

game line-up

OLDHAM R.L.F.C

HUNSLET HAWKS

OLDHAM SQUAD	Played	HUNSLET HAWKS
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GENO COSTIN		STEVE MORTON
JAMES COYLE		MARK MOXON
ANDY CRABTREE		MATTY FIRTH
ANDY GOREY		DANNY EKIS
IAN HODSON		GARETH GREENWOOD
JOHN HOUGH		PAUL SMITH
DREW HOUSTON		WAYNE FREEMAN
SIMEON HOYLE		MARK CUNNINGHAM
GARETH LANGLEY		WILL CARTLEDGE
CRAIG LITTLER		DARREN ROBINSON
RICHARD MERVILL		GLEN PENNINGTON
STUART OLDHAM		CHRIS ROSS
LUCAS ONYANGO		PAUL SEAL
NEIL RODEN		
WES ROGERS		
LEE SANDERSON		
IAN SINFIELD		
KRIS SMITH		
SAID TAMGHART		
TONY TONKS		
ALEX WILKINSON		
LEE WINGFIELD		
ADAM HUGHES		
ADAM ROBINSON		

match officials

REFEREE: Mr J Child TOUCH JUDGES: G Phillips, J Downham

4TH OFFICIAL: S Johnson

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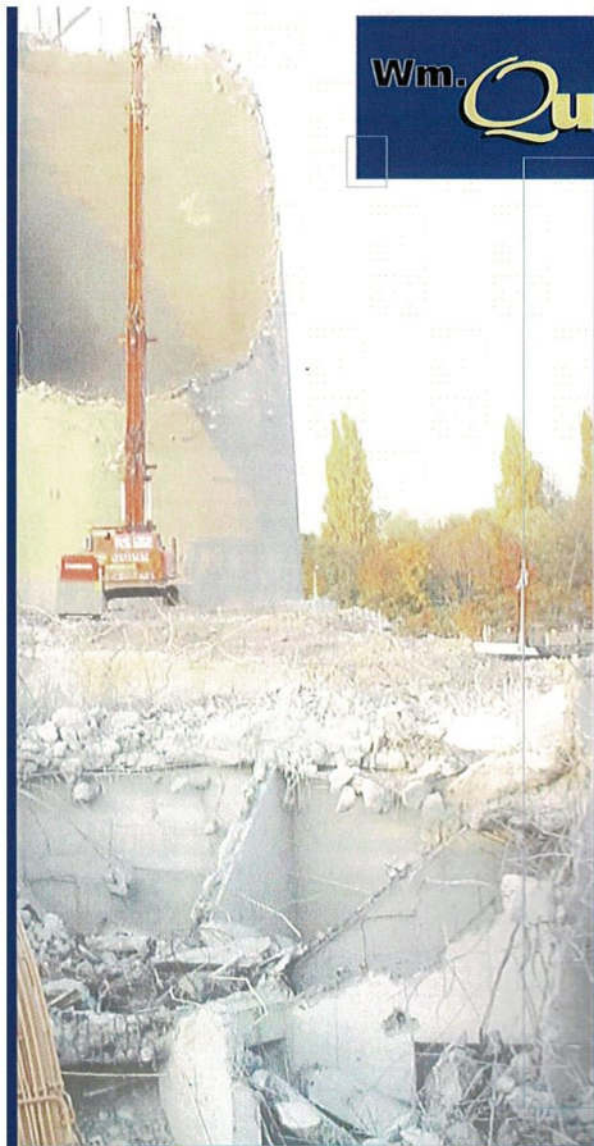
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CONTENTS

Oldham RLFC v Hunslet Hawks

FEATURES

- 4 **Boardroom View** with Chris Hamilton
- 6 **Deeks's Coach Approach** A look at the preparation for today's game
- 9 **Focus on the Service Area**
- 10 **The Boot Room**
- 12 **Player Profile** NEIL RODEN
- 14 **Heritage Trust** with Brian Walker
- 17 **The Boys and their backers**
- 18 **Community Challenge**
- 19 **Five Alivers get the bird!**
- 20 **Roughyeds Roar** by Ian Wilson
- 23 **It's the Hit Man!**
- 24 **Our Visitors - Hunslet**
- 25 **Player Statistics**
- 27 **National League Talk**
- 29 **Keeping the dream ALIVE!**
- 31 **Journalistic license** by Matthew Chambers
- 33 **Players' Association**
- 34 **Fixtures and Sponsors**
- 35 **Merchandise on offer**
- 36 **Today's Teams** View both of today's teams in full, plus match officials

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MOST APPEARANCES: John Hough, 228 - Jan 1998 - Sep 2006
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 MATCH: Mark Sibson v Wigan St. Judes, 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.

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HALL OF FAME MEMBERS

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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
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boardroom **view**

with Chris Hamilton



Welcome back to Boundary Park for what is our first "real" home game in over two months.

In our matches at Sedgely Park the players got two wins from two and although we also lost to Swinton there it was no mean effort by the players to pick up those six points.

It is perhaps indicative of the club's situation that people don't even make an issue of the fact that we have to play games away from our chosen venue each year and certainly none of the players or coaching staff bemoaned their luck.

We are all aware that today is a very important game for the team given our recent run of poor results. We need to send out the message that we are by no means finished for the season and although we have made things harder for ourselves in terms of what we want to achieve this season we still have nine matches to play in the normal league campaign and today is a great opportunity to show people what we can do. There is no reason whatsoever why we cannot go on another great run of results and we simply need to concentrate on our own performances and results and let the other teams worry about everything else.

There is no doubt that the players are lacking a bit of confidence at present but every member of the playing and coaching staff know, without any shadow of a doubt, that the board is 100% behind them and we are confident that we can still be a major force in this division. The players are as disappointed as anyone with recent results and if we can stop making things harder for ourselves than we need to then things will click into place sooner rather than later. There is no question of lack of ability or desire but for whatever reason we have got into a rut.

The opposition today, Hunslet Hawks, have already shown what a good side they can be on their day and like us of late have just lacked a bit of consistency but there is no doubt that they are capable of turning over any of the teams in the division and that should be all the warning we need. They will also be looking at the

league table and thinking that with having to play us twice and being only six points behind then today is a massive game for them also.

One thing we have learned about the Second Division so far is that it is a highly competitive one and if anything it is perhaps more competitive than the first Division because all of the teams are capable of beating each other. I think that without doubt a lot of fans thought that our relegation would mean an easier season this time around but that was never the case within the club and that fact has been borne out so far.

We are all committed however to doing our utmost to have what can be deemed a successful season this year and plenty of hard work is going on to achieve it.

With six of our last nine games at home we need to make sure we utilise that advantage starting today and if we can get back to winning ways we can hopefully kick on from here.

Today also sees the launch of the Past Players Association and we welcome all of those who have made the effort to come to today's match and invite all fans back to the social club after the match to meet them and talk to them. One of our big supporters, J. W. Lees and Company have already committed to backing the association and something like this with a club full of history and tradition like Oldham is long overdue and we hope, with over 60 people already signing up to the association, that it will go from strength to strength.

Finally a big thank you to all of you who have given your support to the team over the last two months. We are one of the best supported teams away from home and even at Sedgely Park your numbers have been encouraging and everybody at the club appreciates your backing.

Please keep it up today and help cheer the lads on.

Enjoy the game

Chris

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deeks's coach approach

with Steve Deakin



IT'S good to be back at Boundary Park after nine weeks and eight games "on the road" --- two of them at Sedgley Park as "home" games, one at the same venue as an "away" match and the other five on opponents' grounds at London Skolars, Workington Town, Featherstone Rovers, Keighley Cougars and Barrow Raiders.

A return to home-sweet-home will hopefully bring with it a change of luck and a change in our results, which have dipped a bit in recent weeks since our run of seven NL2 wins in a row between April 15 and June 10.

By way of an irony, our last appearance here at Boundary Park saw us comprehensively win 50-18 against Barrow Raiders, who turned the tables on us when they beat us 34-26 at Craven Park in last Sunday's encounter.

Let me say at the outset that this was a fine game of rugby league football played out between two good sides. It was our best performance for about a month and Barrow had to play very well indeed in the second half --- outstandingly well, in fact --- to beat us.

From our point of view, we went up to Barrow with a few players left behind due to injuries, yet we still scored four tries, we ran up 26 points (not many teams have scored that many at Craven Park this year), we played a massive part in a great game of football and we collected a bonus point.

The game went away from us in the last 10 to 15 minutes, so it was little wonder the players were hugely disappointed after they had put in a massive amount of effort. It was, once again, a case of so near, yet so far.

However, the players will continue to work hard to make sure we achieve a play-off position and we will be striving to put another run together so that we can finish as high as possible.

I fully understand people's frustration at what sometimes may appear to be a lack of consistency, but I don't think the players can be criticised for their efforts, considering the season as a whole.

In the five games we have lost we have picked up a bonus point every time --- and it is easy to overlook the fact that the nucleus of

the squad has an average age of only 22. We are a very young squad.

Players like Tonks (20), Robinson (20), Brooks (21), Coyle (21), Onyango (23), Littler (21) and Langley (21) are all young players with most of their careers ahead of them, and very young sides invariably find it hard to be consistent. I stress, however, that there is a big difference between a lack of effort and a lack of consistency and I am talking about consistency of performance: there is nothing lacking in effort.

I have to say that, despite a few hiccups in the past week or two, the club is in very good shape in terms of its long-term projection. It has enough of a solid player base for supporters to feel confident about the future, whether it be this season or beyond.

Turning to today's game, we welcome Hunslet Hawks to Boundary Park. We have not yet played them this season because our game at the South Leeds Stadium, originally scheduled for Easter Monday, April 9, was postponed and has been rearranged for Wednesday night, August 22, which is the Wednesday before the Carnegie Challenge Cup final at Wembley on Saturday, the 25th.

