

ONE IN, ALL IN



ALL SPORT INSURANCE



Specialist Insurance For Sports Professionals



For excellent rates on your car
and home insurance...*call us today!*



"QUOTE RUGBY LEAGUE CARES"
+44 (0)1803 659121

@AllSportInsure
Visit: www.allsportinsurance.co.uk



elcome to this summer edition of *One in, All In*, our new-styled twice-yearly newsletter. The feedback we received on the new format was fantastic

and we hope you enjoy catching up on the work of Rugby League Cares and its supporters that is detailed in this magazine.

It continues to be an extremely busy time for the RL Cares team and since our last newsletter in January the charity has moved forward in a variety of ways.

In April, we launched our new men's mental health and wellbeing programme, Offload. The programme is funded by the Big Lottery and is a unique collaboration between Rugby League Cares, State of Mind and the Warrington Wolves, Widnes Vikings and Salford Red Devils club foundations.

We are delighted with the progress being made on the programme, which is being expertly managed by a new member of the RL Cares team, Emma Goldsmith. Emma's background is in public health and there are some very exciting plans being developed to extend and enhance our fan-focused health services.

Our player welfare programme has received a significant boost with former Leeds Rhinos and Great Britain international Keith Senior joining the team on a part-time basis.

Keith's role includes liaising with players to ensure that they are aware of our services and can benefit from our various programmes.

The RL Cares Business Club is a wonderful example of a programme we manage for the benefit of players and we are delighted to welcome a number of prestigious new members to this ever-growing club.

Stratstone BMW Harrogate, Barclays Premier Banking and Frank Exchange all joined the programme in the first part of 2017 and join our existing partners Purple Travel, All Sport Insurance and AFEX. Through their support, we are able to do so much more for the playing community.

Since we announced our ambitions for a National Rugby League Museum in late 2016 an enormous amount of work has taken place. This includes developing the



concepts and framework for what the new museum will ultimately deliver and provide for its visitors, the sport and the broader community, including schools, Rugby League clubs and their foundations.

Detailed work has taken place to develop a Stage One application to the Heritage Lottery Fund. Our bid will be submitted at the end of November and we will be informed of the outcome in early 2018.

Regardless of the result, the trustees and staff would like to congratulate the Heritage team, led by Brigid Power, for their outstanding efforts developing the bid. Brigid has worked closely with colleagues at Bradford Council to develop a project that will deliver a truly wonderful experience to visitors and enhance the wider sport.

One key benefit of the museum is that it will introduce Rugby League to many people who have little or no experience of the game. Our history is unique and something that we are all very proud of: it will be

amazing to be able to share this story with so many and we are all hopeful of a positive outcome in the New Year.

We cannot do any of this work without the amazing support we receive from fans, players and officials, who all do so much to help us.

You can read more about the various fundraising and support we receive in this edition of *One in, All In*. Everything from individual donations and a Legends game to fund-raising dinners and crazy challenges.

It is on the point of crazy challenges, that I will sign off this welcome. On 21st August, 15 riders, including myself, will take on a 320-mile cycle challenge from Leeds to Wembley stadium.

What makes this challenge a little bit different is it will all take place off-road, which I am reliably told will make it even harder. We've received a great head start, however, with huge support from a number of sponsors including UK Red Fire and Security, Yorkshire Boilers, NL Van, Truck and Car Hire, All Sport Insurance, Environmental Services Design, Infinity Works, the Club Doncaster Foundation and Halfords. If you would like to make a donation please go to www.justgiving.com/companyteams/L2W2017

If you would like to discuss becoming a business club partner or getting involved with Rugby League Cares in any way to help with our work, please contact me at chris.rostron@rlcares.org.uk or call 07917 282322.

In the meantime, as Captain Oates almost said, I'm just going for a bike ride, and may be some time...!

It continues to be an extremely busy time for the RL Cares team and since our last newsletter we have moved forward in a variety of ways...



About Rugby League Cares

Rugby League Cares is the sport's independent charity which works with stakeholders from across the game to provide current and former players with practical and financial assistance in areas such as education, training and welfare. Working with club foundations, the charity also provides targeted health and wellbeing support to the sport's community, protects and nurtures the game's rich heritage and, through the RFL Benevolent Fund, supports players who have experienced life-changing injuries. To help fulfil its role supporting the whole Rugby League family, RL Cares always welcomes donations no matter how big or small: to make a donation to RL Cares please visit our Just Giving page, www.justgiving.com/rugbyleaguecares

For all enquiries, please email: info@rlcares.org.uk

One In, All In is produced and edited by John Ledger on behalf of Rugby League Cares. We would like to thank all our contributors for their support, including SWPix, Matthew Merrick and Rugby League Journal for their photography.

Published by:



01347 821344

Printed by: S&G Print Group

One In, All In... Contents

- 05 Business Club**
Practical support for all Rugby League players
- 07 Coming up: Roses**
Legends get ready to go head-to-head
- 09 In the driving seat**
A big welcome to our new partner, Stratstone BMW
- 10 Get ready to Offload**
The men's health project that's making a real difference
- 15 A sackful of good news**
The partner that's put RL Cares in the van...
- 17 A roaring good time**
Pride and passion as the Lions reunite in numbers
- 18 John Burke**
How the RFL Benevolent Fund is helping an injured hero
- 20 Westminster blues**
The former MP who still has Rugby League at his heart
- 23 Memories are made of this**
The clubs that are transforming the lives of dementia sufferers
- 24 Question Time**
The law according to RL legend and RL Cares trustee, Jamie Peacock
- 28 Less dangerous than pony riding**
Why Rugby League isn't as dangerous as some people fear
- 30 Peaky blinder**
The funny side of life's ups and downs
- 32 Down the virtual lane**
Castleford Tigers go back to the future
- 34 The road less travelled**
The fundraisers getting to Wembley the hard way



RL CARES BUSINESS CLUB

The reality of life as a professional Rugby League player is a long way from the perception some people have of fat contracts, flash cars and all the trappings of fame.

Whilst players are well rewarded - at least compared to most young men of their age - their careers are short, filled with pressure and uncertainty, and often leave them disadvantaged.

The newly-formed Rugby League Cares Business Club has been set up to offset some of those disadvantages and involves the charity working in partnership with a number of service providers to enhance the lives of the game's most important stakeholders: its players.

From banking and holidays to education and training grants, players now have easy access to services that enable them to focus fully on their all-too-short careers.

Chris Rostron, the Head of Rugby League Cares, said: "We are all full of admiration for what the players do on the field but often the perception of what being a professional Rugby League player involves is at odds with the reality.

"The Business Club provides a wide range of services that help players, particularly in areas where the nature of their occupation can put them at a disadvantage."

One such area is car insurance: sportsmen and sportswomen are regarded as high-risk by many insurance companies and it can be difficult for Super League players to find affordable cover.

However, RL Cares has teamed up with one of the UK's leading brokers, All Sport Insurance who specialise in insuring players and athletes across a wide range of sports.

All Sport recognises the unique demands of professional sportsmen and offers a personal out-of-office hours' service so players can concentrate fully on their playing commitments.

Many Super League stars are already saving hundreds of pounds on their

insurance premiums and increased awareness of the first-class service All Sport Insurance provide is seeing more players get good deals.

Another aspect of their lives where players and their families are often at a disadvantage is holidays and travel, largely because of the demanding nature of a season which allows for a very small window of opportunity to get away.

Most players report for pre-season training in December and then train and play all the way through to the following October, when high street travel agents often have limited holiday options.

"One player told us that he'd gone away with his family at the end of the season hoping to escape Rugby League for two weeks, only to go down for breakfast on the first day of his holiday to discover eight other Super League players with their families in the dining room!" said Chris.

"That didn't go down too well with his wife, who was hoping she'd have him all to herself!"

RL Cares has agreed a partnership with Sunderland-based online travel specialists Purple Travel to ensure that players who have trained hard and worked hard all year don't have to try too hard to get the best deal for their holiday or mid-season break.

Purple Travel's specialist staff use their expertise to put together tailored packages at the best possible prices for Rugby League players, who also get free access to upgrades, where available from a wide range of operators.

"Purple Travel's expertise and best-price guarantee means that wherever in the world players want to spend their hard-earned rest and relaxation time, they can do so safe in the knowledge that they have access to the best holidays at the best possible prices," said Chris.

The latest additions to the RL Cares Business Club stable of partners are two of the world's best known and most trusted brands, BMW and Barclays.

Most professional sportsmen will earn significantly more than their non-playing friends and contemporaries, but the short and uncertain nature of rugby careers makes it essential that players manage their salaries wisely.

"We are delighted to have secured an agreement with Barclays to give players access to their world class Premier Banking service," said Chris. "Barclays Premier Banking will help players with their daily banking needs and provide access to a wide range of exclusive products and services."

RL Cares has also forged a partnership with Stratstone BMW that will give players full access to a prestigious range of vehicles from BMW and MINI.

As a member of the RL Cares Business Club, Stratstone will provide leasing, finance and purchase option at market-leading rates to Rugby League players and their families.



purpletravelTM
explore.dream.discover

ALL SPORT
INSURANCE



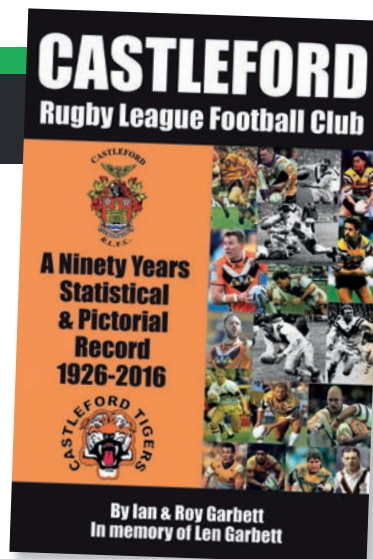
STRATSTONE HARROGATE
Stratstone.com

BARCLAYS

RUGBY LEAGUE CARES BULLETIN BOARD



Ellis Rugby MD Kevin Ellis (left) with Lions Association committee members John Ledger, Gary Hetherington and David Howe



Cas historical guide hits the shelves

Castleford Tigers have lit up Super League like never before in 2017, delighting fans old and new alike with their high-speed brand of entertaining Rugby League.

Their 91st season has undoubtedly been the club's most successful - Castleford have never finished on top of the league table before this year - but there have been plenty more highs over the last nine decades, as a new book details.

Thirty years after the last definitive statistical history of Castleford Tigers was published, the son and grandson of that book have produced an updated version telling the 90-year story of one of the game's proudest clubs.

'Castleford Rugby League Football Club, A 90 Years Statistical and Pictorial Record 1926-2016' by Ian and Roy Garbutt builds on the 60-year history produced by Len Garbutt in 1986.

That book sold out within a matter of months and the updated version deserves to enjoy similar success, packed as it is with information and images detailing the exploits of some of Rugby League's greatest heroes.

Published by Scratching Shed Publications, 'Castleford Rugby League Football Club, A 90 Years Statistical and Pictorial Record 1926-2016' costs £17.95 and is available from all good bookshops.

RL Lions to launch heritage range

The Rugby League Lions Association has teamed up with Ellis Rugby to produce a licensed heritage collection of leisurewear inspired by some of the game's greatest players.

The first range, in what is hoped to be a full catalogue of Great Britain collections, will be launched in mid-October and is based around the jersey worn in the late-1980s and early-1990s.

In this period, coach Malcolm Reilly led a stirring revival of Great Britain following heavy Test series defeats by Australia in the early-80s to restore pride in the national jersey. With legends of the game such as Ellery Hanley, Martin Offiah, Shaun Edwards, Andy Gregory, Kevin Ward and Garry Schofield at the peak of their powers, Great Britain became a force to be reckoned with.

This launch of the first collection will coincide with the 2017 Rugby League World Cup being staged in Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea. The agreement will see profits from every sale donated to the Rugby League Lions

Association, which works closely with Rugby League Cares on its reunions and welfare programmes.

