds and my fellow director Sean Whitehead I would like to thank everyone who supported the event."

"It was very successful and we hope those who took part really enjoyed it and are already looking forward to the 2007 event. Thanks again to everyone involved."

Roughyeds fan K Cooper of Springhead is happy for us to reproduce the following letter which she submitted to the Oldham Chronicle's letters page.

The headline was 'Miracle RL Club' and K Cooper wrote as follows:

"Sean Whitehead counters the claims of those people who say Chris Hamilton shouldn't have let the club get into its present state because he is an accountant, by saying he's an accountant -- not a miracle worker."

"The club has had no luck to speak of. Yet it will be ten years old next year in spite of having suffered enough blows to put Mike Tyson on the canvas several times."

"So, sorry, but you're wrong, Sean. Chris is a miracle worker, and so are you -- and I suspect at no little personal cost one way or another to yourselves."

"I'm sure I speak for several people in saying we owe you a big thanks because without there wouldn't be a club at all, and that extends to everyone else who is working their socks off to keep us going."

"So let's look forward to that tenth birthday. Nil desperandum!"

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Don Yates

Don Yates, family man, retired policeman, chairman of the Oldham Service Area, board member of Rugby Oldham, staunch rugby league traditionalist, columnist and a nice guy, unfortunately lost his fight against leukaemia on the 23rd of July, aged 61.

Whilst a lifelong Oldham supporter, Don was equally as supportive of the amateur game and since his retirement from the police also devoted a large amount of his time to the Oldham Service Area and youth rugby.

It was whilst serving with the police that his interest in getting involved with the youngsters was germinated. He was mindful that a good number of those kids who habitually appeared before the courts came from tough backgrounds - not too dissimilar to many of the lads in the Oldham area - that he knew had managed to steer clear of trouble due to their involvement in rugby league. His retirement thus enabled him to get involved with youth development work at local, regional and national levels.

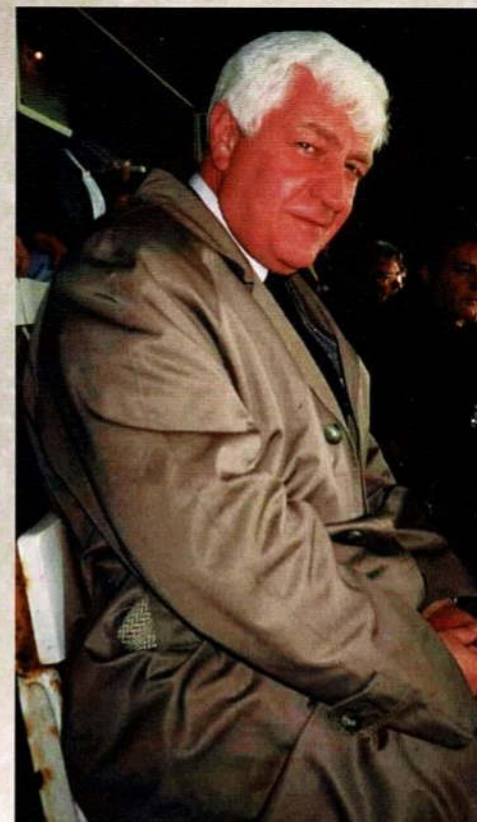
Don's travels to matches were legendary. He would think nothing of hopping on a plane to take in a couple of matches in Sydney and because of the number of times he's been over to France to watch matches should have been awarded dual nationality. He would often take in four or five matches in a week and wouldn't think twice of going up to Barrow to watch say Walney Central play Kells and then the

following day go over to Hull to watch Dockers play Skirlaugh. Ironically, he didn't drive and unless he got a lift would plan his journey using public transport with military precision.

During his treatment he was allowed to leave hospital to take a course of medication at his Failsworth home and in typical Yates' fashion - probably in an attempt to regain some sort of normality - managed to get to the Great Britain vs. New Zealand and Oldham vs. Hornets' games. Then, when things weren't going too well and he was called back to the ward it was a measure of the man's character and typical of his ruthless attention to detail that he took the trouble to contact me to say that he wouldn't be able to complete his programme notes for the Oldham vs. Batley game and would I let the club know!

For years his famous 'On This Day' column has featured in the match programmes of the Roughyeds, St. Annes, Waterhead and Saddleworth clubs as well as every week in the trade newspaper League Express. Just how he found the time I haven't a clue!

Since Don's death tributes have flooded



in. **Journalist Tony Hannan wrote:**

"As a fellow international rugby league traveller who also needs no excuse to notch up the odd air-mile in pursuit of the game, I was fortunate to bump into Don on lots of occasions. He regularly wrote for Open Rugby/ RL World and was a lovely bloke, always ready with a smile - a real league man through and through.

He particularly enjoyed going to France and rare was the visit there when Don, trademark white hair and all, didn't come wandering up, eager to chat about what was going on. I was lucky enough to

share bar and terrace space with him on a number of occasions right across the south of France, in Narbonne, Perpignan, Avignon, Carcassonne, the lot. There can't be many English people who visited France more regularly or saw the game played in more countries than Don did. The more obscure the fixture, the better.

Yet he was by no means an expansionist "dreamer". One of the most entertaining things about Don was the way in which his wanderings didn't interfere with his old school thinking! He might have spent much of his hard-earned cash on travelling to watch a game in Russia, Fiji, Wales or wherever, but what really mattered to Don was that his beloved Roughyeds and northern clubs like them grew strong again.