The Hawks are also fighting for a play-off spot, so we fully understand and expect today's game to pose certain problems, which we will have to negotiate if we are to maintain our promotion challenge.

Finally, another big Roughyeds welcome today to the little ones who are just starting out in rugby league and, at the other end of the scale, to the former players who are making a sentimental journey to revive memories of the happy days when they were proud young men wearing the Oldham jersey.

I refer, of course, to the members of the newly-formed Players' Association, who will be introduced to the crowd individually during the half-time interval.

I'll bet they could tell a tale or two of battles won and battles lost over the years --- and no doubt there will be a few yarns to tell and a few old stories to be told when they get together over a pint in the Roughyeds social club after today's game.

One last point --- we have still nine games to play in the regular season, but SIX of them are here at Boundary Park. That will surely work in our favour, and particularly so if the players have the backing of a sizeable crowd every time.

The boys are back in town, so do all you can to make them feel at home, not just today but also when we play Blackpool, Workington, Celtic Crusaders, London Skolars and Swinton Lions (the date for this game had not been announced when the programme went to print).

Enjoy the game.

DEAKS.

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FOCUS ON THE OLDHAM SERVICE AREA

(all you need to know about local rugby league at grass-roots level)

SPOTLIGHT ON THE UNDER-12s

OUR Service Area feature today concentrates on the town-team under-12s and looks at how they performed in their recent inter-town series of games against Halton, Copeland, Lancashire, the combined Wigan/Leigh side and then Kirklees.

The 22-strong squad was as follows: Jack Ashworth, Chris Bolton, Scott Booth, Josh Bradbury, Dominic Bryan, Shaun Cadwallader, John Casson, Jay Claridge, Jack Connor, Bobby Crossley, Callum Deakin, Charlie Eddleston, Lewis Galbraith, Bradley Knowles, Ryan Maneely, Daniel Richardson, Declan Taylor, Harry Tindall, Bradley Turner, Ashley Webb, Ben White, Elliott White.

In their five games, the local boys scored a total of 134 points and conceded only 46 ---- 30 of them in their one defeat by Wigan/Leigh.

Ben White kicked 13 goals in the five games and scored eight tries for a personal points tally of 58, while the other try scorers were as follows: Lewis Galbraith (5), Elliott White (2), Scott Booth (2), Josh Bradbury (2), Ryan Maneely (2), Shaun Cadwallader (1), Ashley Webb (1), Jack Connor (1), Declan Taylor (1), Charlie Eddleston (1), Chris Bolton (1).

OLDHAM 30 HALTON 0

This was a good, disciplined team display, which produced a tremendous win against a big Halton outfit. Lewis Galbraith, voted boy of the match, scored two first-half tries, one of which was improved by Ben White for a 10-0 interval lead.

In the second half Oldham continued to dominate and they added further tries by Ashley Webb, Josh Bradbury, Jack Connor and Ben White, who also kicked two more goals.

Webb and Elliott White also stood out in a splendid, all-round team display by the local boys.

OLDHAM 32 COPELAND 10

This was another solid performance in which Oldham dominated for most of the game. Lewis Galbraith opened the scoring and Ben White and Declan Taylor extended the lead. A

White goal gave Oldham a 14-0 half-time lead.

As Oldham continued to look the more impressive side Charlie Eddleston and Ryan Maneely came up with early tries in the second half. White claimed his second try late on to finish with a personal points haul of 16 from two tries and four goals.

Josh Bradbury was named boy of the match.

OLDHAM 28 LANCASHIRE 0

The Lancashire lads were 'hilled' as Oldham made it three wins out of three. Ben White scored 12 points this time ---- two tries and two goals --- and other tries were scored by Chris Bolton, Josh Bradbury, Shaun Cadwallader and Scott Booth.

Bradbury's try was an outstanding effort to open the scoring, while Bolton crossed in the second half after getting on the end of a flowing, eight-man move.

OLDHAM 16 WIGAN/LEIGH 30

This was Oldham's only defeat of the season. The local lads had every chance at half time, when they trailed only 12-10, but a glut of mistakes meant it was always going to be an uphill struggle.

Wigan's greater fitness also told a tale in the second half when they piled on the points before a late try by Lewis Galbraith, goaled by Ben White, made the final score look more respectable.

Ryan Maneely and Ben White crossed for first-half tries, one of which was converted by White.

KIRKLEES 6 OLDHAM 28

Oldham rounded off their season with a comfortable win against a big set of Yorkshire lads. This was a terrific, all-round display in which Ben White and Ashley Webb were outstanding.

White finished with two goals and two tries (12 points), while Elliott White (2), Lewis Galbraith and Scott Booth also got over the Kirklees line.



Stars of the future? The town team under-12s beat Kirklees 28-6
PICTURE BY OLDHAM EVENING CHRONICLE

(OUR SERVICE AREA FEATURE NEXT TIME WILL LOOK AT THE UNDER-13s)

the bootroom

THE MEN WHO CARRY ROUGHYEDS' HOPES AND AMBITIONS INTO 2007.

ASHTON, Paul (half-back): Aged 27, Paul learned his trade at Saddleworth before playing for Halifax, Rochdale, Kelghley and Swinton. Got his big chance at Oldham in 2006, initially on a week-to-week basis, and did enough to earn a full contract for 2007. Can play at scrum-half or stand-off.

BAINES, Chris (back-row): A young forward who also did enough for coach Steve Deakin last year, while on loan from Warrington, to win a contract for the latter part of 2006 and then for 2007. Toured New Zealand with Great Britain Young Lions in 2003. Product of Chorley Panthers and Wigan St Pat's.

BOULTS, Jason (prop): One of many new boys in the Roughyeds squad for 2007, 23-year-old Jason arrived on the recommendation of two of his former Halifax team mates, Jamie Bloem and Alan Hadcroft. Spent four years as a young pro with Bradford and then had two seasons at The Shay, missing only a handful of games.

COSTIN, Geno (prop or back-row): A 22-year-old Aussie, Geno first established himself in the Queensland Cup with Wynnum-Manly, but last year played in the same comp for Logan Souths. A rugby workaholic, he puts in overtime on defence and, in possession, always runs strong and straight.

CRABTREE, Andy (hooker): Won Great Britain academy honours in his Wigan Warriors days. Came from Swinton this year. A tidy footballer with good hands and game awareness, he can also play loose-forward. Alert and alive at dummy half.

GOREY, Andy (winger): A scrum-half in his Royton Tigers days, Andy became a good full-back in the former Roughyeds academy side. It was as a winger, however, that he finished 2006 as the club's top try scorer with ten — no mean feat in a losing side.

HADCROFT, Alan (centre): A robust middle back, 29-year-old Alan signed from Halifax for the 2006 season, but his campaign was marred by a series of shoulder injuries, notably at Barrow and Whitehaven. Future as a player in some doubt, but highly regarded as coach Steve Deakin's acting No 2.

HODSON, Ian (back-row): Initially rejected new offer for 2007 due to work commitments, but the Roughyeds door remained open and he re-signed in March after playing the odd game or two for Tyldesley RU Club. One of the club's better performers in 2006, he always gave maximum input, even when asked to play at stand-off.

HOUGH, John (hooker): First player to sign for the 'new' Roughyeds club. Still here nearly ten years later — that's loyalty with a capital L. Joined Warrington from Waterhead as a boy, but carved himself a niche in the annals of the new Oldham club when he signed as a free agent on December 2, 1997. Has played more than 230 games.

HOUSTON, Drew (second-row or centre): Once a youngster linked with Melbourne Storm, Drew had two seasons in the Queensland Cup with Storm feeder club Brisbane Norths before heading south to join Dapto whom he helped to

become champions of the Illawarra competition last year.

HOYLE, Simeon (hooker): Formerly with Kelghley and Halifax, Simeon is a hooker of the old school — tough in defence yet able to make things happen from dummy half. Helped Kelghley to win promotion in 2003 in the same team as Paul Ashton, Richard Mervill and Ian Sinfield.

LANGLEY, Gareth (winger): Pacy, and a good finisher, 'Gaz' joined Roughyeds this year after five years at St Helens. He was Saints academy player of the year in 2005 and runner-up in 2006. Played at Salford as a teenager before joining his hometown club at Knowsley Road.

LITTLER, Craig (centre): Another Saints old boy, Craig was Langley's centre for four years at Knowsley Road. A year younger, he had the chance of another year with St Helens academy, but opted to sign for Roughyeds and continue his centre-wing partnership with Langley.

MERVILL, Richard (prop): Formerly with Halifax and Kelghley, Richard joined Roughyeds for 2007 after playing Down Under in the same Dapto side as Drew Houston. Suffered a broken hand in one of his early games for Roughyeds, but goes into Co-Operative NL2 action in a good seam of form.

O'CONNOR, Paul (full-back): Signed for hometown Widnes after winning students' international honours for Ireland and for Great Britain. Looked good in three loan games for Roughyeds in 2006 and returned on a more permanent basis in 2007, although he will be away for 14 weeks on a pre-arranged trip Down Under.

OLDHAM, Stuart (winger): Formerly with St Helens and Swinton, Stuart played his first serious rugby with Sedgley Park and Liverpool St Helens RU clubs before switching codes to join Saints. Had two seasons with Swinton and became one of six Lions to sign for Roughyeds for 2007.

ONYANGO, Lucas (winger): A real flier, aged 25, Lucas grew up in rugby union in his native Kenya. Has played for Sale Sharks, Manchester and Leigh in Union, and also Widnes Vikings in League. Did well at Vikings before damaging a knee. Over that now and keen to make the most of his chance at Oldham.

RODEN, Neil (half-back): Neil rejoined Roughyeds from Leigh for 2007 after leaving the club initially to go to Batley in 2004. In his first stint here he scored 290 points (58 tries and 18 drop goals) in 142 games over four and a half seasons. Has overtaken Mark Silson as the 'new' club's leading all-time try scorer.