Kevin Ellis, the MD of Ellis Rugby and a former professional player with Keighley, said: "We are absolutely delighted to be commissioned to design and manufacture the range - the 1980s was a golden era for international Rugby League and I'm sure the garments will offer a nostalgic appeal."

John Ledger, the Secretary of the Rugby League Lions Association, said: "We are really excited by this partnership with Ellis Rugby which allows us to celebrate the glorious history of the Lions and Great Britain.

"The Lions Association is very grateful for the support of the RFL and its Chief Executive Nigel Wood, who recognises the important role the Lions continue to play in the story of international Rugby League."

The Rugby League Lions heritage collection will be retailed through rugby specialists, general sports shops online at www.ellisrugby.com and through the Rugby League club shops from October.



RL CARES CONGRATULATES TERRY FLANAGAN MBE

Rugby League Cares's outstanding work within the sport was recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours List when our former chairman, Terry Flanagan, was awarded an MBE for services to Rugby League.

Terry did some outstanding work as our founding chairman and continues to be a massive supporter of the charity.

The sport still plays a huge part in the life of the former Oldham and Great Britain player, who is president of Saddleworth Rangers and father of Salford Red Devils player, Mark Flanagan.

"I am very proud and honoured to receive the MBE, and I firmly believe this is a team award for all the amazing things I have been involved in over the years," said Terry.

Chris Rostron, the Head of RL Cares, said: "We would like to congratulate Terry on his MBE, which is richly deserved.

"Terry's impact on the sport has been immense: his vision and hard work with RL Cares continues to make a positive difference to the lives of many people in the sport."



Eight members of the first-ever Student RL team reunited in Leeds 50 years on

INAUGURAL STUDENT RUGBY LEAGUE TEAM CELEBRATES HALF-CENTURY

A weekend of celebrations to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the first-ever student Rugby League team raised over £1,500 for Rugby League Cares.

The donation was the proceeds from a formal dinner and other events at Leeds University in March, when students past and present came together to celebrate one of the sport's great success stories.

Leeds University was the inspiration behind the rapid growth of Rugby League in colleges and universities after the newly-formed team played its first match in March 1967.

And, 50 years to the day since that momentous game against the General Accident insurance company in Leeds, eight of the original squad met up with other former and current players on the

same pitch at the Soldier's Field, Roundhay. That get-together followed a hugely successful sequence of events the day before, including the traditional Old Boys v Current Students game and a formal dinner attended by nearly 200 people at Headingley Stadium.

The university also unveiled a blue plaque outside the Students' Union 'Old Bar' to mark the occasion where the Union General Athletics Committee took the momentous decision to approve the formation of the first university Rugby League team.

The Head of RL Cares, Chris Rostron, said: "We would like to congratulate everyone involved with the Leeds University Rugby League team on reaching this momentous milestone and thank them for their generous donation to the charity."



Bradford City Hall to open its doors

The location of the new National Rugby League Museum, Bradford City Hall, will throw open its doors in September as part of the National Heritage Open Days campaign.

As well as tours of the historic Grade 1-listed building, Rugby League Cares volunteers will be on site delivering a wide range of Rugby League-related activities for all the family.

The National RL Museum is scheduled to open in 2020 and RL Cares is currently submitting applications for grant funding to deliver a world class facility that the sport has always lacked.

Visitors to City Hall will be able to see some fascinating Rugby League memorabilia and watch rare vintage film of old matches from the sport's archives, as well as build their own Rugby League stadium out of Lego. Fans can also try their hand at stop-go animation and bring their own Rugby League hero to life with state-of-the-art Stop Animation using their own mobile phones or tablets.

Admission is free, with activities taking place between 10am and 4pm on Saturday 9th September.

WAR OF ROSES ORIGIN IS BACK

Some of the sport's greatest players will turn back the clock on Wednesday 30th August when a much-missed feature of the Rugby League calendar makes a welcome return.

It has been 14 years since professional players went head to head with county pride at stake, but the War of the Roses Origin is back on at Headingley Stadium in Leeds.

And though some of the participants will be wearing boots slowed by a thick covering of dust, a fiery and intense contest is guaranteed given the high calibre of the players involved.

Yorkshire's ranks include Jamie Peacock MBE, Keith Senior, Lee Radford, Mark Calderwood, Robbie Hunter-Paul, James Lowes and Lee Gilmour, while the Red Rose ranks features a wealth of talent led by Sean Long, Barrie McDermott, Martin Gleeson, Gary Connolly, Paul Wellens, Denis Betts and Jon Clarke.

Lancashire will be coached by Sam Tomkins and captained by Adrian Morley, with Yorkshire coached by Ryan Hall and led on the field by Jamie Peacock.

The Yorkshire v Lancashire Legends match is being staged on behalf of Rugby League Cares, and the testimonials of Ryan Hall and Martin Gleeson.

Tickets costs just £10 for adults, £5 for concessions (over-60s, students and under-21s) and £3 for juniors (under-16s) and are available from the Leeds Rugby Store at Headingley Carnegie Stadium, online at www.therhinos.co.uk or by calling 0371 423 1315.



They were brothers in arms for Great Britain but Jamie Peacock and Adrian Morley will be sworn enemies when Yorkshire Legends take on Lancashire Legends in the War of the Roses Origin game



The Ultimate
Driving Machine



THE NEW BMW 5 SERIES.

THE SPORTY WAY TO TRAVEL BUSINESS CLASS.

THE BMW 520d M SPORT SALOON.
MONTHLY RENTALS FROM £359

(Plus initial rental)

To book a test drive and to find out more,
visit Stratstone Harrogate or Stratstone.com

STRATSTONE

Princess Royal Way, Pannal, Harrogate, HG3 1LG
01423 855500



Official fuel economy figures for the new BMW 5 Series Saloon: Urban 29.7-64.2mpg (9.7-4.4l/100km). Extra Urban 47.8-78.4mpg (5.9-3.6l/100km). Combined 39.2-141.2mpg (7.2-2 l/100km) incl PHEV. CO₂ emissions: 164-46g/km incl PHEV.

Figures are obtained in a standardised test cycle. They are intended for comparisons between vehicles and may not be representative of what a user achieves under usual driving condition.

Alloy Racing Equipment Limited is a credit broker/intermediary that can introduce you to a limited number of lenders to provide funding for your vehicle. They may incentivise us for introducing you to them. Cars must be hired through BMW Contract Hire, subject to availability. Not available in conjunction with any other offer. Retail customers only. At the end of your agreement you must return the vehicle. Hiring examples based on a 48 month BMW Contract Hire agreement for the models shown, all with initial payments followed by 47 monthly rentals commencing in month 2 and a contract mileage of 32,000 miles. Excess mileage charges and vehicle condition charges may be payable. Terms and conditions apply. All finance is subject to status and available to over 18s in the UK only (excluding the Channel Islands). Guarantees and indemnities may be required. We can arrange finance and hiring facilities for you. Prices, offers and finance are correct at time of printing and are subject to change without notice. Vehicles must be ordered and registered by 30 April 2017. Test drive subject to applicant status and availability. Images shown for illustration purposes only. Advertised finance is provided by BMW Financial Services (BMW FS), RG27 9UF Whilst we have close links with BMW FS and commonly introduce customers to BMW FS, we do not work exclusively with BMW FS. Alloy Racing Equipment Limited, Loxley House, 2 Oakwood Court, Little Oak Drive, Annesley, Nottingham, NG15 0DR.



NEW PARTNERSHIP GUARANTEES SHEER DRIVING PLEASURE

Rugby League Cares has partnered with Stratstone BMW to give the sport's most important stakeholders, its players, full access to some of the world's most desirable cars at market-leading prices.

Founded in 1921, Stratstone are the UK's leading automotive retailer of prestige and premium cars and offer an unrivalled, personalised service to customers.

This exciting new partnership with RL Cares will give players access to vehicles from the full BMW and MINI range supplied by Stratstone Harrogate; players will also receive special rates on finance options and servicing.

Chris Rostron, the Head of Rugby League Cares, said: "We are delighted to welcome Stratstone BMW Harrogate as the latest members of the Rugby League Cares Business Club. We know that BMW is a hugely popular marque among the

playing community, and that many of our players are often paying too much for their cars.

"The fantastic partnership with one of the country's most respected retail centres means players can purchase their next new car confident that they are getting the best car they can afford at the best possible price. I would like to thank Stratstone BMW Harrogate for the enthusiasm they have shown throughout our dialogue to establish this partnership.

"It's clear that Stratstone BMW Harrogate understand the needs of our playing community and are committed to working with players to ensure they experience the sheer driving pleasure that comes with BMW ownership."



Charles Shaw, Head of Business at Stratstone Harrogate (pictured left), said: "We are proud to partner with Rugby League Cares and welcome the

opportunity to be part of the local rugby community. Ideally located in the heart of Yorkshire, we are looking forward to showcasing the versatility of the extensive BMW model range alongside exclusive offers and of course the very best in BMW hospitality."

The RL Cares Business Club was set up to provide a range of services to players in areas where their careers can leave them disadvantaged.

With more disposable income than most young men of their age, players do not always receive the best financial advice or have the time to take the best decisions when making important purchases.

The RL Cares Business Club's partners are all committed to providing players with class-leading advice and service.

The other members of the RL Cares Business Club are Barclays Premier Banking, All Sport Insurance, AFEX and Purple Travel. For more information on Stratstone BMW Harrogate please visit www.stratstone.com/bmw



Rugby League players now have access to the full range of BMW cars at best prices through Stratstone BMW Harrogate



STRATSTONE HARROGATE

Stratstone.com

OFFLOAD PROGRAMME TACKLING MEN'S MENTAL WELLBEING ISSUES

Rugby League Cares is helping challenge how the sporting world tackles issues around men's mental fitness and wellbeing with its exciting new Offload project.

The charity is delivering the Big Lottery-funded project at three Super League clubs, Salford Red Devils, Warrington Wolves and Widnes Vikings, and is already receiving widespread acclaim for its work.

Designed and delivered with the help of State of Mind and other agencies, Offload is open to all men aged 16 and over. It involves participants engaging with current and former professional players and officials to learn techniques that Rugby League clubs use to manage the mental and physical fitness of players.

Over the course of the 10-week 'season of fixtures', men build their own mental fitness with humour in a relaxed atmosphere and develop coping strategies to challenge difficult situations and learn how to recognise when people close to them may need their support.

In many ways, Rugby League has led the way with its work on depression and mental illness, especially since the death of Terry Newton, the former Great Britain hooker who committed suicide in 2010.

That tragedy served to focus the minds of many clubs and people within the game of the need to protect both the physical and mental welfare of players, both past and present. The work that has taken place since has seen clubs reach out to their local communities and share some of the best practice they have developed.

"Rugby League clubs continue to operate within the heart of their local communities, many of which show statistically higher than average levels of mental illness, especially in men," said the Head of Rugby League Cares, Chris Rostron.

"Offload was born from the recognition that the game, working through the clubs, is the perfect vehicle to deliver help to some people who need it most."

Mental illness, often through depression, is the leading cause of disability in the UK and costs the economy over £70 billion per year. Almost one in 10 men will suffer from depression at some point in their lives.

In 2013, 6,233 people in the UK committed suicide, a four per cent increase on 2012: whilst the national suicide rate was 10.7 deaths per 100,000 people, the rate was over 13 per 100,000 in many parts of the north. A staggering 78 per cent of all suicides were male.

The process of devising and securing the funding for the project that would become Offload began in 2015. Initial conversations involved State of Mind and a small number of club foundations who were already delivering excellent public health-focused projects for the benefit of their local communities.

Those conversations became more formal and the group made the decision to constitute itself as the Health and Wellbeing in Rugby League Group whose purpose would be to support Rugby League communities to improve their health and wellbeing.

"Leading up to the point of creating a formal health and wellbeing group, there was lots of best practice already happening

in the sport but not brought together and often working in isolation," added Chris.