I can remember, for example, bumping into him in Edinburgh, ahead of the 2002 Challenge Cup final. While everybody else was on the 'pop' the night before the big game, Don had been on the touchline watching Edinburgh Eagles versus Teeside Steelers in some summer cross - Conference final. "How did it go," I asked. "Awful, rugby league will never catch on in Scotland---"

Usually, that sort of philosophy is guaranteed to get on my nerves. But not when delivered with Don's smile. Action, after all, speaks louder than words. Sod the theory, what did I know? He was the one who would actually be bothered to give up his time and turn out to watch. Again.

If rugby league ever does become a major international sport, it will, in large part, be as a result of rugby league lovers like Don who spend their own hard-

Continued on next page

earned cash flying around the planet to support it."

And, former Whitehaven director and editor of Rugby League Journal, Harry Edgar said:

"I was desperately sorry to hear about Don, he was a great pal of mine – we spent many happy times together. I used to meet up with him at many amateur games. We always got together when he came up to Cumbria, which was pretty often. It was a very big shock to hear the sad news. I will miss him tremendously. The rugby league scene won't be the same for me knowing I won't be bumping into him again soon. I'll never forget Don, and I know he will be hugely missed in Oldham and amongst the amateur game he did so much to help."

Yes, he will be missed here in Oldham. Whether sat on the press bench at Boundary Park, stood on the touchline at Higginshaw Rd, Waterhead Park or Greenfield or out on the playing fields coaching the kids. And he'll be missed much further afield too.

I'll leave it to Australian rugby league

journalist Malcolm Andrews to have the final words:

"In early May I was celebrating my birthday with a few journalist mates in the NSW Bowlers' Club in the centre of Sydney when I was approached by a stranger.

'Are you Malcolm Andrews? I was told I might find you here.'

It was my first meeting with Don Yates. He was in Australia to fulfil a wish to see the Greatest Game of All played at the Telstra Stadium.

He helped me celebrate my birthday and I was so pleased to meet the man whose column I enjoyed each and every week.

Don said he was feeling poorly 'because of some bug I picked up on the plane from England.'

We all now know it wasn't a bug that was affecting him.

I am so sad to hear of his death – but glad that he gave me the opportunity to meet him, if only on one occasion. Our world will be poorer for his passing."

BRIAN WALKER

bfi MITCHELL & KENYON RUGBY FILM EVENING

Supporters are reminded that if they require tickets reserved for the Mitchell & Kenyon rugby films to be shown in the autumn they should either email your name etc to mickharrop19a@hotmail.com or write to Oldham RL Heritage Trust, 19A, Rock Terrace, Manchester Rd, Mossley, OL5 9QD. Don't send any cash at this stage!

MICHAEL TURNER'S NEW OLDHAM BOOK WILL BE AVAILABLE IN THE AUTUMN.
DETAILS WILL BE PUBLISHED IN THE CLUB'S MATCHDAY PROGRAMME.

journalistic license

by Matthew Chambers

THE season may be drawing to a rather drastic conclusion for the rugby community inside Oldham, but thank goodness there has recently been plenty of enjoyable action outside the town to distract the mind, at least temporarily.

Relegation to LHF Healthplan National League Two for the Roughyeds trifles in comparison to the loss of two of the town's staunchest supporters of the sport in Fred Laughton and Don Yates.

Both men lived and breathed rugby league and things won't be the same around here without their passion and commitment to the game at every conceivable level. They will be sorely missed.

The pair will no doubt have kept a close eye on the Powergen Challenge Cup semi-final action last weekend from their new-found vantage point up in the heavens.

Even from up there, the sound of wild celebrations emanating from the town in which the sport was first given life, at the George Hotel in 1895, would probably have been heard.

How heart-warming it was to see Huddersfield Giants progress to the final once more.

The Giants, superbly marshalled by the mesmeric Brad Drew, deserved their comfortable if unlikely victory over Leeds at Odsal.

Speaking to Giants supporters on the eve of the game, few gave their side a real chance of victory. But with players like Drew and cup specialist Robbie Paul in your side, the biggest games are where it's at. Jon Sharp's men may be 6-1 outsiders to lift the trophy at Twickenham at the end of August, but they already boast a (merited) win against St Helens this year and shouldn't be written off.

Hull FC's exploits last time around seems to have instilled a real belief within the lesser lights of Super League

– and beyond – that it is possible to succeed even if you don't play for St Helens, Leeds, Bradford or Wigan.

Not many inside the game would have given the Arlie Birds' city rivals a 'hope in Hull' of landing a semi-final berth.

But with coach Justin Morgan reaching a second successive semi following last year's similarly unlikely exploits with Toulouse, the Challenge Cup is suddenly a competition full of possibility for a host of unfashionable sides.

The Robins fans who made the trip across from East 'ull to the Galpharm Stadium certainly made the most of their big day, despite a thumping defeat by a determined and unsympathetic St Helens team.

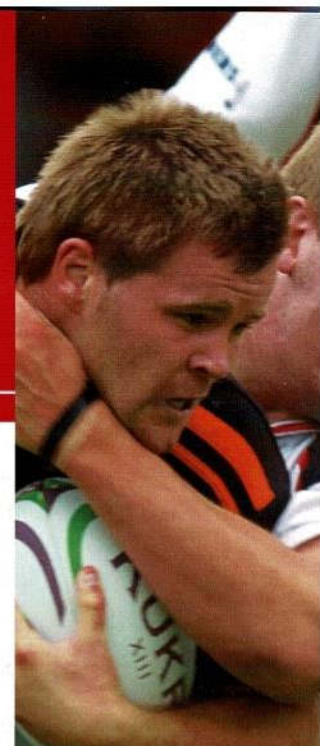
Some 5,000 Rovers fans did their team and club proud, cheering and singing right until the final whistle. It was great to see.

A few similar smiles across the faces of Oldham supporters would certainly be welcome right now.

Those working behind the scenes at the Roughyeds may be busy concentrating on preparing the sort of side that can bounce straight back up from National League Two next season.