ROGERS, Wes (prop): Aged 29, and club captain. Like Neil Roden and Ian Sinfield, has rejoined Roughyeds for a second spell. Signed for Widnes as a 15-year-old, then had three years at Swinton, one here, three at Rochdale and three more at Swinton before coming 'home' for 2007.

SANDERSON, Lee (halfback, hooker): Signed in March after a difficult period with Barrow. Roughyeds paid an undisclosed transfer fee for the Leigh lad, whose uncle, Ian, was an

accomplished Oldham hooker in Watersheddings days. Lee has previously played for Leigh, London Broncos, Rochdale and Barrow.

SINFELD, Ian (back-row): Another experienced forward who has returned to his hometown club for a second stint. Brother of Leeds captain, Kevin Sinfield, Ian played in the first ever Roughyeds game at Rochdale on New Year's Day, 1998. Had four years here, then moved on to Rochdale, Kelghley and Swinton.

SMITH, Kris (back-row or centre): Kris, aged 28, has been on the books of four Super League clubs, namely Leeds, Salford, London and Halifax. A product of the Eccles amateur club, he was snapped up by Leeds while still a teenager. Joined Roughyeds after four seasons at Swinton.

STOUT, Michael (second-row or centre): Signed from Swinton, Michael has a good turn of speed for a forward and likes to use it while breaking wide out. Played at academy level for both Warrington and Widnes. Chose to join Oldham after rejecting a Swinton offer for 2007.

TAMGHART, Said (utility): A French international, Said has represented his country at every level, including full Test matches against Australia and New Zealand. Came under Steve Deakin's influence when both were at UTC, better known now as Perpignan-based Catalans Dragons.

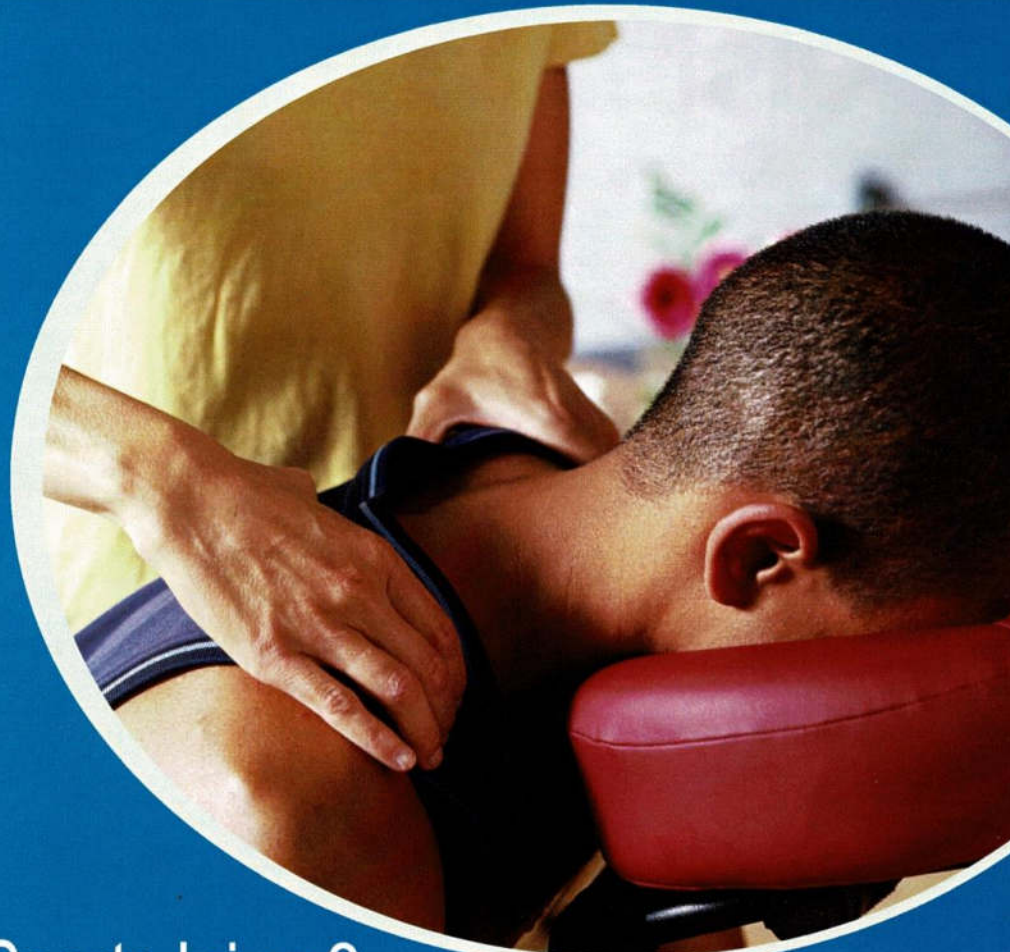
TONKS, Tony (prop): Roughyeds have high hopes of the 22-year-old Yorkshireman, signed from Bradford Bulls just prior to the start of the Co-Operative NL2 season. One year at Wakefield academy, then six at Bulls as a full-time pro, including last season on loan at Doncaster.

WILKINSON, Alex (centre, wing): Played his early rugby with Royton Tigers and toured with GB schoolboys to Australia in 1999 and with England academy to New Zealand and Australia in 2001. While a young pro at Bradford Bulls, he had loan spells with London Broncos, Huddersfield and Hull before going part-time with Roughyeds to continue his studies.

WINGFIELD, Lee (second-row): Played for GB at amateur level in Russia, France and Australia, but desperately unlucky with injuries since he turned pro for Roughyeds on a two-year deal covering 2006 and 2007. In top form early this year, but then broke a hand before suffering a serious knee injury against Swinton on his first game back.

HUGHES, Adam (centre): The massively experienced 29-year-old boasts over 150 Super League appearances during spells with Leeds, Wakefield, Halifax, Widnes and Leigh. A powerful, pacy centre who knows where the try line is, he signed for Oldham in preference to several other clubs.

ROBINSON, Adam (second row): A tough and uncompromising player who relishes his defensive duties, the 20 year-old Yorkshireman turned down Featherstone in order to sign for the Roughyeds from Doncaster. Formerly of the Stanley Rangers amateur club, he started his professional career at Wakefield.



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by ROGER HALSTEAD

LIFE AT THE ROUGHYEDS IS HOME FROM HOME FOR HALF-BACK NEIL

Two years of 'plodding along', then Roden returned to get his career back on track

JACK Roden, Wigan Warriors' chief scout, was just a face in the Sedgley Park crowd when Oldham and Swinton locked horns a couple of weeks ago.

It was a busman's holiday for Jack, who was taking a day off from his Wigan duties to take a rare glimpse of his own son, Neil, in action and no doubt to take more than a passing interest in the debut of James Coyle, whose father Bernard is a close family friend.

"Bernard and I have been mates for years," said Jack. "Our Neil has always enjoyed his rugby at Oldham. I don't get much chance to see my own lad play, but I know he's really happy here and I'm sure James will soon feel at home as well. He's a good lad, and he'll turn out to be a real good signing for the Roughyeds."

If anybody knows anything about talented young players in the North-West it's Jack Roden, lifelong Wigan fan, Warriors scout for more than a decade, Wigan St Pat's committee man for ages and a man so steeped in the game that nearly every weekend he is to be seen on a touchline making mental notes of talented young kids in junior teams throughout the length and breadth of Lancashire.

It was into this all-embracing rugby league environment that Neil Roden was born 27 years ago -- a boy born to inherit his dad's passion for the sport which has formed a large slice of his life for as far back as he can remember. Now, 19 years on since he first tied up a pair of boots for Ince St Williams under-8s, he can look back with a great deal of satisfaction and with many happy memories of his time in his chosen sport, and especially of the huge part he has played, and is still playing, in the ten-year story of Oldham RLFC (1997) Ltd.

Only John Hough, who has played more than 230 games for the 'new' Roughyeds' club, has played more matches than Neil Roden who, in two spells here, has totalled more than 160 appearances.

AND NO OTHER PLAYER SINCE THE CLUB WAS FORMED IN 1997 HAS SCORED MORE TRIES THAN THE POPULAR, UNASSUMING WIGANER WHO RACKED UP 68 TOUCHDOWNS IN HIS FIRST SPELL HERE --- TO PUSH MARK SIBSON INTO SECOND PLACE WITH 61 --- AND HAD ADDED ANOTHER NINE THIS SEASON PRIOR TO THE BARROW GAME LAST WEEK.

Up to now, his biggest occasion in a Roughyeds jumper was the 2001 Northern Ford Premiership Grand Final when he played scrum-half to David Gibbons in the Oldham team, coached by Mike Ford, which was beaten 24-14 by Widnes at Spotland.

"It was also my biggest disappointment," recalled Neil, who hopes that this year he will be able to turn Roughyeds disappointment into Roughyeds delight by

helping the club to win promotion to NL1 at the first attempt.

But back to the beginning, and those early days as a small boy, first with Ince and then, from the age of 12, with St Pat's. Even then, he always played in one of the half-back positions. "I was always slight of build and I could always pass, so I suppose that was why I was always regarded as a half-back," he said.

By the time he was playing a key midfield role in the Pat's under-16s they had assembled a quality side that included John Duffy, Andrew Isherwood, David Highton, Dwayne West and the twins Chris and Phil Farrell and they went on to become National Youth League champions.

Most of those signed pro after that season, but Neil moved up to the Pat's under-18s for half of the following season -- also getting the odd first-team outing --- before he realised his ambition of signing for his hometown professional club, Wigan, where he joined up once more with his good mates, West and the Farrell twins.