"Lots of progress had been made with a Sport Relief grant from 2012-14 when 12 club foundations delivered local projects supporting wellbeing in their local communities. Evaluating this work highlighted how successful foundations are at engaging what are considered hard-to-reach groups.

"One group in particular stood out: men. What was clear during these early conversations was the genuine desire from all parties of the need to work with men and the difference the sport could make in engaging men into the programme.

"State of Mind had been amazingly successful in raising awareness of the issue and reducing the stigma associated with mental illness. Their programme was revolutionary and was delivering outstanding results. The foundations have the capability to connect with their local communities and already have experience of working on public health programmes.

"The limitation was funding. We were encouraged to speak to the Big Lottery regarding potential funding and Rugby League Cares, with the support of the Salford Red Devils Foundation, led early conversations with the North West Big Lottery offices.





Rugby League Cares is looking to broaden the Offload project across all clubs



The Offload project was launched with a fanfare in front of the Sky Sports cameras at the Widnes v Warrington fixture in April



Salford Red Devils players have actively engaged with the Offload programme and its link with Oddballs

“Feedback from the Lottery was encouraging, although measured in that the process is very competitive, and it was clear that a considerable amount of work was needed before the charity could submit a bid and for the application to be successful.”

Many hands make light work, however, especially when those hands are attached to experts with a clear vision for what the project should and could achieve.

One of the key points raised was whether fans actually wanted services supporting their mental health and wellbeing. With the support of the Warrington Wolves, Widnes Vikings and Salford Red Devils charitable foundations, RL Cares conducted a fans’ survey and it quickly emerged that if a service was available, supporters - and in particular, men - would use it.

State of Mind co-founder Dr Phil Cooper MBE believes Offload has the capacity to change how healthcare professionals tackle the issue of mental fitness in men, who are often reluctant to engage with other health services.

“If you ask most men if they’d like to sign up for a 10-week course on mental health which involves lots of presentations from people in the know the answer would be ‘Thanks but no thanks,’” said Dr Cooper.

“However, when you approach men with an interest in sport and tell them that the course is delivered by people they know from the sport they love, at the club they feel passionate about, then you get a different response. There’s nothing like Offload out there anywhere, and I think it’s going to be a huge success.”

Dr Cooper has put together much of the Offload content and recruited the current and former players, coaches and officials who will share the benefits of their experiences with participants.

State of Mind also mentors the people involved in the delivery and is fine tuning the programme as it evolves.

Throughout the 10 fixtures, which begin with an induction process that all players go through when they join a new club, participants learn many of the techniques used by sports professionals to develop good mental fitness, including how to cope under pressure and developing a positive mindset.

“We use a lot of sporting analogies and much of what is discussed has its basis in what takes place within a Rugby League club, which makes it perfect for fans to relate to,” added Dr Cooper.

“The pilot involves just three clubs but Offload has the potential to provide a template for every Rugby League club and indeed clubs in other major sports.”

The process of applying for funding took almost a year, and Rugby League Cares was notified in September 2016 that their bid was successful.

“That’s when the real work started, not least the need to recruit an experienced project manager to lead the programme,” said Chris Rostron. “An extensive application process was followed and Emma Goldsmith was appointed to start work on the programme in January 2017.

“Emma’s background was in leading successful public health projects targeting

men in the north of England and she was considered to be the perfect fit for Rugby League Cares’s new men’s mental health programme.”

RL Cares Health Programme Manager Emma Goldsmith said: “The stigma of poor mental fitness is being lifted and Offload will aim to get across the message that no-one need ever suffer alone.

“We would love as many men as possible to engage with the project and begin enjoying improved mental and physical fitness.”

Since her appointment, Emma has put everything in place to ensure that the project is high quality, safe and, most importantly, successful.

But it doesn’t end there: one of RL Cares’s key priorities is to take the project across the whole sport and to build in new opportunities for a broader constituency to benefit from a Rugby League-led health project.

This could be women and girls, young and older people; everyone where there is a need. Chris added: “One thing Offload has taught us is that the clubs are in many ways like churches, in that their followers - the fans - turn out every week to support their team and in doing so they build a relationship with that club.

“If you take this logic to its conclusion, then clubs, through their foundations and with expert support from Rugby League Cares and other organisations like State of Mind, really can make a difference to people, especially when they might be suffering and in need of help.”

The tragic death of Terry Newton in 2010 helped focus the sport's minds on the importance of good mental health in men



HELPING MEN BUILD A WINNING MINDSET

Professional sports coaches often speak about mental fitness being as important, if not more important, than physical

preparation.

Coaches know that things happen both on and off the pitch that challenge our mental fitness, such as difficulties with work, or finances, breakdown of relationships, or a significant setback or event. These challenges can take a serious toll on our mental health, and if left unchecked, can worsen over time.



Having good relationships with teammates, friends and family, talking things through and reaching out to get help, helps players stay mentally healthy and cope with challenges on and off the pitch.

However, statistics show us that many men try to tough out mental challenges and struggle alone, often leading to more serious problems.

According to male suicide prevention charity 'Campaign Against Living Miserably' (CALM), in 2014, men accounted for 76 per cent of suicides in the UK, and more than 40 per cent of British men aged 18-45

have considered taking their own lives. In 2014, there were 4,623 male suicides, equivalent to 12 deaths a day. Shockingly, in addition, suicide has become the single biggest killer of all men aged under 35 (ONS, 2014).

CALM state that men and boys can often be more vulnerable to taking their own lives because they feel a pressure to;

- ▶ Be a winner and can more easily feel like the opposite
- ▶ Look strong and feel ashamed of showing any signs of weakness
- ▶ Appear in control of themselves



Time to Change, the mental health campaign run by charities Mind and ReThink Mental Illness, carried research out into men's attitudes towards mental health. They found that compared to women, men are;

- ▶ Less knowledgeable about mental health, with more negative attitudes
- ▶ Far less likely to report their own experiences of mental health problems
- ▶ More likely to say that mental health problems are the result of a 'lack of self-discipline and willpower'

We also know that men are less likely to access psychological therapies. Only 36 per cent of referrals to IAPT (Increasing Access to Psychological Therapies) are men. It was these shocking statistics that encouraged Rugby League Cares to develop the Offload programme. Offload has been designed to help men do more of the things that make them feel great and help them de-stress, share what is going on if they are feeling overwhelmed, and develop a set of tools to build their own winning mindset.

IAN'S STORY...



I've been suffering from depression for a few years now and though it's been manageable with medication and support from people around me, there's rarely been a time when I have felt in complete control of it.

Like a lot of people with long-term illness, I have good days and bad: my medication usually works but there are times when I feel really low.

My depression leaves me feeling physically and mentally exhausted and it is only with wonderful support from my family, friends and work that I have been able to cope.

As a lifelong Rugby League fan, I was really interested to hear more when my daughter, who had been involved in 'Fit to Tackle' at Warrington Wolves, said the club were getting involved in a new men's fitness project called 'Offload'.

I'd heard nothing but good things about Rugby League Cares and knew a bit about the great work that State of Mind do, and after speaking to James Howes at Warrington I signed up straight away. That was one of the best decisions I've ever made.

'Offload' has made a huge difference to my life, it's been inspirational and given me new coping mechanisms to deal with my illness and live my life to the full.

The 'fixtures' on Tuesday nights have been the highlight of my week and I know from speaking to the other men at the sessions that I'm not alone: we all love it and have benefited immensely.

People can contribute or get involved as much as they like: some people are happy to talk openly about their situation whilst others like to sit back and listen.

The presentations from people like (former Super League referee) Ian Smith, Phil Veivers, Paul Highton and Jimmy Gittins, who have all spoken about their own coping mechanisms, have been brilliant. The professionalism of James Howes has been exemplary.

In my working career, I have attended a lot of seminars and courses down the years but 'Offload' is by far the best. It's a revelation, especially when you consider the project is in its infancy.

It's shown me that depression affects people on so many different levels and that it is possible not to let it control your life.

The big first step is having the confidence to be able to speak to someone about it: I'm fortunate in that I know my family and friends are there for me but there are people who feel they don't have anyone.

'Offload' is a great way to begin to tackle depression or, for people like me, to better handle the illness.

All the team members look forward to the 'Offload' fixture every Tuesday: we have learned so much about ourselves and each other through the power of Rugby League.

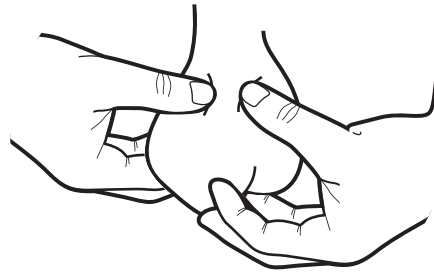
It's been an absolute pleasure to be involved and I hope it becomes a permanent fixture across the whole sport.



Make a date with your balls and check them monthly!

step one.

Feel one testicle at a time using both hands
Performed best after a warm bath or shower



ODDBALLS FACT
 Human testicles are smaller than a chimpanzees but larger than a gorillas



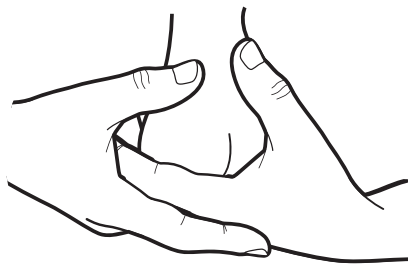
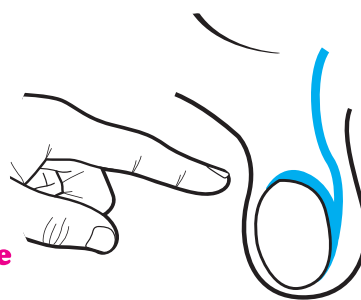
step two.

Inspect by rolling the testicle between thumb & fingers
Use gentle pressure

ODDBALLS FACT
 An octopus's testicles are located inside its head

step three.

Acquaint yourself with the spermatic cord & epididymis
Tube structures that connect to the back side of each testicle



step four.

Feel for lumps, bumps and changes in size
It is normal for one testicle to be larger than the other

RAISING MONEY & AWARENESS FOR TESTICULAR CANCER

www.myoddballs.com

- The prominent **CANCER** in men 15-35
- Every hour a male is diagnosed
- If detected early it is over 90% curable
- Every day a life is lost





Players will be heavily involved promoting the Oddballs partnership

Oddball and RL Cares drive health agenda

Rugby League Cares is delighted to announce a new partnership with The Oddballs Foundation that will see the two charities work together to support their respective men's health and associated projects.

Set up in 2014 as an underwear company to raise money for, and awareness of, testicular cancer, Oddballs has established a national profile through its sporting connections and has enjoyed strong visibility at the Super League Magic Weekends held at St James' Park, Newcastle, in 2016 and 2017.

As part of its support for RL Cares, The Oddballs Foundation has made a generous £15,000 donation and provided the charity with a fully-branded vehicle that will be seen at Rugby League events over the next two years.

Oddballs will also be involved in Offload, the RL Cares men's health and wellbeing project run in association with State of Mind and delivered by the charitable foundations at Salford Red Devils, Warrington Wolves and Widnes Vikings.

Chris Rostron, the Head of RL Cares, said: "We are thrilled with the Oddballs Foundation's generous support, they are a terrific supporter of the charity and the work we do. Oddballs have raised thousands of pounds for testicular cancer through their sales of underwear and other products which were extremely

popular with Rugby League fans at Magic Weekend.

"We are looking forward to working with Oddballs on our Offload project and other initiatives to help raise awareness of testicular cancer and men's health issues."