But here's hoping that the thrilling end-of-season battles to come at all levels of the professional sport can take place against a background where the club picked up at least one win – today, ideally.

Matthew



halstead's choice

by Roger Halstead

Little Andy Gorey, all 11stone of him, is trying everything he knows to build himself up.

He may be small in stature, but he has the heart of a lion and a huge desire to be the best he can possibly be --- and he relies on those qualities to compensate for his shortage of pounds and bulk.

"You don't have to be a Mr Universe to play this game --- look at Rob Burrow at Leeds. He's small, but he doesn't do too bad at the highest level of the sport, does he?" points out the Roughyeds own version of the Little Big Man.

Like Burrow, 20-year-old Gorey was brought up in the game as a scrum-half.

He was never regarded as anything other than a scrum-half until he signed for the Roughyeds as a 16-year-old and was given his first chance in the under-21s out on the wing to see how he coped.

He coped very well indeed --- and he was so safe and sure under the high ball in a match at Dewsbury that it wasn't long before he was moved to full-back when the academy side's regular No 1, Matty Harland, was out of action through injury. Kiel Lancashire and Paul Bennett were first-choice half-backs, but by producing accomplished performances on the wing and later at full-back Gorey, unwittingly perhaps, didn't do anything to improve his chances of being given an extended run in the shirt he wanted most with a No 7 on his back.

Fast forward a couple of years and Gorey was in a similar situation at first-team level.

He had signed a new two-year contract in the run-up to the 2004 season, this to cover 2004 and 2005 and to run to November 30, 2005.

At the end of the 2004 campaign, however, Roughyeds decided to run without an academy side in 2005, a move which cast uncertainty on a boy who was regarded as 'one for the future'.

At that stage first-team rugby for the slight-of-build 18-year-old looked a long way off and with no academy side he was faced with a major decision.

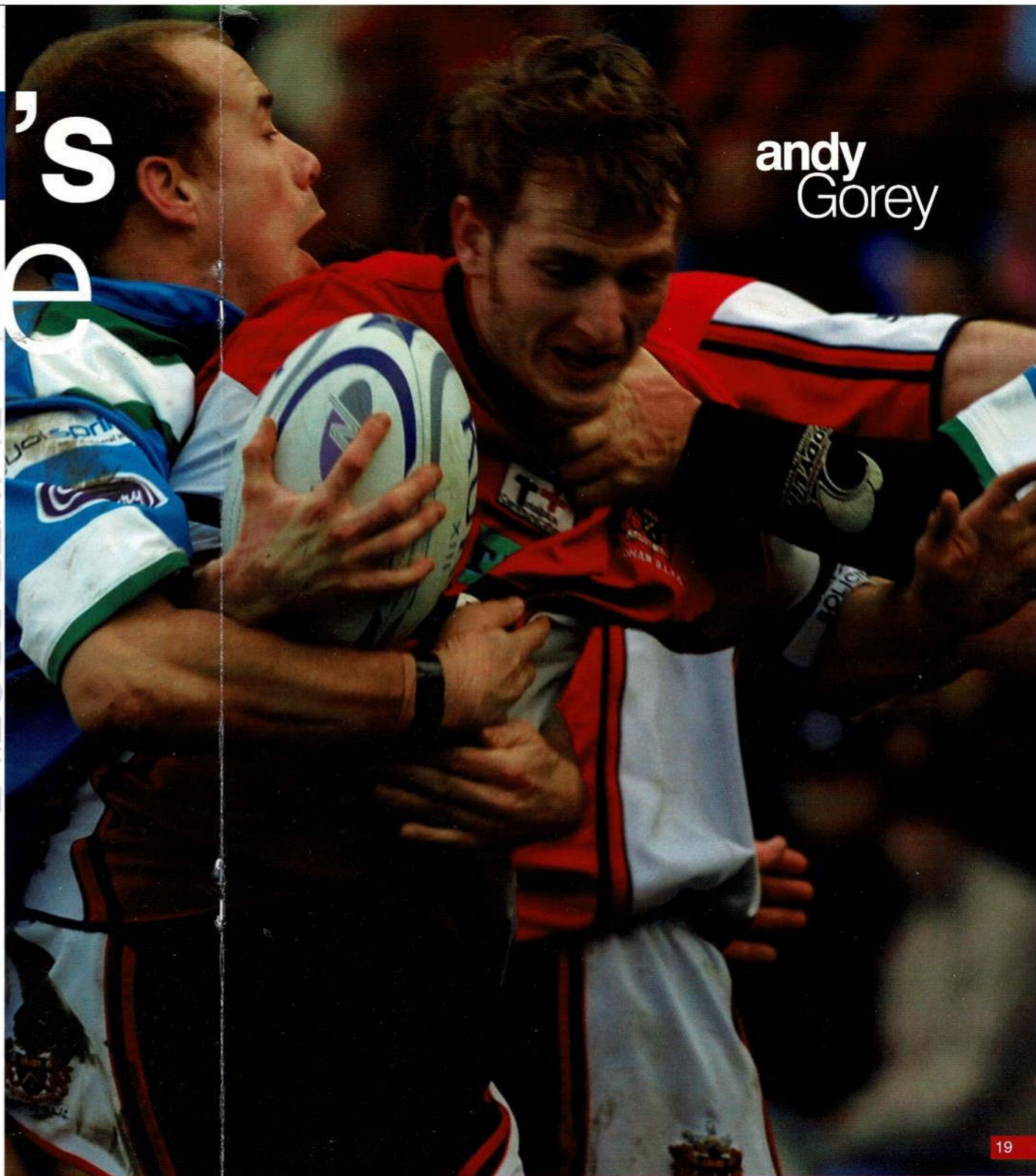
Recalled Andy: "Gary Mercer had taken over as coach, but both he and I were in a bit of a quandary about what I should do for the better.