Neil takes up the story. "My dad was scouting for Wigan even back then, but the chief scout at that time was Derek Standish, a great bloke, and it was Derek who signed me. Every lad wants to play for his hometown club and I was no exception.

"It happened when I was 17 and a half, and I had more than two years at Central Park, playing in the Academy and 'A' teams. One of the highlights was beating Halifax in an Academy cup final at Central Park. It was always a thrill to play on that ground. I think Richard Mervill played for Fax.

"We didn't see a lot of the full-time professionals, but I recall training a couple of times with Inga the Winger. He was awesome. And he was really great with the young blokes like us. Jason Robinson always had plenty of time for us, too, and Kris Radlinski was the same. He always had time to talk to us, and things like that.

"It was about that time that John 'Jacko' Jackson, another scout, got involved with Oldham. And after Phil Farrell and I had been out to Lancashire Lynx on a month's loan, Jacko put us in touch with Fordy and with Oldham.

"We came to the Roughyeds initially on loan and if I remember rightly I think the club later paid an undisclosed fee for us to make the moves permanent."

It was to be the start of a four-and-a-half-season stay at Oldham in which Neil, still not 20 when he arrived, quickly established himself as David Gibbons's half-back partner. He scored six tries in 20 appearances in his first season; 16 in 34 in the grand final year of 2001; 20 in 36 in 2002, when he was top try scorer; eight in 28 in 2003; and 18 in 24 in 2004.

At the end of that 2004 season the Roughyeds squad broke up and the exodus saw the departure of player-coach Steve Molloy, his assistant Andy Proctor, and numerous senior players, among them Farrell and Lee Doran to Rochdale; Ian Watson and Paul Southern to Swinton; Martin McLoughlin, Iain Marsh, Dane Morgan and Roden to Batley.

More than once in the two seasons that followed Neil was to question the wisdom of his decision to uproot.

"I didn't really want to leave in the first place," he recalled, "but there was a big turnover of players leaving and other clubs kept phoning me. I knew that Dane, Marshy and Macca (McLoughlin) had signed for Batley, who kept contacting me to go as well. In the end I decided I would.

"It didn't work out for me, though. The travelling into Yorkshire got me down. I was leaving home to go to work at 6am and on training nights I wasn't getting home until 10.30pm. It's hard to produce your best on the field when you are not happy off it. I didn't show my best at Batley and in the end I had to knock it on the head.

"Half way through the second season I went to Leigh, but for the whole of the 2005 and 2006 seasons I felt I was just plodding along, or marking time. I didn't enjoy my rugby like I had done at Oldham.

"When Deaks (coach Steve Deakin) phoned me and asked if I would be interested in coming back to the Roughyeds I was all ears, I can tell you. I listened to what he had to say and I felt this was a great opportunity for me to go back to a club where I had always felt at home and where I would have a good chance of getting some form back."

He did that alright, capping a terrific run of form when he was named Rugby League World magazine's Co-Operative NL2 player of the month for May which included Roughyeds victories against promotion-seeking rivals Celtic Crusaders down in South Wales and against Barrow at Boundary Park.

Three more wins followed, including a terrific one up at Workington, but then came an unlucky defeat at Featherstone and then two more defeats in the next three matches, against Keighley and Swinton.

"On a personal note I like to think I've been pretty consistent for most of the season," said Neil, "but individually and collectively we lost our way a little bit after the defeat at Featherstone.

"We seemed to lose some of our enthusiasm and intensity -- the very qualities that had served us so well earlier on. But you don't become a bad team overnight. We need to focus again on the things we were doing so well. Whatever happened to us, it wasn't something that couldn't be put right, and I'm sure it will be put right.

"Our aim is promotion and in that respect nothing has changed. At the beginning of the year we would have been happy to be told that, come mid-July, we would be in the position we are. There is a huge amount of rugby to be played yet, and we can still challenge for top spot alongside one or two others who will be snapping at Featherstone's heels in the next few weeks.

"I do know that, on our day, we can beat anybody in this division, so we have to have as good a chance as anybody else of going up."

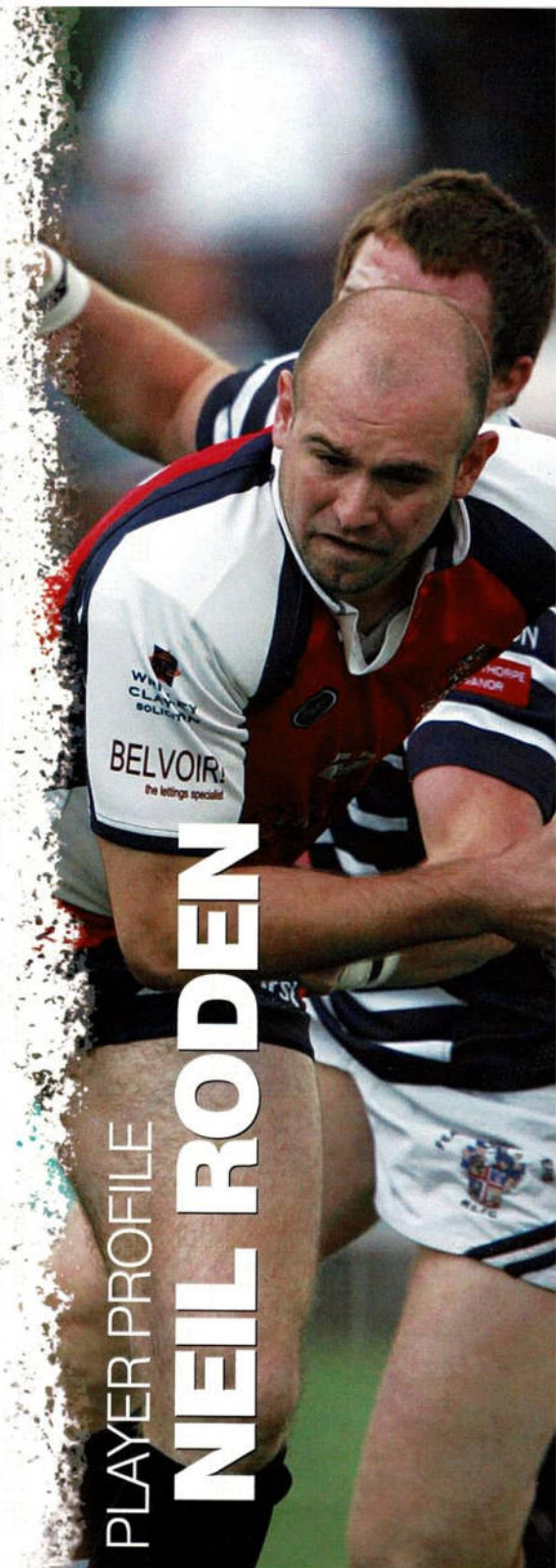
Neil works for the Prison Service as an escort-cum-driver, covering in the main Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Lancashire, but always on call for long-distance jobs all over the country.

Nothing would give him greater pleasure in the next two or three months, though, than to drive Roughyeds into NL1 with the help and support of his team mates at the club where he has always felt a part of the fixtures and fittings.

ROGER HALSTEAD

PLAYER PROFILE

NEIL RODEN



AROUND & ABOUT

with The Heritage Trust

Included in this issue of Around & About is news of three books that have recently hit the bookshelves, the latest on the soon to be released Mitchell & Kenyon DVD and a good luck message to both the club and its supporters from Oz!

RUGBY LEAGUE ANNUAL REVIEW 2007

An excellent new annual publication of rugby league analysis, history and vision.

Compiled by Dave Farrar and Peter Lush there are contributions from the likes of Robert Gate, Tony Collins, Sean Fagan, Keith Macklin, David Hinchcliffe, Tom Mather, Huw Richards, Michael O'Hare, Denis Whittle, Neil Dowson, Andrew Topham, Alex Service, Graham Williams, Roger Grime, Garry Clarke, Gavin Willacy and Geoff Lee, Ian Jackson, Simon Lowe and Giovanni Cinque.

Published as a successor to the quarterly rugby league magazine Our Game the book includes articles on leading issues facing the game plus interesting insights into the sport's history both here and in Australia.

Published by London League Publications. 176 pages. Paperback. ISBN 9781903659 - 31 - 1. Order from all good bookshops or visit www.llpshop.co.uk to order direct. £12-94 (post free).

Snuff out the Moon



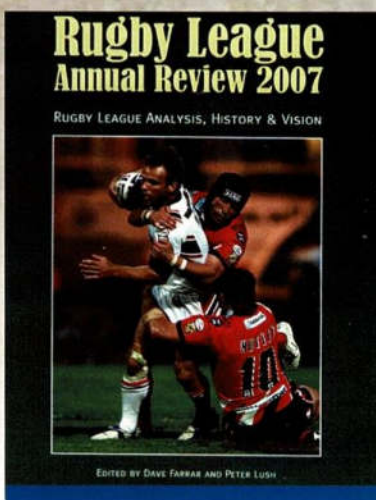
The development of floodlit rugby league
Tom Mather

SNUFF OUT THE MOON

Snuff out the Moon is written by Tom Mather who also wrote the fascinating **Missing in Action** a story of rugby players who lost their lives whilst fighting for King & Country. His latest book is an intriguing tale beginning as far back as the 1870's when the fledgling electricity companies used rugby matches to try to gain publicity for their new product. For example in 1878 Oldham took part in an exhibition 'floodlit' match played at Walton, Liverpool.

It progresses through to 1955 to when Oldham took part in an eight team competition held under lights and played for in London. As well as the Watersheddings side Wigan, Huddersfield, Leigh, Featherstone, Warrington, Wakefield and today's visitors Hunslet played for the Rugby League Television Trophy awarded by Associated Television.

Many of us will recall the BBC2 Floodlit Trophy which ran for 15 years from 1965 through to 1980. In 1965 the RFL Council considered applications for loans to enable clubs to install floodlights. Oldham duly did and joined in the televised competition



SNUFF OUT THE MOON CONT...

when in its second season. Remember that length of the field Martin Murphy try that vied for the score of the series?