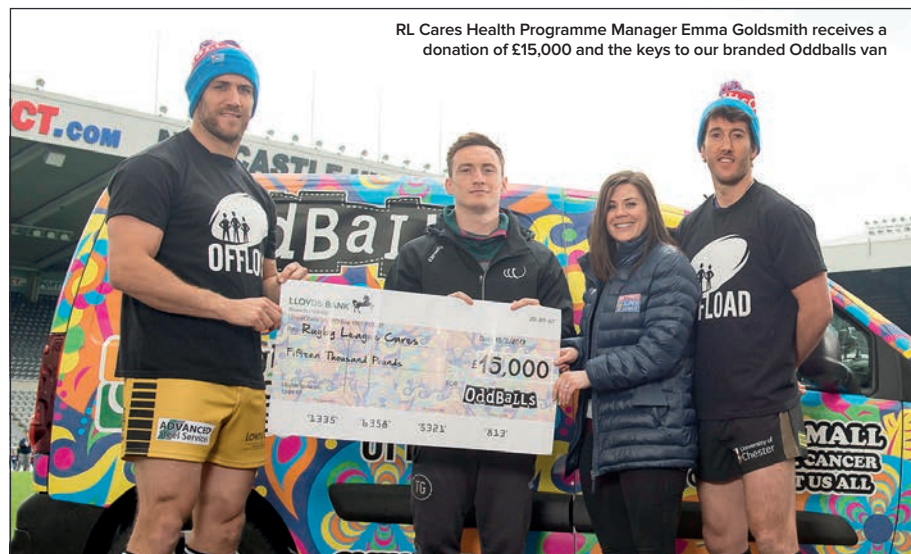
Oddballs Managing Director Will Cooper said: "Partnering with Rugby League Cares allows us to give something back to the Rugby League community that have been great supporters of what we do. Fans, players and coaches have got behind our campaign for the last

three years and this donation is our way of saying 'Thank you' and funding something we really believe is important.

"Testicular cancer and the awareness of it is a key part of the Offload project and a key message that we want to get across."

The Oddballs vehicle proved a big hit at Magic Weekend when thousands of fans visited Rugby League Cares in the Fanzone at St James' Park.

Emma Goldsmith, the Health Programme Manager for RL Cares, said: "It was great to see so many people come along, many of them attracted by our fantastic new Oddballs-branded van: you certainly couldn't miss it! We've spent a lot of time on the road since then and have taken the van to many matches where its presence is a great icebreaker for people who want to find out more about what we do."

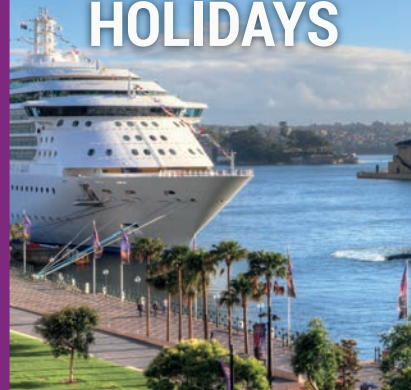


RL Cares Health Programme Manager Emma Goldsmith receives a donation of £15,000 and the keys to our branded Oddballs van

explore.dream.discover



**CRUISE
HOLIDAYS**



**BEACH
HOLIDAYS**



**SKI
HOLIDAYS**



**CITY
BREAKS**



**GROUP
FAMILY**



**STAG
& HEN**



**COMMUNITIES
& CLUBS**



**BUSINESS &
INCENTIVES**



BIG GROUPS
HUGE %
DISCOUNTS

VISIT WWW.PURPLETRAVEL.CO.UK OR CALL US FREE 0800 40 800 80



The memories of Rugby League fans from Rochdale have helped take the game centre-stage

RUGBY LEAGUE IN THE BLOOD

A new project from Rugby League Cares is swapping the whiff of wintergreen for the smell of greaspaint to capture the roar of a crowd from the perspective of fans in Oldham and Rochdale.

The treasured sporting memories of people from the two Pennines towns have been captured to provide the raw material for an exciting new theatrical production, 'Rugby League in the Blood'.

The play will be showcased with four performances in October under the directorship of celebrated writer Mick Martin, whose works include 'Once Upon a Time in Wigan', and 'Broken Time', which tells the story of rugby's great split in 1895.

Mick has led a writing workshop with local volunteers to produce the play's script and has worked alongside heritage consultant Trizia Wells, who has engaged with more than 60 people in Oldham and Rochdale as part of the Stories to Stage project.

"It's been great for me to see the enthusiasm and humour with which fans and players alike recount their memories of Rugby League in Rochdale and Oldham," said Trizia.

"Those who care for people who've been to the memory groups tell me how much their spouses enjoyed recalling their experiences, and that they've continued recalling and retelling stories once they go home.

"I've also been really struck by how important the game is to the wider community. I've enjoyed hearing stories

of town and team told by those who were there in the glory days - cracking stories told in great style by some real characters.

"But I'm also struck by the fact that Rugby League remains very much a part of both towns' character today. I'm so looking forward to seeing all this come to life on stage."

'Rugby League in the Blood' will premiere at Touchstones Gallery in Rochdale on Wednesday 21st October as part of the town's 2017 Literature Festival, and will then be performed at the Flying Horse in Rochdale (25th October), Oldham Library (26th October) and the Mahdlo Centre, Oldham (27th October).

Mick Martin said: "As a Rugby League fan myself it's a pleasure to hear people speak of the clubs and the towns that are so dear to their hearts, and how much the game means to them.

"It's striking how deep-rooted the game is in people's lives and families, and how clearly the key events, the amazing characters and games are remembered as if they were yesterday.

"To listen to ex-players speak of the special moments in their careers, and see the spark in their eyes as they re-visit the best days of their lives, is a humbling but special thing.

"It's as if they are there again, and can hear the crowd - and feel the crack of a prop forward's arm across their chest!

"What have I learnt? Just how much Rugby League is a shared experience just like theatre, filled with emotion and stories, but with real tough guys not pretend ones. And how it's really about community,



friendships, camaraderie, the things that bind us together.

"So the play we have constructed contains all these special memories, a kaleidoscope of recollections, emotions, images, characters and funny events as these voices are captured and heard for a new generation."

As well as some great memories and cracking ideas for the performance, RL Cares has acquired two new collections of Rugby League items for the archives and will leave the Watergrove Memory Clinic with a reminiscence box full of resources and ideas for running future sessions.

RFL BENEVOLENT FUND HELP JOHN SMELL OF ROSES

A wry smile lights up the face of John Burke as the former Wigan and Workington Town stand-off considers the difference the RFL Benevolent Fund has made since the charity first entered his life 10 years ago.

"Well," he says, the smile widening into a broad grin, "I hadn't had a proper bath or shower for 30 years before the Benevolent Fund started to help me so I ought to smell a lot better now than I did back then!"

His comments are accompanied with a wink at Steve Ball, the General Manager of the RFL Benevolent Fund, who is a regular visitor to John's well-kept home between Leigh and Wigan, where the banter flows thick and fast.

John, who celebrates his 60th birthday on 2nd September, was one of the first players the RFL Benevolent Fund reached out to when it was established in 2004.

By that time, over a quarter of a century had elapsed since one of the most gifted players of his generation suffered a life-changing injury playing for Workington against Leeds at Derwent Park.

A young man who had just been named in the Great Britain squad for a Test series against France that autumn saw his international dreams shattered by a tackle which left him tetraplegic and confined to a wheelchair for the rest of his life.



John Burke in action for Wigan against Workington Town

Since making contact with him a decade ago, the Benevolent Fund has funded important modifications to John's bungalow, including adapting his kitchen, landscaping the garden and installing a fully-functional wet-room with accessible shower and facilities.

"The shower cubicle was too narrow for me to get in safely: I had to edge in backwards and hold the shower head over my back while my carers helped me," recalls John. "It was far from ideal but the Benevolent Fund have been brilliant and have really made a difference to my life."

John was on track for a career at the highest level when he made his professional breakthrough as a precocious teenager at Wigan.

A former captain of the Leigh town team, John captained England schoolboys in the first-ever 'Test' series against the touring Australian Combined High Schools in 1971-72 before going on to play at Colts level with Warrington and Leigh.

"I have some great memories of playing for England Schoolboys, even though we didn't win a game!" he recalls. "The Aussies played a brand of rugby we had never seen before, it was just incredible. A lot of those players went on to achieve great things, players like Craig Young, Les Boyd, Robert Finch and Ian Schubert."

After playing for England Colts against France, John returned home to learn that Wigan, Leigh, Rochdale and St Helens



RUGBY LEAGUE
By BRIAN BATTY

JOHN BURKE, one of the game's most promising young full-backs, was last night transfer-listed at £12,000 by Wigan.

Burke, 21, who recently won his first-team spot in the return of Great Britain star George Fairclough, asked for a move.

Requests

Vince Karalis has predicted that Burke will become a future international, but he finds his chances of first-team football limited at Central Park.

Challenge Cupholders Leeds made an official inquiry about Burke a night ago and have been closely watching developments, but could find the transfer difficult.

LEEDS READY TO MOVE IN AGAIN

Wigan may be prepared to drop. They reduced the £15,000 fee on scrum-half Jim Nulky last night and he has promised to resume training after a month's absence.

Wales plan to keep England guessing when the selectors meet today to name a side for the European triangular clash at Swansea on February 19.

Team manager Ron Simpson, a Welsh selector, said last night: "I will suggest we pick a squad of 18 players. Why should we show our hand to the backhand side of the stick?"

"In any case, if we named a team at this point we could be forced into making several changes through injury, as we did before the match with France.

"I can't see how we can change the pack, but we could make an odd change in the backs.

Full-back David Watkins, still a great favourite in Wales, will come into the reckoning along with wingers John Bevan and Maurice Richards.

Jim Mills, a powerful Wigan winger, will be in the Welsh side. He plans to play for the League Cup game against Hull K.R.

Thursday week after being sent off in a match against Wigan last week.

Widnes plan to have another look this week at the Welsh rugby union trialist winger, who scored a try in the win over Wigan.

They failed recently to persuade British Lions winger Gareth Evans to have a trial, and as a result switched to the winger.

Terms

I understand he is asking a hefty sum to turn professional, and secretary Harry Greenwood said yesterday: "We are still discussing terms with him."

Prop Bill Ramsey is expected to be back in the pack for tomorrow night's game against Hull K.R.



JOHN BURKE

were all keen to offer him a professional contract. Leigh, who he had supported all his life, were widely expected to capture the teenage stand-off or full-back but it was Wigan who won the day.

"As a Leigh lad it was a difficult decision and though my dad would have loved to see me play for the 'Leythers', he didn't put any pressure on me and said it had to be my own decision," he remembers.

"When I went to Wigan and saw the set-up at Central Park it was something special: not just the enormity of the ground but the way they treated me. The size of the contract was an influence but it was the whole package that hooked me.

"When you signed for Wigan you felt as if you were someone: I'm not saying that was the case with me but it felt like you were part of a bigger club with a big history and big ambitions.

"On one of my first days there a director came up to me and said 'Welcome to Wigan, John. You've made the right decision, you'll win trophies at this club'.

"When I signed the coach was a St Helens schoolteacher called Joe Coan but soon after he left and Vince Karalius came in with Peter Smethurst as the A-team coach. I liked Peter very much, he was a fantastic person and coach who would listen as well as teach you things.

"My career progressed from there and I enjoyed my time at Central Park until I started getting a bit disgruntled with some of the directors. You'd tell them something in confidence and pretty soon they'd all know about it. I didn't like that, and I wasn't the only one.

"Players like Bill Francis, Jimmy Nulty, Bob Irvine, Bobby Blackwood and Brian Hogan all left in the space of a few months because the club wasn't being run right."

In 1977, John was transfer-listed by Wigan and shortly afterwards a fiercely ambitious Workington Town stepped in to pay a then club-record fee of £12,000 to secure his services.

"I remember travelling up with my dad, driving through the Lake District and saying to him 'It's a bloody long way to go for a game of rugby!'" adds John.

"Things moved quickly and I soon began to enjoy my rugby again at Workington."

Having won the Lancashire Cup for the first time in their history in 1977, the West Cumbrian side began the 1978-79 season strongly with many of their hopes resting on the talents of John Burke.