"I still had a year to do on my contract, but I hadn't played in the first team at that stage.

"I remember the chairman, Chris Hamilton, ringing me up to talk to me at first hand. He explained the club would not be

PLAYER PROFILE

andy
Gorey



andy Gorey

Continued...

regular rugby, or if I preferred to move on they would release me. They didn't want me to be held back because they had decided to go with only a first team, and I really appreciated that.

"I thought about it, and spoke to my dad, and I decided to hang in there, be very patient and wait for a chance.

"If I had decided to ask for my release I might have ended up in amateur rugby again, whereas if I stayed with the Roughyeds -- where I was very happy anyway -- I would at least be gaining in experience from training in a pro environment, with other pro players, at my home-town club and under a man like Mercer.

"So I decided to stay, and as things have turned out I am delighted I made that decision."

Although Oldham born, Andy moved to Dewsbury with his family when he was a small boy and he first handled a rugby ball in earnest as a four-year-old with the Shawcross Sharks club in the Heavy Woollen district town.

His brother David, then aged six, played for the Sharks under-7s and although only four, Andy got the occasional run out in the same team. From day one, he always played above his weight!

By the time the family moved back to Oldham, Andy was aged eight or nine and rugby league for him --- and his father Chris --- at Royton Tigers was starting to become serious.

Dad got his coaching badges and Andy began to make a name for himself as a boy with lots of potential as a pacy half-back.

For the next few years he was picked for the Oldham town team at scrum-half in every age group, and he also caught the eye of Lancashire and NW Counties selectors.

By the time he was 14 or 15 he had set his sights on becoming a professional. At the age of 16 he had three trials with Leeds Rhinos and passed them all with flying colours, but he was told he was too young to sign.

Then came a spell with an elite youth squad at Bradford Bulls before the Roughyeds moved in with an offer and Andy signed on the advice of his father, Chris, who says he has never once regretted that decision.

Andy takes up the story. "My dad has helped to coach me ever since I was at Royton Tigers, and I owe him a lot. I have tried everything I know to build myself up physically, without much success, but he has always stressed to me that it's equally important to be determined, to have a big heart and to have a good attitude.

"I'm always hearing that 'not big enough' thing, but it doesn't bother me. It passes over my head. If I let it bother me, it would eat away at my confidence.

"It's all in the head, anyway. If you know you can tackle and you can bring opponents down, you just get on with it. It doesn't matter how big or how small you are, if you go into a tackle with only 70 per cent commitment you will get hurt. Go in with 100 per cent and you will more often than not make the tackle a good one.

"Don't get me wrong, I know I need to put weight on, and I would benefit if I did. I've talked about it with Deaks (head coach Steve Deakin) and I can assure you I am doing everything I can to try to make it happen.

"I'm eating and drinking all the right things and working hard on weights, but you can only do so much --- you can only do what your body tells you to do, and at the moment it seems to be telling me that I won't be putting on much weight, if any at all.

"I'll keep on trying, but other than that it isn't something I can control

running two teams that season and he gave me the choice to do whatever I thought was best for me.

"He said I could stay and work under Gary (Mercer), with no academy side in which to get



--- and it certainly isn't something I have to let get me down."

Gorey's big chance finally came on March 11 last year when he was named as a substitute in a 46-14 third-round Powergen Challenge Cup win against amateurs Sharlston Rovers on the Featherstone ground at Post Office Road.

He got into the act on the right wing, scored a try, went desperately close to scoring another, and generally did enough to remain in Mercer's plans for the remainder of the year.

He scored three tries in his first four outings and finished last season with three from eight.

This season, with Deaks in charge for most of the time, he has played 17 times and has scored seven tries.

"It's been a good season for me on a personal level because I've got the game time," added Andy. "I've learned a lot and gained a lot in experience.

"As for the team, every team and every club hits a patch sometime when it is struggling, but it is up to everyone at the club to put this season behind them and to bounce back next year with a positive outlook in the second division.

"As a member of the squad I am just delighted to be in the 17 and to play anywhere I am picked.

"But seeing that you are asking, it would be less than honest of me to say that I wouldn't fancy a go at scrum-half if I ever got the opportunity.

"I would like to test out the pace in the middle of the field and see how I coped with it.

"I would be going back to what I was doing a long time ago and it would be nice to see if I had the confidence and the skill to handle the scrum-half role. I guess I'll never know if I'm not thrown in at the deep end.

"Mum and Dad are real pleased for me and for the way things have gone for me this year because they have a lot of faith in me. My brother could have done it, but he chose the Army instead and I just carried on."

Andy, who works full time as a paint-sprayer in Rochdale, lives in that town with his girl friend, Amanda, who is more interested in her horses than in her boy friend's rugby.

"She has five horses and they take a lot of caring for, so we go our separate ways at weekends --- me to rugby, Amanda to her horses.

"I reckon if she did come and watch she would probably be my biggest critic. At least, this way, it's more peaceful for me."

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ROGER HALSTEAD'S PERSONAL TRIBUTE TO FRED LAUGHTON



Fred Laughton died as he lived . . . with a minimum of fuss and only when he had got the job done. The job came first.

Be it as school teacher, rugby coach, chairman of various youth organisations in the town, mentor and friend to generations of St Augustine's pupils, match-day announcer at Saddleworth Rangers, stats man for the Roughyeds or video commentator for the Oldham club that meant so much to him, Fred always put service before self.

His loyalty knew no bounds. He was steadfast in his support and backing for his church, his faith, his school, his pupils, his colleagues, his sport of rugby league, his beloved Roughyeds and his adopted town.