The book culminates with the impact of SKY and the televised floodlit matches that currently hit our screens week in and week out.

THE STORY OF THE 1958 BRITISH LIONS TOUR

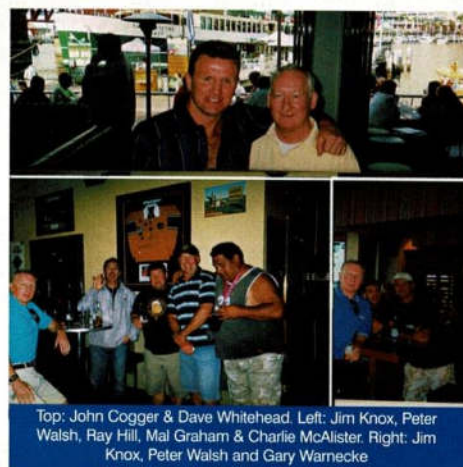
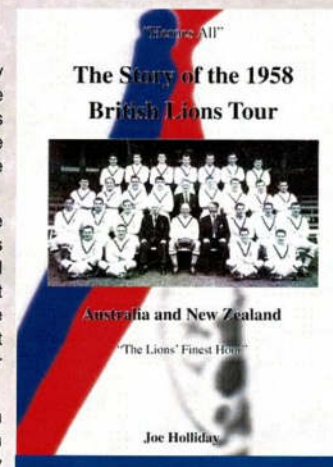
This is a self-published book from Cumbrian rugby league historian Joe Holliday which covers a national sporting triumph. Arguably the greatest rugby league tour to Australia and New Zealand of all time the 1958 Lions regained the Ashes by performing heroic deeds. Having lost the first test they defeated the Kangaroos against all the odds in what become known as The Battle of Brisbane going on to take the third and final test played on Sydney Cricket Ground.

Whilst the tour was both a sporting and financial success, there were management problems within the British camp which are revealed within this excellent read. Whilst coach Jim Brough and joint tour manager Tom Mitchell both represented the Workington club they were never friends and had distinct differences in respect of selection and motivation which split the camp and made newspaper headlines out in Australia and back home. It is alleged that whilst living in the same town for the rest of their lives, they never spoke to each other again.

Throw into the equation the responsibilities of business manager Barney Manson who had his own ideas of what-should-be-what it forced the RFL to conduct an enquiry. The book includes those RFL interviews with all three plus the enquiry report.

Oldham had three players on this tour – three-quarter Alan Davies, scrum-half Frank Pitchford and prop-forward Ken Jackson. It was also the tour that launched the career of mercurial half-back Alex Murphy and included Cumbrian wingman Ike Southward who, shortly after his return, would sign for Oldham for a world record transfer fee.

300 pages. Send a cheque made payable to Joe Holliday to 12, Northumberland St, Workington CA14 3HA (tel: 01900 66319) for £18 (postage free) or purchase via Ebay.



Top: John Cogger & Dave Whitehead. Left: Jim Knox, Peter Walsh, Ray Hill, Mal Graham & Charlie McAlister. Right: Jim Knox, Peter Walsh and Gary Warnecke

***** Those wonderful sporting clips from between 1901 and 1903 (there are 33 in total) seen during the recent Mitchell & Kenyon TV series are due to be released on a DVD this week. This amazing insight into Edwardian sporting activity concentrates on rugby and soccer but also includes cricket, athletics and cycling. The turn-of-the-century try, one of the first recorded on film, from the 1901 Oldham vs. Swinton game at Watersheddings, is in there too. See the next matchday programme for all the details.

After a "reunion" with former club officials Jim Knox, Ray Hill and Dave Whitehead held just a short while ago at Sydney's magnificent Darling Harbour Oldham's former overseas men Mal Graham, Gary Warnecke, Peter Tunks, Charlie McAlister, Peter Walsh and John Cogger send their greetings to all Oldham supporters and wish the club every success. (Joe Collins will be sending out Players Association forms I'm sure!)

BRIAN WALKER

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COMMUNITY CHALLENGE



Sean Mellor, our Community Development Manager, keeps you up to date

COMMUNITY DRIVE.

Following the undoubted success of the Sedgely Park Curtain-Raisers, it is great to announce that, for selected games and subject to favourable weather conditions, these popular ingredients of Rugby League Matchdays will now be appearing at Boundary Park. The motivational impact on young, potential "stars of the future" of performing in a "proper stadium" should not be underestimated.

As well as encouraging players to work even harder at their sport, these games can also help generate interest in the game. A relatively-new local Junior Club, Fitton Hill and Hathershaw Bulldogs have reported an increase in their player numbers and several further enquiries since their recent impressive appearance at Sedgely Park. It would be tremendous if every local Junior player had the opportunity to perform on the actual playing surface of the local professional club. What a wonderful way of

encouraging young players, who are, irrespective of their playing ability, potential "supporters for life"!

The Oldham Service Area Squads recently received a rousing reception when they were introduced to the Matchday crowd. As a result of their fine performances in the recent Representative Season, a number of individuals have gained selection for the Regional Camps which form the next stage of the Player Performance Pathway, which can ultimately lead to Regional and National Honours.

The following players should be congratulated on their selection for Regional Camp.

U13s: Ryan Bradbury, Nathan Hughes, Kyle Mayall, Josh Ogden, Ewan Reddyoff, Josh Ward, Danny Yates.

U14s: Kristian Bell, Daniel Bridge, George Ford, Grant Hudson, Louis Jackson, Ryan Murgatroyd, Ben Pye.

U15s: Andy Fitzpatrick, Danny Moran, Gareth Owen.



Kids on the pitch -- what a great way to motivate them!

Thanks to everyone who came to see us yesterday in Spindles. I can't comment on how it went because of print deadlines, but I was pretty confident it would be a success and nothing changed my optimism as we built up towards the day. Thanks, too, to Spindles, to W H Smith and to Waterstones, who were also involved in the promotion, not forgetting Harry Potter and our club mascot, Red 'Ed the Roughyeds.

To those who received complimentary tickets as part of the promotion, I hope you enjoy your Boundary Park experience

today, and that you will come to see us again at one of our remaining home games in NL2 this season.

Finally, watch out soon for news of what will be happening in our Sportsmatch Community programme, which Roughyeds will run in conjunction with Capio Oaklands Hospital. More of that later, bye for now, SEAN.

FIVE ALIVERS GET THE BIRD!

Five Alive members got the bird --- literally --- at their latest quarterly luncheon in the Roughyeds social club.

They dined to a lovely lunch --- one of the many benefits enjoyed by subscribers to the scheme --- and were then treated to a display and presentation by the Lancashire Hawks and Owls sanctuary from Blackburn.

Various species of owls from around the world were on display, including a 9lb European Eagle Owl, named Jammu, with which members could be photographed. Several were, including Frank Elwood (see picture).

Other owls and hawks on display were species from many parts of the world, including South America, Mexico and Alaska, as well as the British Isles variety of barn and tawny owls.

Said the club's chief executive Chris Hamilton: "It was something different --- and judging by the volume of the applause at the end everyone seemed to enjoy it."

The Five Alive lunches are held four times a year and represent only one of many benefits enjoyed by Five Alive members, whose unofficial motto is given elsewhere in this match-day magazine: Keeping the dream alive... Five Alive!

Members can take guests to the four-times-a-year luncheons (start at noon, finish around 2.15pm) for just £15.



FANCY YOUR CHANCES AS A TIPSTER - PROVE IT

ROUGHYEDS are running a Prediction Competition with a difference. Entry fee is £20 but subject to how many people join the prize for the winner will be A SEASON-TICKET FOR 2008. For obvious reasons, however, a prize of this value will require a sizeable entry.

Fans are asked to predict:

- 1 - the final Super League table
- 2 - the two teams who will contest the SL Grand Final
- 3 - the winners of the SL Grand Final
- 4 - the final NL1 table
- 5 - the two teams to contest the NL1 Grand Final
- 6 - the winners of the NL1 Grand Final
- 7 - the final NL2 table
- 8 - the two teams to contest the NL2 Grand Final
- 9 - the winners of the NL2 Grand Final.

Entry fee is £20 (you can have as many entries as you wish but EACH is £20) and all entries must be received at the club by July 27. You can post in to Oldham RLFC, Lansdowne Rd, Chadderton, Oldham OL9 9EF or you can email your entry to: janetorlfc@btconnect.com

SCORING: you will get one point for each correct placing in the league tables. Two points for each finalist correctly predicted and three points for correctly predicting the Grand Final winners.

In the event of a tie the winner will be the one who scores the most points in the league table placings.

Mrs Eunice Bailey of Heron Street, Hollinwood was so thrilled to receive a £500 voucher for Mann's Furniture as a prize in the Roughyeds' Club Cash lottery that she immediately took out membership for two grandsons -- one of whom lives in St Anne's --- and a grand daughter.

"It was a lovely prize -- and a lovely surprise," said Mrs Bailey, who had her picture taken by the Chronicle in Mann's Yorkshire Street store with Roughyeds chief executive Chris Hamilton and the man from Mann's, manager Mr Steve Homa.

Added Mrs Bailey: "We've an idea what we want, but we are not rushing. We'll take our time. The voucher is valid until December 31 so we've plenty of time.

"Funnily enough, my daughter Janet won £1,000 on a

Roughyeds lottery back in the Watersheddings days --- must be 20 years ago --- so we seem to be keeping it in the family!"



with Ian Wilson

roughyeds'

roar!

To say the least, we are all undoubtedly extremely disappointed at what has happened to the club's results since that fateful day at Featherstone - only 5 weeks ago! To have lost four games out of five as we have, after having been defeated only once previously in eight games in National League Two, has been a major shock to the system. This is certainly the case amongst supporters - and I suspect that it has been just as much of a shock amongst officials and players.