Town acquitted themselves well in the first round of the Lancashire Cup, defeating Wigan 14-2, and after enjoying a bye in the next round welcomed Leeds to Derwent Park for a league match that would change John's life forever.

"It was the day after my 21st birthday and I don't really recall what actually happened," he says. "I was told a pass came over in my direction that wasn't meant for me, it was meant for the centre. I jumped up and caught it and fell to the floor in a seated position with my legs out.

"I was tackled while I was on the floor and because I was sat up, my head was forced forward with my chin to my chest. It was a double dislocation of vertebrae five and six. I do remember being in a lot of pain but not much else really.

"I should have gone to the spinal injuries unit on the day of the accident but they didn't take me until the day after. To stand any chance of recovering from an injury like mine they say you have to be treated within four or five hours but that didn't happen.

"I was taken to hospital in Whitehaven but there weren't any doctors around so I spent the night there and I shouldn't have done. Being there so long didn't do me any good at all.

"Nowadays when you see a player get injured they carefully put a neck brace on and strap him to a spinal board: with me, I was lifted straight from the floor on to the stretcher and that's when the damage could have been done. You can't dwell on those things, though: it happened and now I try to live my life as well as I can."

John spent almost a year in hospital in Hexham and Southport and, after spending weekends at home with his wife and infant daughter, it soon became clear that major changes were needed.

"We were living in a semi when I was discharged but I couldn't manage in there so we got some money together: Workington had set up a trust fund and I used that money to buy land and build the bungalow where I live now," says John.

"It's a big house with wide doors and big rooms, which is great because it allows me to keep my independence.

"I've had live-in carers for the last 15 years but before then, after my marriage broke up, I lived on my own."



John at his home between Leigh and Wigan

When they first met John, the Benevolent Fund discovered a pragmatic and positive personality who was making the best of circumstances that were far from ideal.

The limitations of the bathroom arrangements were problematic and John was struggling to access kitchen appliances from his wheelchair, having to use a stick to turn the kettle on and activate plug sockets.

"The RFL Benevolent Fund has made a great difference to my life. It wasn't here when I got injured but since its introduction, they have been marvellous," says John.

"They have given me my independence back. I run a car on Motability which I pay for every month, but the deposit can be quite expensive. The Benevolent Fund have kindly paid the deposit, which means I can get out and about now.

"They support me greatly: if I want anything I contact Steve and we work something out. If they can help, they do.

"I know I speak for a lot of people when I say that the Benevolent Fund is a way for me that says you're not forgotten, that someone is there for you at all times, no matter how long it was since you were injured.

"It's also good to meet up with Steve regularly, even though he costs me a fortune in salmon sandwiches and biscuits every time he visits! At least when he's eating my biscuits I'm spared his terrible jokes!"

The RFL Benevolent Fund is financed largely through private donations and from the levy of £1 per ticket on every seat sold at the Betfred Super League Grand Final and the Ladbrokes Challenge Cup Final each year. The Steve Prescott Foundation also make a generous annual donation to allow the Benevolent Fund to fulfil its role.

For more information on the RFL Benevolent Fund, including details of how to make a donation, please visit www.rflbenevolentfund.co.uk

RUGBY STAR PARALYSED IN TACKLE

Town player paralysed

EX-WIGAN Rugby League starlet Burke is lying paralysed in hospital after crash tackle.

Burke, 21, was being transferred to a specialist spinal hospital this afternoon after dislocating a vertebrae while playing for Workington against Leeds yesterday.

RUGBY LEAGUE CAMPAIGNER LEAVES WESTMINSTER LEGACY

There is a certain irony that an MP who plays on the left wing for the House of Commons Rugby League team should see his political career paused - and possibly ended - by a rival party's swing to the left.

Greg Mulholland, the former Liberal Democrat MP for Leeds North West, lost his seat in the General Election in June, when the student vote in Headingley helped send Labour's Alex Sobel to Westminster in his place.

It was a tough, cruel outcome for a politician who had forged a reputation as a respected and progressive constituency MP since winning the seat from Labour in 2005 and then retaining it in both 2010 and 2015.

Going into the most recent election, the Manchester-born graduate of York University was widely expected to hold the seat, that is until Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn defied all expectations with a campaign that breathed new life into 'old Labour' and brought about a return to two-party politics.

In his seven years representing Leeds North West in the House of Commons as a Lib-Dem, the 46-year-old campaigned on a wide range of issues, from hospital provision in Otley and support for small breweries to winter fuel payments for the severely disabled and land banking.

But it is in his capacity as chairman of the Parliamentary Rugby League Group that Mulholland's presence will be most missed by those involved in a sport he championed with distinction within the Palace of Westminster.

"I have nothing but great memories of my time as chair of the Rugby League



Group and still hope to be involved in some capacity," said Mulholland, who got his first taste of Rugby League as an undergraduate.

"I played at York Uni and then for a few community clubs and the 'Rugby League bug' really got hold of me. Like a lot of people, I found that by playing Rugby League I became not just part of a team and a sport but of a whole culture.

"We didn't use the phrase 'Rugby League family' back then but that's what it felt like. It still does and it's a family I'm incredibly proud to be part of. I wish I had devoted more time to playing Rugby League but life got in the way: my political career, firstly as a councillor in Headingley and then as a MP, meant I was just too busy.

"Being a Leeds City Councillor for Headingley was fantastic as a Rugby League fan and over the years I developed a strong relationship with Leeds Rhinos and the Rhinos Foundation, with whom I'm still Vice-President. When I was elected to Parliament in 2005 there was no question that I'd join the Parliamentary Rugby League group and within a matter of weeks I'd accepted the position of vice-chairman."

The group brings together MPs and members of the House of Lords with the specific aim of supporting Rugby League and its interests at Westminster and was set up in 1988 by former Wakefield MP David Hinchliffe.

Angered and frustrated by the prejudice and hostility the sport had traditionally



We didn't use the phrase 'Rugby League family' back then but that's what it felt like. It still does and it's a family I'm incredibly proud to be part of...



Greg Mulholland forged strong links with Leeds Rhinos during his time as the Super League club's local MP

faced from the establishment, not least from rugby union, Hinchliffe's energy and passion led to the group winning some important battles, including the lifting of the ban on playing Rugby League in the Armed Forces in 1994.

That campaigning spirit was continued by Mulholland's predecessor as chairman, Lord Lofthouse of Pontefract, who he succeeded in 2011.

"When Geoff (Lofthouse) stood down it was a real honour and a privilege to become chair of a group which was another Rugby League family to me," he said.

"The group is a set of characters who all have a clear passion for Rugby League and who share the desire to give the sport a strong voice in London and Whitehall."

The sport's fight for recognition and fair treatment over the years has inevitably seen some people regard Rugby League supporters as a bunch of 'chippy Northerners' but the growth of a game which now has at least one team

in every county in England has changed perceptions. And, just as Rugby League has changed down the years, so has the role of the group.

"There weren't these great battles to be fought any more but we had to be ready to show people that Rugby League is important and that we as the Parliamentary group were ready to support it," he said.

"As chair I wanted to take the vision of all those who had gone before me and drive it forward. We gained some important victories, such as restoring the funding for the Rugby League World Cup in 2013 after the Government had abolished the Regional Development Agencies, and the way in which we successfully challenged the cuts to sports coverage by BBC local radio.

"It was good that the BBC Trust and Board listened to us and as a consequence coverage for Rugby League and other sports has been protected.

"I am also proud to have been there at the unveiling of the Wembley statue in 2015, when Rugby League Cares delivered

a work of art that will forever tell fans of all sports about the special historical relationship between Rugby League and the national stadium.

"There are other things the group did while I was chair that were special: we had a wonderful reception with clubs from London and the South East which saw them come to the House in their club colours.

"Having people there from London Broncos and Skolars, as well as the likes of Southampton Spitfires and Medway Dragons, reminded everyone in Westminster that Rugby League is anything but a 'Northern sport'."

Mulholland was also instrumental in the formation of the Political Animals, a Westminster-based active Rugby League team which continues to involve lifelong fans and introduce new MPs and other politicians to the joys of playing the sport.

"The Political Animals is a unique way of telling people all about the sport and I'm looking forward to staying involved," he said.

“When Look North re-ran the film of me scoring a try between the posts for the Political Animals at Headingley from 2008, just a few days after the election result, this year it brought a smile to my face.”

Like everyone who shares the passion for Rugby League, Mulholland has his own views on how the game is run and its position within the wider sporting landscape. He is a supporter of the new structure which allows for promotion into Super League via the Super 8s and has sympathy for both the views expressed by players about the number of games they are required to play, and the owners who have to run clubs as businesses.

“Rugby League is in a good place but I do feel the time has come for a wide-ranging review of the sport. It’s something we had discussed at the group, and though we felt the group wasn’t the right body to do it we could contribute,” he explained.

“The game needs to know where it stands, where it’s succeeding and where the challenges and opportunities are. I would like to see this happen over the next two years and it’s something I’d be interested in being involved in alongside other people.

“If you go down to Headingley, as I often do, on a nice warm Friday evening with a 20,000-strong crowd and take someone who has never been to a Rugby League game before they are bowled over at what an amazing sport it is. If there were three or four more Headingleys it would be a totally different sport. Super League has been thrilling over the last few seasons but the challenge is below that.

“Clearly there are challenges for clubs that we still call semi-professional, even though they aren’t much more than community clubs. We also need to look



Greg Mulholland played an important role in persuading then Sports Minister Hugh Robertson to restore funding for the 2013 RL World Cup

at the community game and the issue of Rugby League in schools if we are to ensure that the sport can thrive.

“The demands we place on our best players needs to be looked at, although there aren’t any easy solutions. I don’t know how elite players running at the speeds they do and being involved in the collisions we see can play so many games.

“There is a case for looking at that, but equally we want a Super League with competitive clubs and it would be harmful to reduce the number of clubs just to reduce the demands on players.

“The new structure works because it gives Rugby League the sense that you can achieve: that was lacking when there was no promotion and relegation. Every sport needs aspiration and dreams and we have them in Rugby League now.

“We do have to do more to look after the health and welfare of players: they are the sport’s most valuable assets.”

For now, Mulholland is still coming to terms with the election result and dealing with his unexpected unemployment: finding a new vocation, and an income to support his wife and three children, is a priority.

“Politics, like Rugby League, is tough and you have to take it on the chin,” he said. “Even though my share of the vote went up, I still lost the seat and I have to accept that.

“I think I acted with dignity when the result was announced. No-one could say that I wasn’t a good MP and I like to think I did a good job. However, losing your seat means that the day after the

count you wake up feeling like you have no job, no role and no identity and that’s very, very hard.

“One thing that has helped is the work I have done with State of Mind, who do a wonderful job in the sport.

“We had a presentation at Westminster which involved Brian Carney talking about how he coped with the death of Terry Newton, and Jimmy Gittins and Danny Sculthorpe relating their stories about how their rugby careers had ended. I can relate to that terrible sense of loss. Physically I’m fine but I do wonder who I am now and what it’s all for. Reflecting on the experiences of Brian, Jimmy and Danny has been really helpful for me.”

Mulholland’s election defeat has provided him with an opportunity to deliver on a promise he made to State of Mind’s Malcolm Rae some months ago, when the men’s health charity’s chairman learned that the now former MP was an accomplished songwriter.

“I told Malcolm that I’d love to write a song for State of Mind based on the stories I’d heard from people like Brian, Jimmy and Danny and the unexpected amount of time I’ve had on my hands has enabled me to deliver,” he said.

“It’s still very much a work in progress but I have a good feeling about the song. Hopefully I can stay involved in Rugby League in other ways, too. The sport leads the way in so many areas and organisations such as Rugby League Cares do a fantastic job. It would be great to help out if I can.”

MEMORIES CLUBS OFFERING MUCH-NEEDED SUPPORT FOR DEMENTIA SUFFERERS

Since the historic first shout of 'Gerremonside!' in the 19th century, Rugby League has possessed a fantastic ability to forge lasting memories for everyone involved at every level of the sport.