Did Fred, born in Workson, adopt Oldham? Or did Oldham wrap its civic and communal arms around Fred and accept him as one of its own?

Either way, in his 35 years in the town, Fred became part of the fabric of the place, earning a special place in the hearts of generations of St Augustine's boys and girls and generations of young rugby league players at school, town team and county levels.

He came to Oldham intending to stay for no more than two years.

"I liked the beer, the rugby and the people so I stayed a bit longer," he told friends at his recent retirement party in Werneth Cricket Club.

Rugby league and the people of Oldham liked Fred as well. It was a perfect partnership made in the classrooms and on the playing fields of the town --- and if Fred got a lot out of it, it was only because he put even more into it.

There are many people far more qualified than I to talk about his skills as a teacher. But I did have the privilege, in 1988, of seeing him at work 12,000 miles away in Australia when the Oldham Schools' Rugby League took a party of local under-13s and 14s on an epic and ground-breaking tour to the other side of the world.

It was the first time some of the lads had been outside Oldham. It was a terrific tour but, inevitably, some were homesick; some had petty squabbles; some had to cope with injuries; some just got fed up of being constantly on the move and staying in "billets" with Aussie families --- all part of an experience designed to build character and self reliance.

Tour leader Iain MacCorquodale had fantastic lieutenants in Eric Fitzsimons and Fred Laughton, but Iain and Eric will acknowledge that it was to Fred that most of the lads turned when they needed a shoulder to cry on or a father-figure to confide in.

He was that sort of bloke --- a teacher with the knack of being strict disciplinarian or arm-round-the-shoulder "softie" as the occasion demanded.

Years on, there could have been no worthier recipient of the "unsung hero" award which Fred won, first at local and then at regional levels, for his quiet work behind the scenes in the development of schoolboy rugby league players across 30-odd years.

He helped to bring on many young players who progressed to Test and international levels. But for every Barrie McDermott and

every Leo Casey there were hundreds more whose names will never be seen in headlines, but who will nevertheless remember Fred with great affection as the man who used rugby league to demonstrate lessons for life.

One of those lessons was the value of consistency of purpose --- the will to carry on against all odds; the all-consuming desire to get the job done.

That desire shone through in the twilight of his life when, despite serious illness, numerous hospital admissions, toe amputations and, more recently, heart problems he invariably turned up to keep appointments and to do his duty.

Who but Fred would have suffered a heart attack at the Halifax-Oldham game at The Shay; spent the next four days in hospital; and then turned up 48 hours later, large as life with pencil and clipboard in hand, to take down the Oldham stats at a derby clash with Rochdale Hornets?

The job came first.

Similarly, he again came out of hospital for the specific purpose of attending his retirement party the next night. It must have been some ordeal for a sick man to take centre stage.

He knew the place would be heaving with friends from various walks of life. He wasn't going to let them down. The show had to go on.

We didn't know it then, but when he spoke briefly in reply to tributes from St Augustine's colleague and friend Rick Brierley, from Father Dolan of St Edwards at Lees, from Roughyeds chairman Chris Hamilton and from this obituarist, they were to be the last words he spoke in public.

The next day he officially retired from his full-time vocation as teacher, mentor and friend.

The job was done. Finished. The job had always come first, but now it was ended. The party was over. Another academic year, the last of his career, had come to an end.

Without fuss, and in the knowledge that he had seen the job through, Fred left us with only the memories --- marvellous memories of a man who stamped his own indelible mark of professionalism, honesty and loyalty on Oldham's rugby league and teaching communities.

Workson's loss all those years ago was Oldham's gain. And it was a measure of his desire to contribute as much in later life as he had done in earlier years when he was more active, that he took on the chairmanship of the Oldham Schools' Rugby League, of FOSSA (the Federation of School Sports Associations) and of the body giving advice on careers to Oldham school leavers.

He was a man of many parts, a man of many and varied roles. His core values were based on a deep religious faith, respect for his fellow men and concern for those less fortunate and less privileged than himself.

Couple all that with his love of and support for rugby league and for the Roughyeds and he just had to be one top guy.

We'll miss you, Fred --- more than you could ever imagine.

ROGER HALSTEAD.

the bootroom

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Kids & Co

Hi Kids

Things are very quiet on the junior front at the moment, a lot of you are away on holiday or getting ready to go. Hope you have a good time.

For everyone who is not lucky enough to be going to Twickenham to watch the Challenge Cup Final bring your mums and dads along to the social club and watch it on the big screen, there will be fun and games with "Braddy" as well as the match to watch.

At the time of going to print we have no mascot details, this season seems to have been a struggle getting anyone to volunteer as a lot of you now feel you are too old. If we do manage to get a "kid" in time I'm sure Nigel will announce them on the day

Enjoy the summer

See you all soon.

Carole and Janet

SUPPORT GROUP NEWS

For a change, a bit of fun and a test of your memory. The following are anagrams of some of the many coaches of Oldham RLFC over the last 40 years. Can you identify them?

MISSZOENIMCRIFT
HEFJEHDIONSOL
TIESMOCCKA
RABANKWRORF
REBNOLBDIN

RENTSEPUTK
XOVCAED
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HALIFAX

Brad Attwood

Queensbury based although a product of the prolific Ovenden club in Halifax, Brad went on tour to Australia with the Combined English Schools side in 2001. He can play any back position with equal facility but is rapidly establishing himself as a quality full back.

Damian Ball

The former Dewsbury, Rochdale, York and Hull KR back-rower took a six-month sabbatical from the game at the end of 2004 in order to complete his degree studies before signing for Halifax in May 2005. Ball won the National League Grand Final in 2000 whilst with Dewsbury Rams.