Of course, we can all buy in to the "all is not lost" line. It really would be a major catastrophe, and a surprise of huge proportions, if we were to fail from here to qualify for the end-of-season play-offs; and from there anything is possible, at least theoretically. But the chances of eventual success - I think we all agree that is defined as a place in NL1 next season - surely depend first on a correct diagnosis of our present predicament.

I have never personally had a direct association with a professional sports team, but I have had quite a range of experience with amateur and youth teams, and I suspect that one thing at least is common to both categories. That is character. Some sides are genuinely winning teams, and others, who may on paper seem to be at least as, or maybe even more, talented, are not - and the difference always boils down to the character of the significant personalities who are the dominant ones in the side. The really quality teams always seem to win the tight games, sometimes against all odds.

I will quote just three examples from my personal experience. The first was a school 2nd XV rugby union team. They often received serious criticism when playing below their potential in games which were won reasonably comfortably - but they won

the two big games, each by one point, against sides who thought they would win easily. It was down to magnificent performances by three lads in their final year at school, who were otherwise quiet, unassuming workhorses, but who showed utter determination when their self-acclaimed aim to finish their 3-year 2nd XV careers with an unbeaten record was under real threat.

The second concerns two school cricket 1st XI seasons. Both were good sides - as it happened the current England cricket manager was a member of both! - but the one which was on paper the slightly less talented finished up with the better record. The reason? The character of the captain of the more successful side, who simply never recognised that defeat lay ahead, and invariably inspired his players to make sure that it rarely did.

My final case is current - and I hope I do not speak too soon! Macclesfield Titans are a side newly formed this season, and play in the Cheshire and North-West section of the RFL's regional Summer Conference. They are in position to qualify for the national knock-out stage of the competition with three games to go, which is a remarkable achievement in itself. But the point is that almost every match has been a nail-biter - and someone has regularly pulled something out of the bag in the last five minutes to ensure the win.

To return to Oldham, we are all aware of our second-half capitulations, actually going all the way back to the home game v Featherstone. Has someone now got the character to generate the whole-team effort and commitment to get us to start winning the tight games again?

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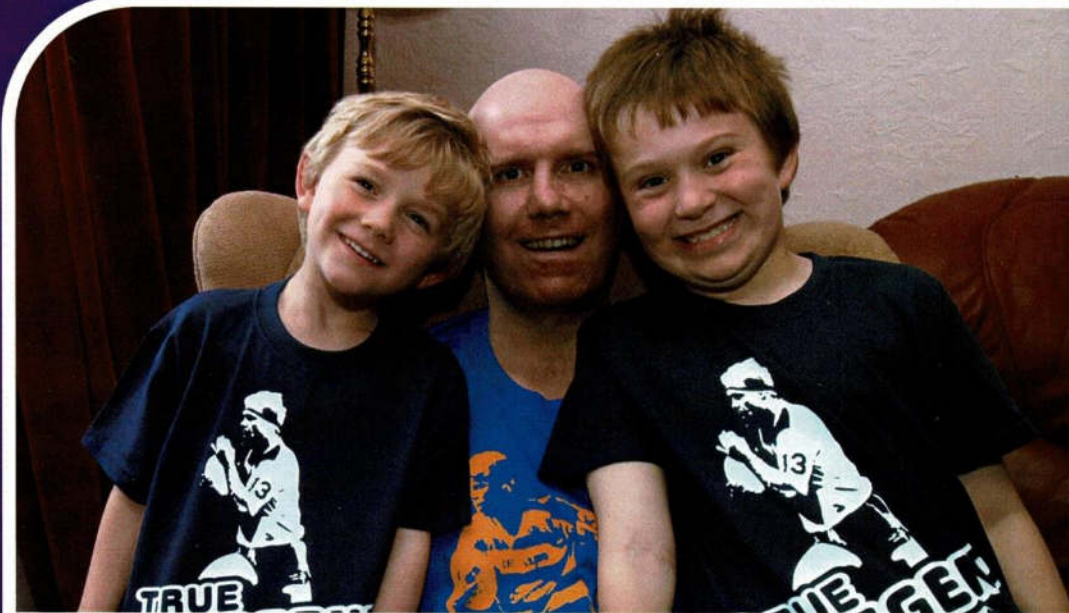
When Leeds Met launched the Carnegie Great Student Run 2007, leading the way was former Widnes, Wigan and GB star Joe Lydon. Joe declared his intention to run the 5km race to raise money for the Mike Gregory Trust Fund. Mike is one of rugby league's most popular, respected and courageous stars who captained Warrington and his country with such distinction.

The Mike Gregory Trust Fund was formed by friends and supporters from the rugby league community who knew

of Mike's battle against Motor Neurone Disease and felt compelled to do something to help.

It is Mike and his family's intention that the trust's funds will be used to cover his ongoing medical expenses and help raise awareness about the effects of Borreliosis/Lymes Disease.

Through the Carnegie Great Student Run and the Carnegie Challenge Cup, Leeds Met Carnegie provides a unique opportunity for the whole of the rugby league community to participate and support the Mike Gregory Trust Fund.



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BE PART OF IT - RUB SHOULDERS WITH CHAMPIONS - SUPPORT A GOOD CAUSE

RICKY 'HIT MAN' HATTON TO TOP THE BILL AT ROUGHYEDS' GALA DINNER

John Willie Lees back club's tenth-anniversary celebrations in £5,000 deal

BY ROGER HALSTEAD

ROUGHYEDS are delighted to announce a new £5,000 sponsorship deal with local brewers John Willie Lees who are backing the club's tenth-anniversary celebrations.

Highlight of numerous initiatives and events, including the launch of a new Players' Association at the Oldham v Hunslet game at Boundary Park today, will be a gala dinner at the Queen Elizabeth Hall on Friday, September 28 at which the guest speaker will be Manchester's own world-class boxing hero Ricky 'Hit Man' Hatton MBE.

Ten thousand British fight fans were in Las Vegas last month when 29-year-old Ricky beat Jose Luis Castillo to retain his IBO light-welterweight title.

True to form, the 'Hit Man' delivered again. Undefeated with 43 wins, 31 by knock-out, Ricky will be star of the show on the night Roughyeds go to town to celebrate their first ten years since Oldham RLFC (1997) Ltd was launched.

His booking was unveiled on Tuesday at the Middleton Junction brewery of John Willie Lees when club and company, not for the first time in the past ten years, signed a deal which once again adds J W Lees to the club's ever-increasing sponsorship portfolio.

Chris Hamilton, the Roughyeds' chief executive, said: "The club has always had a good working relationship with J W Lees and this latest agreement is another that we are delighted to conclude.

"In the coming months club and brewery will have a number of opportunities to get together for mutual benefit and everyone at the Roughyeds is looking forward to once again working alongside the people from J W Lees.

"They are sponsoring our tenth-anniversary celebrations, and the deal will enable us to deliver a series of initiatives that are being lined up for the next few months, some of them linked with the anniversary, some of them not.

"They will culminate in our Grand Gala Dinner in the Queen Elizabeth Hall on Friday, September 28 and we are delighted to announce that Ricky Hatton will be guest speaker. Other details will be announced later.

"The brewery will also be involved in links with the newly-formed Players' Association, whose members will be guests of the club at the game against Hunslet at Boundary Park, and there will be several events and initiatives over the next 12 months in which Roughyeds fans will be able to participate in."

Mr William Lees Jones, speaking for the company at the launch of the new sponsorship deal on Tuesday, said he had great admiration for what Chris Hamilton and Sean Whitehead had done for the club. He had not yet met the club's new chairman, Bill Quinn, but he was looking forward to that and to seeing the club make progress in the future.

He went on: "As far as the brewery is concerned, Oldham has always been a rugby league town — you've only to look at the great players who come from Oldham to see that.

"Some of them support the club, and what it is trying to achieve, from the background and, as a company, we can do our bit to help — and also hope that it might encourage other companies and businesses to also become associated with the club.

"In things like this it is easy for people to hide behind whatever they want to hide behind, but we thought that by giving support to the club's tenth-anniversary celebrations it was a great way of renewing our association with the club.

"We are delighted to do what we can for the club — we have always done that."

News of other events and initiatives to form part of the club's tenth birthday bash will be announced later. Watch the local press, this match-day magazine and our official website at www.roughyeds.co.uk to see what's in store — and don't miss out.



The real deal — William Lees Jones of J W Lees (left) and Roughyeds chief executive Chris Hamilton are all smiles shortly after the agreement was sealed. Picture by OLDHAM EVENING CHRONICLE.

YOU'RE IN THE ARMY NOW!

THE Army and the Roughyeds will join forces on Thursday (July 26) to give Roughyeds fans a treat — and a rare insight into what life in the Army is all about. Weather permitting, the 2nd battalion Duke of Lancaster Regiment will work out with the Oldham players on Noddy's Field between 7pm and 8.15pm, performing a skills session and a modified games session.

The soldiers of this regiment have recently returned from operations in Iraq and, once they have finished at Noddy's Field, they will head for the Roughyeds social club in Alfred Street, Werneth where they will show a powerpoint presentation of their duties overseas. Club and regiment are extending an open invitation to fans to watch the activities at Noddy's Field and then to go back to the social club to watch what the Army has to offer to potential recruits.

HAWKS SET TO SWOOP AS TEAMS MEET FOR FIRST TIME THIS YEAR

by NIGEL MARLAND

We welcome Hunslet Hawks today for the first meeting between these sides this season, as, like ourselves, they had to cancel games at the start of the season to allow for ground maintenance.

Coach Mike Cass who came to Hunslet mid-way through last season as Head Coach needs little introduction to National League fans who will remember him from his days at Batley.