Few people ever forget the feeling of their first game, either as a player or a spectator, and most fans treasure their own special moment from their association with Rugby League, be it the joy of a cup final win at Wembley, the relief felt on the day a team avoided relegation or a flash of brilliance from a favourite player.

It is these magical moments that provide much of the glue that holds the Rugby League family together, because so many personal memories come from the shared experience of enjoying the greatest game of all.

Many clubs are now harnessing the power of Rugby League by running Memories Clubs, which are having a transformational impact on the lives of older supporters and their families.

Memories Clubs bring together fans and their families to share stories about what makes the game, a club or its players so special: open to all ages, the clubs help bring history to life, are combatting loneliness and realising dramatic changes in the lives of those suffering from dementia.

There are currently around 850,000 people in the UK suffering from dementia, a figure that is set to increase to two million by 2051 as an ageing population expands. This year, 225,000 will develop dementia, 60 per cent of whom will be diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, for which there is no cure.

Rugby League Cares has recently been working with Dewsbury Rams to help establish a Memories Club which meets on the second Wednesday of every month.

Run entirely by volunteers, the club provides a focal point for fans to meet up with fellow Dewsbury supporters and 'guest' supporters of other local clubs and talk about times past and present. Its most recent meeting was attended by Allan Agar, a member of the Dewsbury team that defeated Leeds in the 1972 Championship Final who helped guests reminisce about what was a golden period for the West Yorkshire club.

For Allison Simpson, the Dewsbury Memories Club is having a profoundly



Allan Agar, a Championship winner with Dewsbury, was a guest at a recent meeting of the Rams' Memories Club

positive influence on her family through its impact on her father, Tony Boothroyd.

Tony, 74, was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease two and a half years ago, since when the symptoms of a condition which causes memory loss and confusion have accelerated.

"Dad has been a Dewsbury fan all his life and the whole family are huge supporters of the club," said Allison, who has been one of the driving forces behind the setting up of the Memories Club.

"Sport is one of the few things that captivates dad, be it sport on TV, being at the match, or talking about old times. He can clearly remember so many sporting occasions: of his own, those he's watched from the terraces and those he's watched his grandchildren participate in.

"Sadly, because of Alzheimer's, he can't recall what we did earlier today or tie his own shoelaces. It's an unspeakably awful condition which can only get worse. But when he's at the match, or attending a meeting of the Memories Club, we get him back because he loves to tell the stories about Dewsbury and listen to the memories of other fans.

"The club is also a great way to get to really know people you've seen at the games over many years and never really had a chance to speak to."

Prior to the setting up of the Memories Club at Tetley's Stadium, Allison and Tony visited the Memories Clubs at Rochdale Hornets, Batley Bulldogs and Hunslet, where they received a warm welcome.

The Dewsbury club was set up with strong support from Hunslet chief executive Martin

Flynn, who believes every club should have its own Memories Club.

"It's such a simple concept and one that is very effective in tackling social isolation and helping people with dementia, which are challenges faced by supporters of every club in every sport," said Martin.

"We are more than happy to share best practice with anyone and were delighted to help Dewsbury set up their Memories Club, not least because of the strong connections that exist between us.

"Bernard Shoeman, who is involved in our heritage group and is very active in our Memories Club, was secretary at Dewsbury for seven years, for example, and he was able to share lots of memories."

Fans and players of all ages from any club are welcome to attend, and admission is free.

Widnes Vikings have an active Memories Club that meets monthly at the Chemics Café, where current and former players and staff from the Super League club's charitable foundation interact with dementia sufferers on reminiscence events, stadium tours and low-level physical activities.

The Vikings Sport Foundation works in partnership with a national charity, Community Integrated Care, who continue to be astounded by the power of sport.

The Hunslet Memories Club meets at the Garden Gate pub in Whitfield Place on the first Wednesday of every month from noon. Refreshments and lunch are available.

The Dewsbury Rams Memories Club meets in the Amber Ribbon bar at Tetley's Stadium on the second Wednesday of every month from noon.



QUESTION TIME

with **Jamie Peacock MBE**

The former Leeds, Bradford and Great Britain front-rower is forging a new career as football manager with Hull Kingston Rovers and is also a trustee of Rugby League Cares. What does he think about the charity's work? What did he get terribly wrong in 2013? And what advice does he have for the young players of today? In our exclusive interview, here is the world according to JP...

● **RLC:** Rugby League Cares is doing more in the field of player welfare and player support: why do you think this is important?

○ **JP:** Playing Rugby League for a living is a dream job but it's also an incredibly difficult job to do, which is why most people can't do it. Emotionally it takes you on a roller-coaster ride with every aspect of what you do judged by thousands of people. Living in that kind of world can have an adverse affect on your life so the people who do it need looking after. Also, they need help making the transition from doing their dream job when the time comes to move on to the next stage of their lives.

That's why the role of Rugby League Cares and the club player welfare manager is so important. There were no player welfare managers when I started and RL Cares has only been around for a few years: there were no campaigns around mindfulness or mental wellbeing 20 years ago, not just in Rugby League but in society in general.

Thankfully things have changed for the better in the last five years since RL Cares came along, creating a shift in focus towards the need to protect the welfare of players. That can only be a good thing.

● **RLC:** You are one of the new breed of administrators drawn from the ranks of ex-players: does the game need to put more faith in the abilities of its former heroes?

○ **JP:** I feel the opportunities are there already and we are now seeing more and more players move into administrative roles and making a success of it. You only have to look at the likes of Ian Blease at Salford, Kris Radlinski at Wigan and Karl Fitzpatrick at Warrington to see how well former players are doing in the game.

The key is players having the right attitude to take on these role: you can't just assume that because you've played Rugby League for 20 years you know everything there is to know about the game and what's needed to run it. Players need education to learn the skills that are required to run clubs as businesses and prepare themselves for their new career.

I was fortunate because I ran my own businesses in tandem with my playing career and knew a lot of the ins and outs of administration.

Playing Rugby League requires a huge physical commitment from modern players but the game has moved on from the days when players spent most of their time on the training ground: the time is there for players to go into education and learn new skills.

● **RLC:** What was the most difficult aspect for you about transitioning from playing at Leeds to working at Hull Kingston Rovers?

○ **JP:** Apart from the M62?! The most difficult thing for me was accepting that no matter how well you've prepared for life after rugby, the transition is a very tough journey for everybody. No matter who you are, you are always going to miss playing.

Life isn't a straight line, it's about

peaks and troughs: just like in their playing days, players have to learn to manage those peaks and troughs post-retirement.

You need a sense of purpose when you finish: if you don't then you will struggle. It's important for players to find a job where they feel they are making a positive difference.

It's normal to find it hard. It doesn't mean you're weak if you miss doing a job you loved doing for most of your adult life which you can't do it any more.

● **RLC:** What is your biggest regret from your playing days?

○ **JP:** I have no regrets whatsoever about not putting in or not doing something I ought to have done as a player. However, I do wish I had said yes when Steve McNamara asked me to come out of international retirement to play for England in the World Cup in 2013. I was there at Wembley for the semi-final working with the BBC watching England play the Kiwis in a fantastic atmosphere and I knew I had made the wrong decision.

It would have been good to test myself in the NRL but though I had a few offers to go, they never came at the right time for one reason or another. I always made sure I gave it my best shot when I played in World Club Challenge matches and when I pulled on an England or Great Britain jersey.



● **RLC:** Looking back on your career, do you feel you started to think about life after rugby early enough?

○ **JP:** In some ways, yes. No-one thinks about retiring or planning for life after rugby when they're young because it all seems such a long time away, but of course it's not. When I was 25 there was little player welfare and no pathway into education and I'm lucky that I decided to set up my own businesses back then.

When I got to 30/31 I thought I need to do something about this now. Players have to use the time they have before they start having families to upskill themselves and get educated.

I didn't do it early enough and by the time I started to think about it seriously I had a lot of other commitments and responsibilities in my life.

● **RLC:** What are the most important things a young player just setting out on his professional career needs to know?

○ **JP:** You have to realise that just because you are doing your dream job, not every day is going to be great. The best players are the ones who deal with setbacks better than everyone else: they make themselves accountable to themselves, not others. If they aren't selected or don't play well, they look at how they can address what's gone wrong rather than blaming other people.

Young players - and older players - should always be self-aware of where they can improve, understand what they are good at and what they bring to their team. A player ought to focus on three areas where they excel and work on them one at a time.

Also, enjoy what you do: not many people get the opportunity to do their dream job.

● **RLC:** Having spent the vast majority of your playing career at the highest level, how have you found life in the Championship with Hull KR this year?

○ **JP:** It's been a great journey for the club, which has operated like a Super League club all year. There hasn't been any dip in standards from any department. From a personal point of view, it's been a learning experience visiting grounds which aren't



always up to the standards you get in Super League, but understanding that all the clubs are living within their means and using the resources they have.

● **RLC:** You're heading 'Down Under' with England in the World Cup this autumn to work with Wayne Bennett: how optimistic should Rugby League fans be about England's prospects?

○ **JP:** They should be very optimistic for our chances, especially if we have a fully-fit squad and can keep all our best players together. Based on the back of the performance against Samoa in Sydney earlier this year we are in a good place right now. The atmosphere down there was very hostile and there was a lot of pressure on the team but they stood up to it and acquitted themselves superbly.

For the first time, we looked like a Wayne Bennett team, and Wayne Bennett teams usually achieve success. Australia still have some wonderful players but one of their key individuals, Johnathan Thurston, will be missing and that's a big factor.

If anyone is still thinking about going to the World Cup to support England I'd say get yourselves down there. At the very

least you'll enjoy a few beers and come back with a suntan: if things go the way we hope, you'll be there to witness history in the making.

● **RLC:** How pleased were you when you heard that there will be a Great Britain Lions tour in 2019? Would you like to be involved?

○ **JP:** I would love to be involved! It was fantastic to play for, and captain, Great Britain, and I'd jump at the chance to be part of what's happening in 2019.

England is a great brand for all players but the Great Britain jersey is truly iconic: when you pull on a Great Britain jersey you are standing on the shoulders of giants because there is so much history and heritage wrapped up in it. You can feel that history in the jersey.

As a sport, we don't have another brand that means as much as Great Britain and I was delighted when I heard the news that the Lions were back on the agenda. All the people involved in making the Lions tour happen deserve our thanks.

● **RLC:** You're dusting off the boots to represent Yorkshire against Lancashire in the Origin Legends game in late-August - how much juice is left in the tank?

○ **JP:** I would like to think there's plenty left but that's not the case! You can only go so far on vapours but I'm determined to give it my best shot, if only for Ryan Hall and Martin Gleeson. I'd just like to warn anyone who is coming to the game expecting to see us playing at the pace they remember in the past not to get too carried away!

Thankfully there are as many substitutes as I had first-team appearances, so none of us need to embarrass ourselves!

It's going to be a cracking game for some great causes: I'm sure everyone who goes along will love it!





RUGBY LEAGUE LIONS ASSOCIATION REUNION A ROARING SUCCESS

Rugby League's Lions roared loud and proud at a historic reunion event in Bradford in late January, when record numbers of one of the sport's most exulted clubs met for their annual luncheon.

Seventy five members of the Rugby League Lions Association came together to celebrate a tradition which dates back to 1910, the year a team representing the Northern Union toured Australia and New Zealand for the first time.

A Lion is any player or official who has been involved in a tour or international tournament in the southern hemisphere with Great Britain, England or, in the 1975 World Cup, Wales.

For the first time, the reunion luncheon saw players awarded their unique heritage number and presented with a framed certificate confirming their place in history.

Working with Rugby League Cares, the Lions Association has researched the history of international tours 'Down Under' and given every player a number starting with James Lomas of Salford, the captain of the 1910 tour, who is Lion Number 1.