Chris Birchall - currently on loan to Featherstone

Originally signed on a season-long loan deal from Bradford Bulls in 2002, the Leeds-born prop made only 10 appearances in 2005 before badly damaging knee ligaments at Whitehaven in April, which kept him out of the game until the final match of the season at Castleford.

Anthony Blackwood

Blackwood impressed as a centre in his first season at The Shay, scoring 13 tries in 25 appearances. The converted back-rower captained the Leigh Under 21's to Grand Final victory in 2004, winning the man of the match in the process, before joining Halifax in November 2004.

Jason Boults

Halifax-born 20-year-old prop forward signed from Bradford Bulls in November 2004 and went on to make 30 appearances last season, scoring 1 try. A former Siddal junior, Boults was a product of the all-conquering under-16 side that also spawned Wigan's England A half-back Luke Robinson and former Fax forward Jaymes Chapman.

Dominic Brambani

Queensbury based halfback who started at Bradford before moving to Castleford for their promotion season. Kicked 11 goals from as many attempts versus Oldham in March 2006.

John Clough

Former Salford City Reds hooker

who originally joined on a month's loan deal at the end of June - released by the Reds at the end of July and promptly signed a permanent deal until the end of the season.

Marcus George

Began his career on the club's scholarship programme but turned professional with Huddersfield alongside younger brother Luke. He left the Giants at the end of last season and had been on a pay-as-you-play deal at Odsal before returning to The Shay.

Damian Gibson

'Gibbo' originally signed from Leeds Rhinos in the 1997 close season and was an integral part of the side who finished 3rd in Super League in 1998. He has also represented Wales and scored 41 tries in 114 appearances during his first spell at The Shay.

James Haley

Made his first team debut against Batley in May 2004 after being the leading scorer in the club's under 21's side and set a Club record in the first game of 2006 by playing in his 50th consecutive game from debut. Elusive runner with pace to spare, he scored several long-range tries last season as he registered 22 tries in 31 games.

Adam Hayes

Adam is a product of the Huddersfield Academy where he spent four years before joining Casino Cougars, a NSW junior side in Australia, for 12 months. He returned to England in 2004 to sign for Featherstone where he made 33 appearances and scored 7 tries last year.

Joe Hirst

Halifax beat a host of Super League rivals to his signature after he won man of the match in the previous month's National Cup final, despite finishing on the losing side.

Andy Hobson

Local-born Andy made 146 appearances (scoring 8 tries) during his first spell for his hometown club before joining the Vikings after Fax's relegation from Super League in 2003. A strong powerful runner, he once scored an incredible 114 tries in a season for King Cross Under 14's team, and

previously played for Stanley Rangers ARLFC.

Simeon Hoyle

Siddal product who spent last year playing for Collegians in the Illawarra League under Gavin Clinch. Played Academy football for Halifax before signing professional with Keighley in 2002.

Andy Kirk

Signed from Wakefield Trinity Wildcats in August 2005, he went onto make 6 appearances (3 tries) and his defensive contribution was instrumental in Fax's end of season improvement.

Dave Larder

Highly-rated second rower signed from Leigh Centurions in November 2004. The 28-year-old was a member of the Centurions' Grand-Final winning line-up and turned down a full-time Super League contract at The Coliseum to remain part-time. Made 29 appearances for Fax in 2005, scoring 9 tries.

Scott Law

Made a meteoric rise to fame in 2005 after his form in pre-season friendlies earned him a first team slot. Made his debut versus Oulton Raiders in the Challenge Cup and scored his first senior try for the club in the victory at Hunslet before he dropped out of the side.

Dean Lawford

Signed from Batley Bulldogs in October 2004. The 27-year-old half-back played alongside coach Anthony Farrell at Sheffield, Leeds and Widnes. Lawford has already been at the Shay once during his career, having made two appearances in May 2001.

Ryan MacDonald

Originally signed on loan in March 2004, Ryan made 4 appearances before returning to Widnes Vikings. Subsequently released by the Vikings and joined Halifax until the end of the 2004 season. Aggressive runner who made several impressive performances before a broken arm ruled him out of the 2004 play-off final.

Joel Penny

Former Whitehaven half-back Joel Penny signed in November 2005. The 25-year-old Australian, replaced Ben Black on the club's

overseas quota, and turned down a lucrative new deal with last year's beaten Grand Finalists to move to the Shay on a one-year contract.

Rikki Sheriffe - on loan from Harlequins

A Halifax lad, he joined the Huddersfield Giants from King Cross ARLFC but first joined his hometown team on a loan spell at the end of 2003 before signing a year-long loan for 2004 and again for 2005. Finished the 2005 season as the Club's leading try-scorer with 28 tries in 28 appearances.

Jon Simpson

Played in the pack in the same Calderdale Schools side in 1998/99 but chose to join Huddersfield rather than his hometown team. Had three seasons in the Giants' Academy sides before going back to his roots at amateur side Elland.

Byron Smith

Baz is the grandson of former Halifax stand-off Ken Ward. Made his first Fax debut against Wigan in August 2003 and went on to make 7 appearances for his hometown club during that season. The prop forward then moved to Castleford Tigers before returning to the Shay in March 2006.

Andy Spink

Signed from Batley Bulldogs in October 2004. Second-row forward Spink picked up their Players Player of the Year award and was a member of the NL1 Dream Team in 2004 prior to his move to the Shay. Made 27 appearances, scoring 2 tries in his debut season.

Matthew Whittaker - on loan from Castleford

Matthew is a strong running back rower who had a previous spell at The Shay in 2004 when he played 5 first team appearances in his one month loan spell.

David Wrench - on loan from Wakefield

Former Leeds prop or second-row who joined on a one month loan deal from Wakefield Trinity Wildcats at the end of June. The 27-year-old made 22 appearances for Wakefield last season.