Until a fortnight ago we would have been looking forward to the return to Boundary Park of one of the Roughyeds fans favourite players in recent years, David Gibbons, who came with his twin brother Anthony from Bramley with Mike Ford when he took over as Coach of the Roughyeds. There were no two more honest players than the Gibbons twins and it was with great sadness that I read only a fortnight ago that David had been forced to give up his post as assistant player coach after surgery had failed to enable him to carry on. I am certain he will be sadly missed at Hunslet and I am certain all Oldham fans will wish him well in the future.

Another ex Oldham player is Darren Robinson who turned pro in 1997 for the Oldham Bears just before they folded and has since played for Rochdale, Dewsbury and Batley. A goal kicking hooker who, at over 6 feet tall, must be one of the tallest hookers in the game but I suppose nowadays it is irrelevant as the one thing hookers are not called on to do is hook.

Mike Cass has kept most of his last season's squad but has strengthened in key areas bringing in both experience and youth. Probably the most experienced is Steve Morton who claims to be thirty something and has an ambition to play until he is 40. Club captain is smallest player Mark Moxon who is just 5' 6". An ex Halifax player Mark has established himself well and is also captain on the field. He links up with Matty Firth, a classy out half, and the pair of them have proved a dangerous partnership.

In the forwards the three not to meet in an alley on a dark night are Danny Ekis, Danny Mugatroyd and Gareth Greenwood. Danny Ekis claims to be the best mate of Stuart Fielding and hits just as hard. It is claimed he never stops smiling during a match, whereas the other Danny, built like the proverbial brick built privy does is not noted for his smile. They are both ex Cougars and work well together whereas Gareth is an ex Ram and says Danny Ekis is the hardest player he has met, though it would appear Gareth himself is no soft touch.

Although there is no obvious connection between the clubs at first sight, a delve into the record books shows the third Challenge Cup Final ever in 1899 was between the two clubs. Played at Fallowfield in Manchester, Oldham were victorious 19-9, with a crowd of 15,762 and receipts of £946 16 1. Oldham played in the first 5 Northern Rugby League Championships between 1907 and 1911 and the second one in 1908 was against Hunslet who were victorious in a replay at Wakefield by 12 points to two after a 7-7 draw at Salford. Coincidentally in the first Lancashire and Yorkshire Championships in the 1907/8 season, Hunslet were the Yorkshire Champions and Oldham the Lancashire Champions. Let's hope this is a sign of things to come from these two great clubs.



David Gibbons
--- flashback to his Roughyeds days



Darren Robinson
--- Roughyeds old boy

Oldham RLFC Appearances and Scorers, 2007

players statistics

[up to and including July 19]

NAME	PLAYED	TRIES	GOALS	POINTS
P Ashton	11	3	27	66
C Baines	17	2		8
J Boults	19			
M Brooks	4			
G Costin	15	4		16
J Coyle	2			
A Crabtree	20	1		4
A Gorey	8	1		4
I Hodson	12	4		16
J Hough	2			
D Houston	19	2		8
S Hoyle	18	1		4
A Hughes	8	9		36
G Langley	21	9	18	72
C Littler	18	4		16
R Mervill	18	1		4
P O'Connor	14	4		16
M Ogden	5	1	10	24
S Oldham	1			
L Onyango	12	9		36
A Robinson	9	3		12
N Roden	21	9	2dg	38
W Rogers	10			
L Sanderson	8	1	20	44
I Sinfield	17	1		4
K Smith	10	5		20
M Stout	4	1		4
S Tamghart	18	2		8
T Tonks	10	2		8
A Wilkinson	19	12		48
L Wingfield	4	1		4

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NATIONAL LEAGUE TALK

with GARETH WALKER of RUGBY LEAGUER & LEAGUE EXPRESS



Widening the gap further?

NEWS that there are plans for Super League clubs to enter the Carnegie Challenge Cup for the last 16 only will set alarm bells ringing around the National Leagues.

There are several people involved in the game outside the top flight that feel the gap between themselves and Super League is widening - and we're not talking about on the pitch.

Surely this measure will simply add to their discomfort.

The reasoning behind the proposals are clear - apparently people don't want to see one-sided games being played out in front of crowds much lower than league games.

Which is understandable for Super League clubs - but what about those outside the elite?

Even though attendances have undoubtedly been down in the Challenge Cup in recent years, a tie with one of the big guns can still set a small club up for the season.

And it's not as if the low attendances in the competition have been restricted to games including NL clubs - for example when Wakefield hosted Bradford in the Cup this year the crowd was just 3,568. In the league the same fixture attracted an attendance of 9,106.

It's a pattern repeated in other all-Super League ties.

That suggests that the Challenge Cup's lower crowd problem extends far beyond the involvement of National League clubs - so why cut them off?

There is talk of compensation for NL sides, with a figure of £20,000 being reported in 'Rugby Leaguer & League Express' at weekend.

But until we know specific details of that (would it be every year, paid in one lump, the same to NL1 and NL2 clubs?) it's difficult to see how it could replace the potential of a money spinning tie with a Super League heavyweight.

And if the reasoning behind the switch is to do away with one-sided scorelines watched by lower attendances, should we scrap the round where every National League club plays an amateur side?

No way - because people connected with the sport in NL1 and NL2 can see the benefits that the Round Three can have for the amateurs. It is their cup final, a day out for their supporters, and can boost their coffers.

It's the same for National League clubs hoping to land a big fish from the top flight. Under the proposed new system, only four will have that privilege.

If the Challenge Cup and franchise proposals both came in, some clubs might never get the chance to play the likes of Leeds, St Helens or Wigan again.

The franchise system is something else that causes unease.

I had a long discussion with one leading National League coach, who wished to remain unnamed.

He made the point that although the franchise system has many benefits for those chosen few currently in Super League, he couldn't think of one single advantage for clubs in NL1.

Whatever anyone in Super League will have you believe, there are a significant number of people in the National Leagues that feel they are being cast adrift from the top tier of the sport.

That should set alarm bells ringing with anyone.

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Mark Antony Kitchens (Mark Harrington)
Martin Hunter
David Macauley (Chartered Surveyors)
David Foden
Matthew Chambers
Oldham Advertiser
Paul Robinson
Mick Kilgannon
Ray Broadbent
Iain Taylor
Joseph Lawrence Perrins
Costin Electrical Services Ltd (Phil Costin)
Hans Bateson
John Kettleton
Keith Egerton
Karen Marrie

Hot on the heels of new Five Alive member Keith Egerton from Welwyn Garden City comes well-known local fan Karen Marrie, who helps out in the club's hospitality suite on match days, rarely misses a match and is a frequent visitor to the Support Group's quiz nights.

Unlike Keith, from sunny Hertfordshire, Karen lives on the Roughyeds' doorstep . . . but what led a fan like Keith from nearly 200 miles away to support the club in this way?

His soft spot for Oldham Rugby spans more than 50 years, but his lasting support is remarkable given that he was only 13 when his family moved out of this area, never to return.

"My dad started taking me to Watersheddings around 1955 when I was aged seven," Keith explained. "We lived in Chadderton at the time and we went to nearly all the home games in the 1956-7 season.

"The highlight of that period, for me anyway, was the thrashing of St Helens, 40-8, in the previous year. I didn't go to many away games, but I do remember the Challenge Cup defeat at Leigh in early '57 when we were expected to win but were disappointingly beaten. Another highlight was seeing the Kiwi touring team at Watersheddings in 1955.

"I started going to games on my own from about ten, but then my family moved up to Lancaster in 1961 and I haven't lived in Oldham since."

Keith manages to watch about two or three Oldham games

a year -- he was at London Skolars when we were down there in May -- and he keeps in touch via the club's official website at www.roughyeds.co.uk

He added: "It was on the website that I read about Five Alive and I recognised that, even from afar, it was one way in which I could offer hands-on support to the club I have followed all my life, admittedly from a distance.

"There must be Oldham diehards scattered all over the country who might consider doing the same. I hope so because the more people who get behind the club, in whatever way they can, the better chance the club will have of making progress."

Incidentally, the latest winner of the monthly Five Alive first prize of £500, Dorothy Johnstone, is another lifelong fan, whose interest -- like Keith's -- goes back to the early 50s. "I would be about eight or nine when my father took me for the first time in 1954," she recalled. "I've been a supporter ever since."

The similarity with Keith's story continues. "My family moved away to Bury," said Dorothy, "and in those days that seemed a long way off. I lapsed a little bit but even then the club meant a lot to me. In more recent years, and certainly since 1997, my interest has been very strong again. The 2001 grand final season was fantastic and judging by the way the team is playing I'm hoping there will be a lot more good times ahead."

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journalistic license

by Matthew Chambers

LAST week's defeat at Barrow will have been heartbreaking for all those decked out in red-and-white who made the journey.

Having comprehensively outplayed the opposition in the opening 40 minutes only to then be on the end of the best half of rugby encountered in Co-operative National League Two this year, Oldham's players and fans left Cumbria feeling very deflated.

There was little the team could do to halt the Raiders' belligerent charge — sparked, interestingly enough, by a dose of poetry read out to his players by coach Paul Creary at half-time.

'The Indispensable Man', written back in the 1950s, can be summarised thus: pull your socks up son, there's no room for prima donnas here. Barrow certainly followed that message to the letter, none more so than highly-paid, man-mountain forward Michael Smith.

But despite Barrow's high-quality rugby, Steve Deakin's men still came close to holding on for the three points. This alone should give hope that, should a favourable slot in the play-offs be secured at the end of the season, there is a decent chance of Oldham getting somewhere.

Especially so if Boundary Park can become (to chuck in a couple of clichés) a cauldron of noise within a fortress. With six home matches left out of nine, there are plenty of points still to be played for and lots of opportunities for the current top four to slip up remain.