Players are then numbered alphabetically until the captain of the next tour, all the way through to the 2014 Four Nations and Lion Number 582, Elliott Whitehead.

The framed certificates will only be presented at the reunion lunches, and at this year's event the oldest Lions present were Rugby League Hall of Fame members Billy Boston MBE and Lewis Jones, who were both members of the 1954 Great Britain tour.

The Lions received their certificates from a member of the last Great Britain team to win the Ashes in 1970, Malcolm Reilly OBE, who also coached Great Britain on three tours.

The lunch was also attended by many Lions from the 1990s and 2000s, including Graham Steadman, David Lyon, Neil Harmon, Barrie McDermott, Chris Joynt, Anthony Sullivan, Keith Senior and Brian Carney.

Framed certificates were also presented to the family members of late Lions, most movingly to Keith Gregory, the father of Mike Gregory, a tourist in 1988 and 1990, when he captained Great Britain.

Rugby League Lions Association secretary John Ledger said: "The 2017 Lions luncheon was a hugely successful event with 350 guests and a record number of Lions.

"The Association has been given a new lease of life with the help of Rugby League Cares and the charity's reunions programme, which aims to re-engage former players with the sport.

"We were delighted to welcome 75 Lions to the luncheon, many of whom had not attended a reunion before, and we hope

to see even more new - and old - faces next January.

"The Association is very fortunate to have the full support of the Rugby Football League, who recognise the important role the Lions play in the sport's history."

The Lions heard from Nigel Wood, the RFL chief executive and chairman of the Rugby League International Federation, who outlined his hopes of a return of extended Lions tours on the international calendar.

Nigel said he was committed to doing all he could to give current players the opportunity to share the unique experience of a tour with midweek and weekend games against club and representative teams that older Lions had enjoyed.

The Rugby League Lions Association will gain new members this autumn when England head 'Down Under' for the 2017 Rugby League World Cup and all members of the squad will receive special invitations to the 2018 Lions luncheon.

The history of the Rugby League Lions between the first tour in 1910 and the last tournament 'Down Under' in 2014 is detailed in a special publication produced in partnership with Rugby League Cares.

'Rugby League Lions' also includes details of the unique heritage numbers of all 582 Lions and features some fantastic and evocative images from tours and international tournaments in the southern hemisphere.

A limited number of 'Rugby League Lions' are available to purchase for just £5, including postage, with all proceeds going to RL Cares.

To buy a copy send a cheque for £5 payable to 'RL Cares' to **RL Lions Association, 33 Banks Avenue, Ackworth, West Yorkshire WF7 7JU.**

Alternatively, make a £5 donation to RL Cares' Justgiving page - www.justgiving.com/rugbyleaguecares - and forward confirmation of your donation along with your name and address to RugbyLeagueLionsAssociation@gmail.com



The Rugby League family rallied around following the deaths of Danny Jones (left) and Ronan Costello



RFL BENEVOLENT FUND THERE FOR THE DARKEST HOURS

Rugby League has twice been rocked by tragedy in 2017, when the sport has lost two players to injuries sustained playing the game they love.

The deaths of Evan Hawksworth and Adam Cooper touched everyone within a sport that is still mourning the loss of Huddersfield Giants teenager Ronan Costello in 2016 and Danny Jones, the Keighley Cougars scrum-half, in 2015.

Adam, 31, a father of three, collapsed and died at the side of the pitch after playing for Warrington-based Culcheth Eagles at Runcorn in early July. Less than two weeks later, 14-year-old Evan died after suffering a serious head injury in a freak accident playing for Wakefield-based Stanley Rangers against Batley Boys.

On all four occasions, the Rugby League family has rallied around the families of the players involved, raising tens of thousands of pounds and staging strong and emotional shows of support in their hour of need.

The tragedies have also seen the RFL Benevolent Fund bring its fantastic and sensitive expertise to bear in what are difficult and terrible times for all concerned.

“With the experience the Benevolent Fund has, we are able to take out some of the sharpest corners that people face in their darkest hour,” said RFL Benevolent Fund General manager Steve Ball.

“When tragedy occurs there is no standard script for the family to follow which enables them to deal with what’s happened.

“Because of the high-profile nature of such events, families can feel like they’re under a magnifying glass. It’s up to us to put a support network in place around the family to lessen the extremes that death sometimes brings.

“The Benevolent Fund also brings a focal point for the wider Rugby League family to direct its efforts through one channel rather than hundreds. Our work allows well-meaning people to focus their energy and love into doing the best thing.

“It’s not uncommon for families to say to me how grateful they are for the love that the wider Rugby League family has shown them, how amazed they are by the kindness of strangers who share a common bond through their love of Rugby League.”

The proximity of the tragedies involving Evan Hawksworth and Adam Cooper have inevitably raised questions about

safeguarding and whether the sometimes unforgiving nature of Rugby League needs to be addressed.

However, Steve Ball insists the game is no more dangerous than it has ever been. And he believes it is safer than many give it credit for.

“In this era of social media, where most people are part of a wide electronic network, there is a lot more awareness of events, and certainly tragedies, now than there was 10 or 20 years ago,” said Steve.

“Lots of tragedies have occurred in the past and not featured on the radar of most Rugby League fans: nowadays people hear of someone dying within hours, and sometimes minutes, of tragedy striking.

“It’s understandable for people to question whether Rugby League has become more dangerous when we get two deaths in such a short space of time, but that’s not the case.

“It’s a sad fact of life that people who are active in sport are susceptible to injury but Rugby League is no more prone to tragedy than any other sport. For example, more people are killed or suffer life-changing injuries every year from riding ponies than from playing Rugby League.”



Front-rower Neil Harmon in action throughout his career

RL CARES OFFERING SUPPORT TO PROPERTY INVESTORS

Rugby League Cares is working with current and former players to help them reclaim millions of pounds that were lost as a result of the collapse of the European housing markets in 2008.

Rugby League players were among thousands of investors who saw their investments wiped out when real estate prices in countries like Spain and Morocco fell rapidly, prompting many developers to go under.

Until recently there was believed to be no legal recourse for people who had invested in properties that were never built, but a little-known Spanish law is now providing hope for investors who in many cases lost their life savings.

It is estimated that British investors could claim back up to £4billion from Spanish banks.

Working in conjunction with legal experts on a no-win, no-fee basis, Rugby League Cares is asking players who may have lost out to get in touch for a free consultation.

The charity was alerted to the situation by Neil Harmon, the former Warrington, Leeds and Ireland prop, who is pursuing

a claim for €60,000 from a failed investment in a Moroccan property development in 2006.

"A mate and I both put down deposits of €60,000 on an 'off-plan' project in 2006 that was scheduled to be completed in 2008," said Neil.

"I'd invested a lot of the income from my playing days in property and at the time 'off-plan' buy-to-let schemes, particularly offshore ones, were widely recommended.

"Unfortunately in 2008 when we should have been paying the balance for the completed property, the banks pulled the plug on hundreds of developments and everything stopped.

"The advice we, and countless other investors got, was that there was no chance of getting our money back, but then it emerged that protection did exist under Spanish law."

Although Neil had invested in a Moroccan development, the funds were transferred via a Spanish bank which, under Spanish law, had a legal duty to hold the deposits until such time as the property was completed.

"The banks initially took a hard line and refused to co-operate with

investors but when their case was overturned by the Spanish Supreme Court, the resolution we all wanted became possible," he added.

Because of the current weakness of the Pound against the Euro, Neil and other investors are set to win back their original investment, plus an additional 'bonus' that will go some way to making up for the stress and anxiety the experience has caused.

"We invested 'off-plan' in good faith and were victims of the bursting of the property bubble," said Neil. "This is part of my pension, I can ill-afford to lose such a sizeable chunk of money and I'm sure there will be other Rugby League players out there in the same situation.

"I would urge any player who lost money through dealings with Spanish banks in the 2000s to get in touch with Rugby League Cares."

If you are a current or former player who lost money by investing in 'off-plan' property schemes in Europe in the 2000s please contact the Head of RL Cares, Chris Rostron, on chris.rostron@RLcares.org.uk All communications will be treated in the strictest confidence.

POCKETS DEEP MOUNTAIN HIGH:

£25,000 RAISED FOR DANNY JONES DEFIBRILLATOR FUND

Barrie McDermott looks back on a memorable National Three Peaks walk which raised more than £25,000 for the Danny Jones Defibrillator Fund...

It didn't, on the face of it, seem to be too much of a challenge. As an Oldham lad, hills hold no fear for the likes of us: not their steepness, nor the inclement weather. There's nothing wrong with a bit of damp and cold, as anyone who ever visited Watersheddings will tell you.

The windchill was once so bad at a Roughyeds home game that one of my mates put his jumper on. But only for 10 minutes in the second-half, mind.

So, when Lizzie Jones and I discussed the idea of doing a fundraising venture on behalf of the Danny Jones Defibrillator Fund, it seemed perfectly sensible to stick to what I know. I'd climbed Kilimanjaro and gone to Everest base camp with the Steve Prescott Foundation and loved the experience, so the Three Peaks - that's the three tallest mountains in Scotland, England and Wales, not those small Yorkshire lumps I did last year - seemed like a walk in the (national) park.

It was only a few days after speaking to the amazing Lizzie that I learned that the national three peaks had a sting in the tail: to complete the challenge, you have to walk up (and down) Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike and Snowdon in just 24 hours.

I knew it was going to be tough, and when the going gets tough you need your mates on your side: a few phone calls later, I'd roped in some of the lads from my old amateur club Waterhead - first-team coach Jon Perks, ex-players Darrel Rogers and Neil Wheeler and club chairman Tommy 'Lewis Hamilton' Howe to join me on the challenge, as well as a fat lad and 'Headmasters RL sub' from Widnes called O'Connor.

Waterhead are one of the clubs who have purchased a life-saving defibrillator with help from the Danny Jones fund, which was set up in memory of the former Wales and Keighley half-back who collapsed and died playing for the Cougars at London Skolars two years ago.

I didn't know Danny well but, like everyone in Rugby League, I was in awe of the work his wife Lizzie has done to raise awareness of cardiac health and raise money with the goal of putting a defibrillator in every amateur and junior club in the country.

As well as the Waterhead crew and the chunky one from Widnes, numbers quickly grew. Lizzie said she was up for it as well, as were some of her mates, and within a few weeks there were 22 of us signed up, all raising money for the defib fund.

The walkers also included former pros Francis Stephenson and Chico Jackson, for whom subtitles would have been helpful: that Hull accent is something else, isn't it!

With some fantastic sponsors on board, including Give Local Yorkshire and Arrow Self Drive, who supplied a fleet of mini buses to transport the walkers to, from and between the mountains, we set off on the afternoon of Saturday 10th June.





Picture by Bruce Fitzgerald Photography

Most of the walkers had wisely travelled up to Ben Nevis the night before, when Terry and I were on commentary duty with Sky in Salford, and the scale of what we were taking on hit home on the long, long drive up to Scotland on Saturday morning.

You find out lots about yourself on challenges like this: you also find out lots about your mates, not least the fact that some of them have very small bladders. But, after lots of stops, we finally reached Ben Nevis and the adventure was on.

They say the sun shines on the righteous but the Scottish weather gods must have overlooked the fact that Terry O'Connor was in our midst because it was absolutely gorgeous on the first ascent and descent, when waterproofs stayed tucked away in rucksacks.

On a long walk in a group it's really easy to find yourself talking to very boring people and that was the case on all three peaks - no matter how fast you walk to try and get away from him, shaking off ex-Waterhead player Kevin Sinfield is an impossible task. And when it looks like you're going to succeed, he's there under

your feet tripping you up. Things were easier with O'Connor: every team needs a furry mascot and while he's not got much fur up top, we were delighted to have him along as an honorary Waterhead old boy. With the emphasis on old.

A mascot needs a name and pretty soon we were all on familiar terms with 'Terry the Big Fat Pig', who may not be the fastest at going up mountains but all that weight comes into its own on the way down. He's a one-man walking avalanche...