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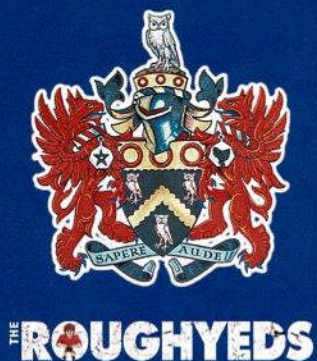
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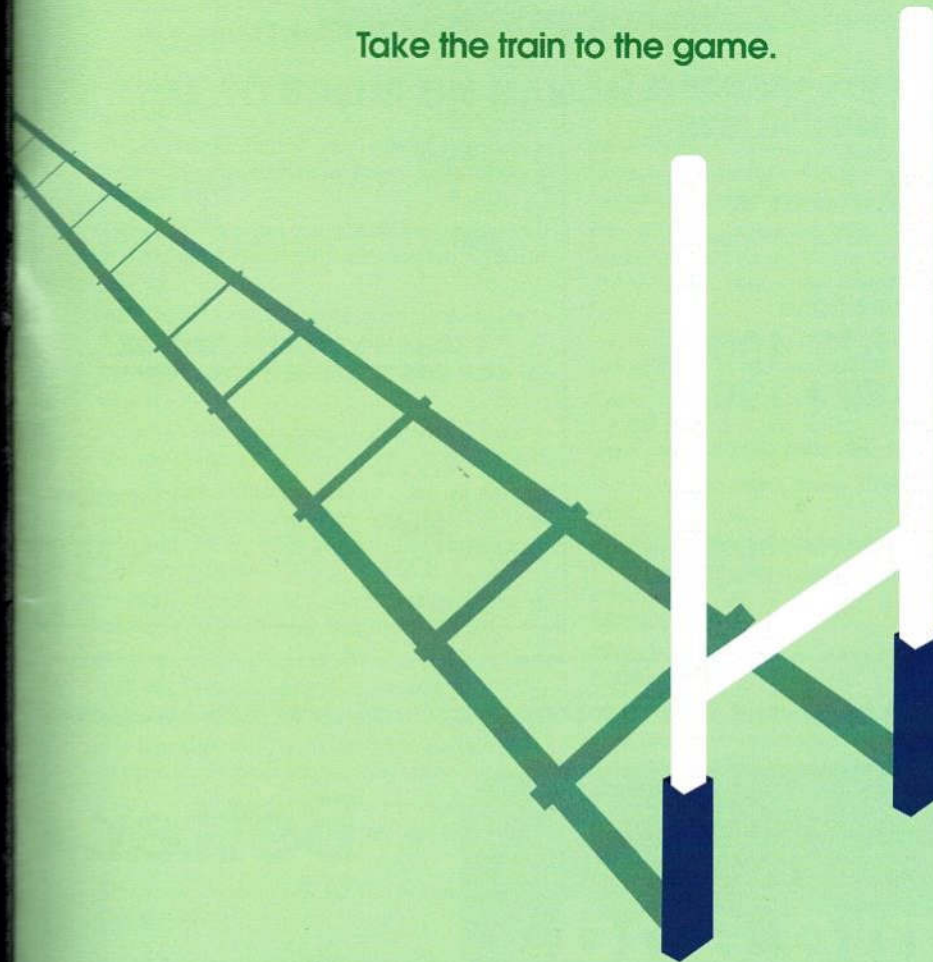
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NATIONAL LEAGUE TALK

with GARETH WALKER of RUGBY LEAGUER & LEAGUE EXPRESS



TIME TO FOCUS ON NATIONAL LEAGUE CROWDS

THERE is a fascinating article about attendances in this month's edition of Rugby League World magazine.

The piece examines the widely held theory that crowd figures in our sport are constant on the up and up.

Well, as the statistics prove, they certainly are at Super League level.

But it's a whole different story outside the top flight.

After ten years of summer rugby, attendances in the top division had risen by almost 40 per cent.

But in the National Leagues the figure was almost minus 20 per cent – and that had been dragged up in 2005 due to the presence of Castleford Tigers in NL1 that year.

In 2004, crowds in NL1 and NL2 were nearly 40 per cent down on what they were in 1996.

It's a remarkable figure, and one that has been virtually overlooked by most observers.

But it's something that needs to be acted on by the sport's authorities, if the game outside Super League is to have a viable, long-term future.

Clubs in the National Leagues need help to promote themselves better in their local communities.

Of course several clubs do this at present – but not enough.

* The August edition of Rugby League World magazine is on sale now.

While there will always be the odd success story, generally crowd figures in the lower leagues are not too impressive at present.

For example, fledgling club Celtic Crusaders attracted a highly creditable 1,103 to their top-of-the-table clash with Dewsbury Rams last Sunday.

But four-figure crowds have been a real rarity in LHF Healthplan NL2 this season.

There have been only 11 all season – with the highest at just 1,182 for the Barrow Raiders v Workington fixture.

The story isn't much better in National League One.

Although admittedly lacking league leaders Hull Kingston Rovers, last Sunday's highest attendance was 1,752 at the Halifax versus Widnes match.

There were two other attendances below the 1,000 mark.

As everyone reading this will know, the entertainment served up by teams outside Super League is usually second to none.

The next challenge for the sport is to ensure that more paying spectators get to appreciate that.