But whichever way you look at it, a win today is vital. Some were getting swept away with thoughts of huge margins of victory when the

Roughyeds were on their recent winning streak; right now, any sort of win will do.

Especially against opposition as clearly capable as Hunslet.

* ON first inspection Super League's salary cap system is based on falsehood. It penalises the clubs who can, thanks to their income streams, afford to go out and throw bundles of notes at the feet of the game's superstars (not to mention the players who aren't particularly gifted at all) by not allowing them to do so, while also patronising those with smaller incomes by claiming they can't be trusted not to splash out cash they can't afford — in the opinion of their masters — to be spending.

On the other hand, this system ensures that most games, even top-versus-bottom match-ups, are interesting and unpredictable. And I'd guess, the majority of supporters wouldn't like to see an unregulated competition take its place.

But, and apologies if this sounds as obvious as a frying pan in the face, a docked point or two isn't adequate punishment for mocking the very foundations of a season-long competition.

Hopefully the RFL's new "live" system will see a reasonable level of justice served on perpetrators in the future. But after the events of the past three weeks, very few people in and around rugby league will be holding their breath.

Matthew

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players association up and running

BY ROGER HALSTEAD

AT the grand old age of 82 Frank Stirrup will take centre stage on the Boundary Park pitch today when members of the newly-formed Oldham RLFC Players' Association are introduced individually to the crowd at half-time.

Older fans will remember half-back Frank as the midfield magician of the great Oldham side of the 1950s. He was a few years before I started covering Watersheddings affairs for the Oldham Evening Chronicle, but fans from that golden era still purr with delight when they recall what Frank could do with a rugby ball in his hands.

Despite his age, he is coming from his home in Leigh today with a celebrated Leigh-based contingent of Terry Gorman, Jimmy Reynolds, Bob Pugsley and Vinnie Nestor — not to mention another Leigh lad who settled in Oldham and made his life-after-rugby here, the celebrated Martin Murphy.

These notes were written early in the week, but at that stage the players who had said they would be in attendance today were Martin Murphy, Adrian Alexander, John Blair, Lyn Morgan, Geoff Munro, Terry Gorman, Jimmy Reynolds, Lou Laverty, Bob Pugsley, Johnnie Paterson, Des McKeown, Dave Walker, Trevor Simms, John O'Brien, John Donovan, Kevin Flanagan, Tommy Leyland, Mick Taylor, Colin Hawkyard, Frank Stirrup, Vinnie Nestor, Bernard Walker, Ken Payne, Jack Doughty, Brian Lord.

There may be others, of course, and they were all to meet up in the Roughyeds social club from 1pm this afternoon before coming down to Boundary Park where they were to share a yarn or two in the vice-presidents' lounge under the main stand before taking their seats.

They will be presented to the crowd at half time and they will return to the social club after the game where they will have a buffet before going into the concert room to mix and mingle with supporters.

Supporters who want to meet up again with their heroes of yesteryear and talk over old times can do that in the concert room once the players have had their post-game refreshments.

John Willie Lees are to get involved with the Players' Association and various events may be announced soon in John Willie hostels with members of the association in attendance.

Meantime, the association is anxious to build up its data base, which now stands at nearly 60, and is also keen for more members and potential members to attend its next meeting, which will be in the Roughyeds social club on Tuesday, August 7 at 7pm.

Among the long-distance ex-players who have been in touch are Bob Mordell from London, Brett Clark from Australia, Frank Foster from Barrow, Joe Warham from Leeds, Dave Parker from the Midlands, Chris Joynt from Wigan, Mike Ford from London and John Fairbank, Terry Ramshaw and Billy Harris from Yorkshire.

For those nearer home you can enlist on the form here, get in touch with Joe Collins at the address on the form or, more importantly, attend the meeting on Tuesday, August 7.

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ROUGHYEDS' RAID LANDS COYLE

OLDHAM have beaten off competition from several clubs to sign Wigan's talented young half-back James Coyle.

He has signed a deal to November 30, but with an option to extend it to next season before his initial agreement expires.

"We are delighted to land James — absolutely delighted," said Roughyeds' chief executive Chris Hamilton, when the signing was announced a couple of days before the recent Swinton game at Sedgley Park.

Roughyeds say NL1 clubs Whitehaven, Leigh and Batley, plus NL2 rivals Swinton, were also in the hunt for Coyle, who spent the whole of last season out on loan at Widnes and played in every game except the Grand Final.

Coyle was on the North-West Counties under-16s tour of Fiji, New Zealand and Australia in 2001 alongside several who have gone on to higher things such as James Roby, Ian Hardman and Harrison Hansen, to name but three. He has won honours at every level of the sport in his development so far and he was generally regarded as one of the best young half-backs in the country at Academy level.

He rejected a full-time contract at Widnes at the end of last season and returned to Wigan, his home-town club, but he is now looking for part-time rugby after landing a job at BNFL at Warrington, which will also involve taking a degree course.

He starts his job and his studies in September — and Roughyeds moved in swiftly when they got the nod that he might be available to play rugby on a part-time basis. He is currently full time at Wigan, as is his younger brother Thomas. Their father, Bernard, and their grandfather played for Wigan so young James was a third-generation Coyle to wear the famous cherry and white when he made his Wigan debut a couple of years ago.

2007 fixtures

DATE	OPPONENTS	CUP	VENUE	K. O.	RESULT	W/L	ATT
31/01/07	Warrington Wolves	Friendly	Home	7.45pm	42-6	W	789
11/02/07	Rochdale Hornets	NRC	Home	3.00pm	8-24	L	1,145
18/02/07	Swinton Lions	NRC	Home	3.00pm	18-28	L	1,017
25/02/07	Dewsbury Rams	NRC	Away	3.00pm	22-32	L	819
04/03/07	Rochdale Hornets	NRC	Away	3.00pm	6-16	L	816
10/03/07	East Hull	CCC 3	Away	2.00pm	26-10	W	214
18/03/07	Dewsbury Rams	NRC	Home	3.00pm	8-32	L	622
25/03/07	Swinton Lions	NRC	Away	3.00pm	42-18	W	555
01/04/07	Keighley Cougars	CCC4	Away	3.00pm	26-16	W	1039
04/04/07	Featherstone Rovers	NL2	Home	7.45pm	12-23	L	1,162
09/04/07	Hunslet Hawks	NL2	Away	3.30pm	NEW DATE BELOW		
15/04/07	Blackpool Panthers	NL2	Away	3.00pm	40-20	W	501
29/04/07	Keighley Cougars	NL2	Home	3.00pm	32-20	W	847
04/05/07	Celtic Crusaders	NL2	Away	7.35pm	34-26	W	3441
13/05/07	Harlequins	CCC5	Home	12.30pm	6-66	L	559
20/05/07	Barrow Raiders	NL2	Home	3.00pm	50-18	W	848
26/05/07	London Skolars	NL2	Away	3.00pm	34-6	W	636
03/06/07	Workington Town	NL2	Away	3.00pm	27-18	W	1,231
10/06/07	York City Knights	NL2	Home	3.00pm	21-10	W	1,024
17/06/07	Featherstone Rovers	NL2	Away	3.00pm	18-24	L	1,587
24/06/07	Keighley Cougars	NL2	Away	3.00pm	18-26	L	969
01/07/07	Gateshead Thunder	NL2	Home	3.00pm	36-12	W	847
08/07/07	Swinton Lions	NL2	Away	3.00pm	10-17	L	956
15/07/07	Barrow Raiders	NL2	Away	3.00pm	34-26	L	1,348
22/07/07	Hunslet Hawks	NL2	Home	3.00pm			
29/07/07	York City Knights	NL2	Away	3.00pm			
05/08/07	Blackpool Panthers	NL2	Home	3.00pm			
12/08/07	Workington Town	NL2	Home	3.00pm			
19/08/07	Gateshead Thunder	NL2	Away	3.00pm			
22/08/07	Hunslet Hawks	NL2	Away	7.30pm			
02/09/07	Celtic Crusaders	NL2	Home	3.00pm			
09/09/07	London Skolars	NL2	Home	3.00pm			
TBA	Swinton Lions	NL2	Home	3.00pm	TO BE REARRANGED		

Play offs will take place on Sundays, September 16, 23 and 30 with the Grand Final on Sunday 7th October.
Home* venue to be arranged.

Key

NRC - Northern Rail Cup
NL2 - National League Division 2
CCC - Carnegie Challenge Cup

today's sponsors

Sponsorship packages available.
All sizes catered for, large or small, individuals or party groups.

Please contact the office on

0161 628 3677

for further information and pricing

PLAYERS AFTER MATCH REFRESHMENTS

TAYLOR'S FRUIT AND VEG (OLDHAM MARKET) AND ASHWORTH'S BUTCHERS (OLDHAM MARKET) EXPRESS DAIRIES

Oldham RLFC fully support the Let's tackle Racism in Rugby League campaign and welcomes all players and spectators irrespective of their ethnic or racial origins. Racism has no place in our game and racist chants are totally unacceptable.

Allow everyone to enjoy the game.

MERCHANDISE on offer



AWAY KIT



HOODY



ORANGE T-SHIRT



RED POLO



WHITE T-SHIRT



BASEBALL CAP



CUSHION



LADIES BAG

SHOP PRICES 2007

Sizes for tee shirts and polos are small to xxl; sizes for pink tees are small to xl

Hoodies	£22
Tracksuits	£35
Shirts	£43
Teddies	£7.99
T shirts (red/white, orange/black)	£12.99
Ties	£15

Gym Bag	£4.99
Caps	£8.99
Mugs	£5.99
Pennants	£5.99
Beanies	£8.99
Polos	£12.99

Red/White Striped Polos	£14.99
Pink Caps	£8.99
Pink Ts	£12.99
Pink Scarves	£8.99
Pink bags	£17.99
Cushions	£5.00