They say an army marches on its stomach, which is literally true for the Waterhead boys, and we were indebted to some incredible people for keeping us fuelled on the walk.

Our good friends from Le Munch Bunch in Halifax did us proud with their sandwiches, although Lizzie's mistake was putting them all in our van! We rationed them to only three each.

Waterhead chairman Tommy Howe is surely up for the Man of Steel award after putting on bacon butties on a travel stove for us all when we came off Ben Nevis; plus, his final words for each mountain

was 'Stay safe lads,' the wonderful duo Mr and Mrs Hicks were a sight for sore eyes with more bacon and egg butties at the foot of Scafell Pike in the middle of a weary night; and Getbuzzing and Nutrition X kept us going with their energy and hydration expertise.

The support we got was awesome beyond words: Julia Lee, the former match official, did a fantastic job with all the organising and logistics, and the know-how and mountain leadership of the people at Carnegie Great Outdoors were invaluable.

There were a lot of tired walkers at the end, countless blisters, aching shoulders, knees and joints plus some soggy, worn-out equipment but to a man and woman we still had plenty in the tank for the bar on Sunday.

We raised a lot of money on the Give Local Three Peaks Challenge which will help make this glorious game of ours even safer for thousands of young people across the country. There's still time to donate to this brilliant cause: please visit www.justgiving.com/fundraising/danny-jones-3-peaks



HIGH-FLYING TIGERS CHAMPION THEIR PAST LIKE NEVER BEFORE

They have been the team of the moment throughout 2017, a season when their exploits in Super League have seen Castleford Tigers top the table for the first time in their history.

This summer, coach Daryl Powell and his players have enhanced the club's long-established reputation for playing attractive, free-flowing and effective Rugby League: rarely since their inaugural season in 1926 have Castleford been classier.

But it is not just on the field where the Tigers have set the standard to which other clubs should aspire: off the pitch, Castleford have led the way by championing their heritage in a manner that is every bit as classy.

Using 3D digital technology, Castleford have begun to celebrate the past like never before by launching an online archive and virtual museum to showcase a wealth of photography, memorabilia, audio and video.

While the likes of Michael Shenton, Greg Eden and Luke Gale have been turning on the style, the careers and exploits of the other heroes who form equally important strands of Castleford's DNA have been plucked from history and placed in the here and now.

The online archive - or 'Memory Box' - is packed full of evocative recollections from fans, officials and players for whom Castleford has been, and remains, a hugely important part of their lives. It comprises

a fully searchable database which includes films, audio interviews, artwork, photographs and articles.

Accessed via a dedicated website, the database pulls together the countless strands that run through the history of a club which continues to be the focal point of the local community.

"We wanted to create something that captures what Castleford RLFC means to the town and to everyone who is, or has been, involved with the club at every level," said Stephen Ball, a trustee of the Tigers Trust who has played a pivotal role in the project.

"There isn't anything like this at any other club in any sport in this country, as far as we are aware: we're very proud of what we have achieved.

"It's taken a lot of hard work by a fantastically committed group of volunteers to get to where we are. This is merely the start point: there is so much more we can do."

The project began life in 2015 with an application for Heritage Lottery Funding to build on interest in the history of Castleford Tigers stimulated by an exhibition in the town's library.

With limited physical space at the Mend-a-Hose Jungle, a situation that is unlikely to change when the club moves to its long-delayed new stadium, the Tigers Trust took the far-reaching decision to establish a virtual museum.

Digital arts organisation One to One Development Trust secured the contract to deliver the project, which makes the most of the Wakefield-based company's experience in using video game engine technology.

"We have involved volunteers in all aspects of the project, from the collection and digitisation of material through to creating films and audio interviews and in the design, layout and curation of the exhibitions," explained One to One Development Trust Chief Executive Judi Alston.

"Castleford Tigers are leading the way with this innovative heritage project. It will be a great asset, not just to Castleford fans but to Rugby League supporters all over the world."

For now, the virtual museum is only accessible via a PC but the Trust is seeking the funding needed to make it compatible on Mac and iOS devices.

"We want as many people as possible to be able to access this fantastic resource," said Stephen Ball. "From young children to their grandparents, the museum is a great way of engaging with everyone who cares about Castleford Tigers."

To download the Castleford Tigers virtual museum please visit archive.castigersheritage.com/virtual.asp

To search the 2,000-plus items in the Memories Box chronicling the club's rich heritage please visit archive.castigersheritage.com/memorybox.asp



Batley Girls Under-16s' trip to Australia acted as inspiration for new play, *The Ruck*
 Images courtesy of Paul and Michelle Kilburn

RUGBY LEAGUE-INSPIRED PLAY HITS THE STAGE

Rugby League Cares has secured second-year investment from IVE, the Yorkshire-based creative arts and culture agency, to deliver projects based on the Arts Council's Arts Award framework.

The Cultural Partnership investment allows RL Cares to continue working with the charitable club trusts and foundations at Huddersfield Giants, Hull Kingston Rovers and Leeds Rhinos on a wide range of participant-led performance arts initiatives.

IVE is one of 10 Arts Council-funded bridge organisations connecting the cultural and education sectors to give children and young people access to great art and cultural opportunities.

As part of the extended relationship, IVE will continue to support the Rugby AM Academy Gold Arts Award programme, which this year will identify and work with students from Priesthorpe School in Leeds.

Rugby League Cares has also been working with Creative Scene, an Arts Council England-funded organisation which aims to make art a part of everyday life for people in Batley, Birkenshaw, Birstall, Cleckheaton, Dewsbury, Gomersal, Heckmondwike, Liversedge and Mirfield.

This link will see the Huddersfield Giants Community Trust work alongside Creative Scene on a new play inspired by the real-life story of the first UK girls' Rugby League team to tour Australia.

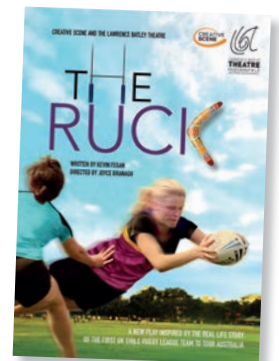
'The Ruck' is the story of how in 2015 Batley Girls Under-16s shattered one of sport's most enduring glass ceilings, overcoming discrimination, family difficulties and friendship issues.

Written by award-winning playwright Kevin Fegan, 'The Ruck' will have its world premiere at the Lawrence Batley Theatre in Huddersfield on Saturday 16th September before performances at Wakefield, Doncaster and Barnsley.

Creative Scene will run a performance arts workshop with youngsters from the Huddersfield Giants Community Trust during the October half-term, incorporating many of the songs and scenes from 'The Ruck'.

Vicky Holliday, the creative producer, said the workshop examines a wide range of themes around the play, including the physical challenge of adapting a game of Rugby League to the stage.

"After coming to the Lawrence Batley Theatre to see the performance, the young people from the Giants Trust will also be doing some team building work and some creative writing looking at how to turn a true story into drama. It's an amazing story and an inspirational piece of theatre that will appeal to anyone with a passion for sport or theatre, or both!"



W

hile the players, officials and supporters of Hull FC and Wigan Warriors head for the 2017 Ladbrokes Challenge Cup Final aboard luxury

coaches, trains and cars, a hardy group of Rugby League fans will be taking a more testing route to Wembley.

On Monday 21st August, 15 cyclists, including 1998 Wembley winner Keith Senior and 2004 Challenge Cup finalist Chev Walker, will set out on a marathon 320-mile off-road ride from Headingley Carnegie to Wembley in aid of Rugby League Cares.

Travelling along riverside paths, forest trails and bridleways, the riders on the UK Red Ride to Wembley will work their way south via Sheffield, Chesterfield, Nottingham, Loughborough, Leicester, Northampton, Milton Keynes and St Albans before arriving at the Wembley Stadium Rugby League Legends statue on the eve of the cup final, Friday 25th August.

The ride's title sponsors are UK Red Fire and Security, a Leeds-based company which utilises state-of-the-art technology and expertise to provide protection to homes and businesses across the country.

UK Red have been joined by a host of other corporate sponsors, including All Sport Insurance, IT consultants Infinity Works, NL Van, Truck and Car Hire, Environmental Services Design, Yorkshire Boilers, Halfords and Club Doncaster Foundation.

Chris Rostron, the Head of Rugby League Cares who is one of the 15 riders, said: "It's fantastic to see former players pitching in to help the charity by taking part in the UK Red Ride to Wembley and what will be an epic five days.

"RL Cares works closely with both current and past players and the funds we raise on the ride will allow us to continue our sterling work supporting the game's most important stakeholders. I would like to thank all our corporate sponsors for their generous support: we're also grateful to the hundreds of individuals who are supporting us by sponsoring the riders."

The participants also include former Salford player Paul Highton, ex-Wakefield Trinity chief executive James Elston, Rugby AM TV presenter Alex Simmons and RL Cares staff members Emma Goldsmith and John Ledger.

Kevin Walton, the Managing Director of UK Red Fire and Security, said: "My colleague Dean Bettison and I rode from London to Paris last year and raised £1,500 for Rugby League Cares, and this year wanted to do something a bit more challenging and nearer to home.

"We're both keen Leeds Rhinos fans and have nothing but admiration for the work



UK Red Fire and Security director Dean Bettison (centre) saddles up with Keith Senior and Head of RL Cares Chris Rostron
Picture by Roger Saunders

RUGBY LEAGUE PEDAL POWER

Rugby League Cares does and the way it impacts positively on the lives of people involved at every level of the sport.

"When I pitched the idea of the UK Red Ride to Wembley to Chris and a few others, the response was fantastic and it's great to have so many familiar, and new faces, joining us for the five days.

"I really hope players and fans alike get behind us by digging deep and sponsoring the riders. Rugby League Cares goes to such great lengths to help people, it would be nice to see that sterling work get the recognition it deserves."

Keith Senior, who cycled through South America last summer alongside Paul Highton as part of the team that rode to Rio in aid of RL Cares and the Jane Tomlinson Fund, said he was "almost" looking forward to getting back in the saddle!

"Since I retired six years ago I've undertaken some massive challenges for great causes and this is up there with the toughest of them," said Keith.

"I struggled to make the transition to the next stage of my life at the end of my playing career and it would have been so much smoother had Rugby League Cares been around back then to offer the support they now provide to current players.

"When Chris Rostron rang and asked me if I fancied joining him on a sponsored ride from Leeds to Wembley I jumped at the chance. It was only when I signed up that he told me we weren't going to be doing it on tarmac though..."

If you would like to sponsor the ride to Wembley, either as an individual or company, please visit www.justgiving.com/fundraising/kevin-walton10





Striving to be your trusted business partner

AFEX has been helping our clients all around the world since 1979, whether they are sending or receiving international payments or in need of risk management services, we take pride in creating innovative tailored FX solutions.

With offices in 20 locations and covering all major time zones AFEX is truly global; we work around the clock to ensure our clients' aren't affected by the volatile FX market.

Our experience paired with our unrivalled customer service ensures our clients feel safe in the knowledge that they have a team of experts by their side.

Remember every second counts.

For more information, please call us on: **0207 004 3939** or visit **afex.com**.

© 2017 Associated Foreign Exchange Holdings, Inc. All rights reserved.

Associated Foreign Exchange Limited, which does business under the trade name of AFEX (registered in England and Wales, Company Number 4848033, Registered Office Address: 4th Floor, 40 Strand, London WC2N 5RW), is authorised by the Financial Conduct Authority under the Payment Services Regulations 2009 (Register Reference: 502593) for the provision of payment services and is registered as an MSB with HM Revenue & Customs (Registered No: 12159000). All clients must have a fully completed and approved application and other necessary documentation on file with AFEX, including a list of authorised traders, if applicable, to initiate valid and legally binding funds transfers orders and other orders and instructions (including cancellations and amendments) (collectively 'Order') on client's behalf. For more information, visit www.afex.com.



Rugby League Cares