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2006 fixtures

DATE	OPPONENTS	CUP	VENUE	K. O.	RESULT	W/L	ATT
22/1/06	Rochdale Hornets	Law Cup	A	14:00	42-8	L	1,114
27/1/06	Leeds Rhino's	Friendly	H	20:00	16-8	W	3,191
15/2/06	Rochdale Hornets	NR Cup	A	19:45	18-16	L	920
19/2/06	Halifax RLFC	NR Cup	H	15:00	26-42	L	1268
26/2/06	Keighley Cougars	NR Cup	H	15:00	25-24	W	764
8/3/06	Halifax RLFC	NR Cup	A	19:30	66-8	L	897
12/3/06	Saddleworth Rangers	POWERGEN CC 3RD RD	H	15:00	32-10	W	804
19/3/06	Rochdale Hornets	NR Cup	H	15:00	10-22	L	783
26/3/06	Keighley Cougars	NR Cup	A	15:00	32-28	W	946
2/4/06	Barrow Raiders	POWERGEN CC 4TH RD	A	15:00	8-40	L	975
9/4/06	Hull Kingston Rovers	NL1	H	15:00	8-48	L	1658
14/4/06	Rochdale Hornets	NL1	A	15:00	28-10	L	1103
17/4/06	Doncaster Lakers	NL1	H	15:00	10-56	L	820
30/4/06	Leigh Centurions	NL1	A	15:00	44-22	L	2215
14/5/06	Whitehaven	NL1	H	15:00	10-48	L	813
28/5/06	Hull Kingston Rovers	NL1	A	15:00	80-6	L	2859
4/6/06	Halifax RLFC	NL1	A	15:00	34-28	L	1274
10/6/06	York City Knights	NL1	H	19:00	0-62	L	684
25/6/06	York City Knights	NL1	A	15:00	56-14	L	2220
2/7/06	Rochdale Hornets	NL1	H	15:00	18-22	L	713
9/7/06	Widnes Vikings	NL1	A	15:00	72-18	L	3213
21/7/06	Batley Bulldogs	NL1	H	19:45	8-40	L	729
30/7/06	Doncaster Lakers	NL1	A	15:00	58-10	L	712
6/8/06	Halifax RLFC	NL1	H	15:00			
13/8/06	Batley Bulldogs	NL1	A	15:00			
20/8/06	Widnes Vikings	NL1	H	15:00			
26/8/06	POWERGEN CHALLENGE CUP FINALS	POWERGEN CC					
3/9/06	Leigh Centurions	NL1	H	15:00			
10/9/06	Whitehaven	NL1	A	15:00			
17/9/06	LHF Healthplan Play Offs						
24/9/06	LHF Healthplan Play Offs						
1/10/06	LHF Healthplan Play Offs						
8/10/06	LHF Healthplan Grand Final & Play Off Final						

Key

NR Cup - Northern Rail Cup
Powergen CC - Powergen Challenge Cup
NL1 - National League Division 1

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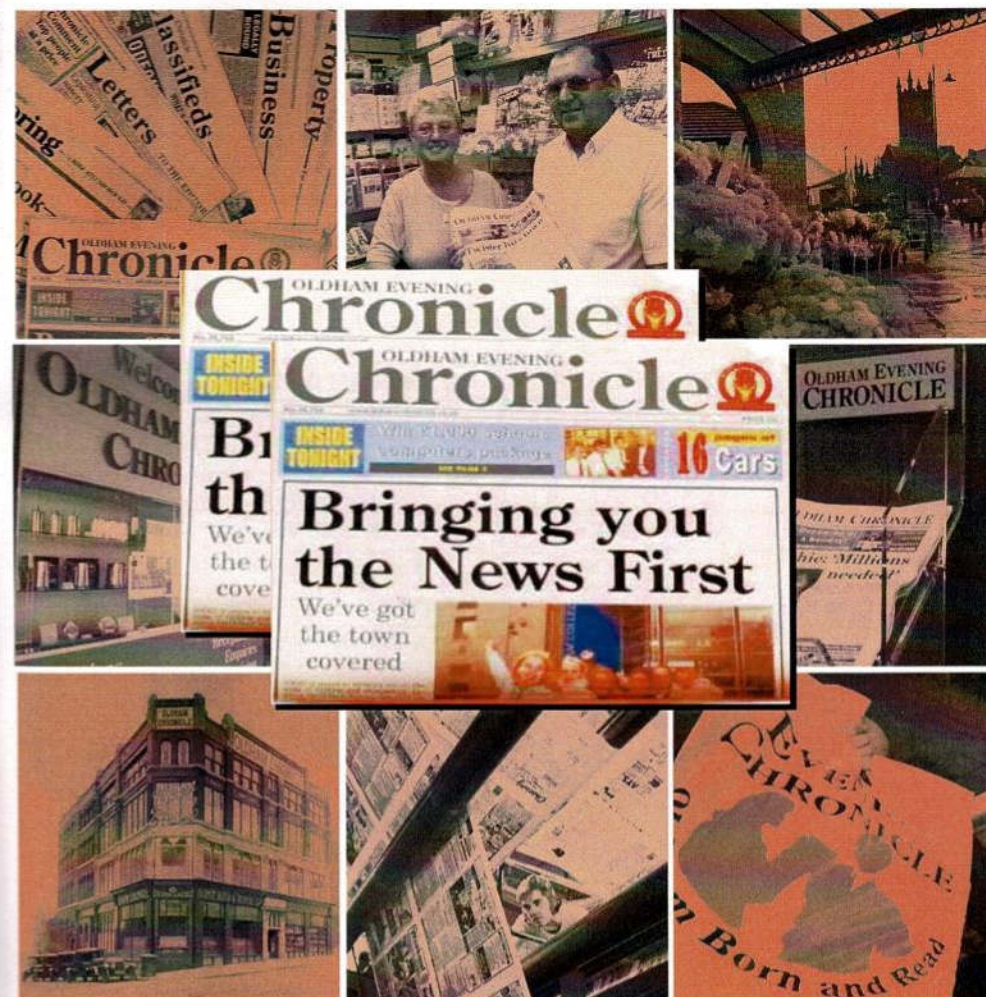
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