Welcome to the December 2015 edition of the 'Dreadnought'. The idea of the newsletter is to remember and celebrate Trinity's history and heritage in the form of articles, photos, stories and memorabilia. This edition looks at Trinity at Christmas through the years.

CASTLEFORD RUGBY LEAGUE FOOTBALL CLUB LIMITED

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Thursday, December 25th, 1958   Kick-off 2.30 p.m.

CASTLEFORD v. WAKEFIELD T.

OFFICIAL PROGRAMME · THREEPENCE

For many years a Christmas Day league game was the norm and it was not until 1959 that these games ceased. Throughout the 1950s, a Christmas Day routine was often quick opening of presents, maybe a quick visit to church, a quick Christmas dinner and then off to Wheldon Road or Belle Vue for the big Trinity v Castleford showdown

Christmas Day

From Trinity's early Northern Union days to the late 1950s a Christmas Day game was nothing out of the ordinary. If anything, Christmas time was a treat for rugby league fans as clubs often played on Christmas Eve and Boxing Day too and extra games at weekends if Christmas fell on a midweek day.

Trinity's first Yuletide game came in the Northern Union's inaugural season, 1895, when Bradford visited Belle Vue in the return fixture of the two club's very first Northern Union game three months earlier. It was not a great spectacle for the crowd as it ended in a 0-0 draw. Four years later Hull came to Belle Vue and returned home with a 3-13 loss and two years later Normanton visited, only to lose 9-0.

In 1905 Trinity and Dewsbury then started a Christmas Day rivalry that continued until 1931 with each Christmas Day game being alternated between Crown Flatt and Belle Vue. Trinity held the upper hand with twelve wins to Dewsbury's six, with two draws over the twenty games.

Leeds then provided the opposition throughout the 1930s with two wins each and a draw over the five games.
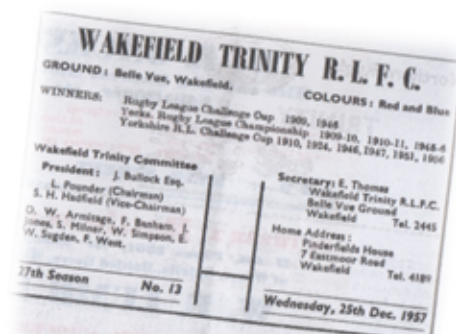
Castleford, Dewsbury and Featherstone Rovers were our opponents in the war years and then post-war, 1945, Castleford provided the opposition on Christmas Day until these holiday games stopped in 1959.

As noted, these games were often local derbies, which reduced travel on the day, but in 1957, Trinity received long distance visitors, which cannot have been an easy day for Barrow.

When the *Shipbuilders* turned up at Belle Vue on a cold Wednesday afternoon, they were a mid-table side after a couple of successful seasons which saw them reach Wembley in 1955 & 1957 and third in the 1956-57 league table, and they still had internationals, Willie Horne and Phil Jackson in their backline. Trinity had youthful stars in their backline such as Fred Smith and Neil Fox with ex-international loose forward, Ken Traill making his third appearance after his signing from Halifax. Three days earlier, this youthful Trinity side had just been thumped 5-52 at St Helens.

Trinity put up a fight early on with an Eric Cooper try and Fox goal but four Barrow tries saw them leave Belle Vue with a 16-5 win in front of 7,487 attendance.

Christmas Eve

December 24th league games have been few and far between in Trinity's history with only eleven games being played over the course of time, and these were generally Saturday games at the beginning of a busy Christmas schedule.

Again, many games were local derbies with Bramley, Dewsbury, Batley and Castleford providing the opposition. Trinity travelled to Warrington in 1904 and they would not have envied the long haul to Barrow in 1938, losing out 15-6 to the previous season's Wembley finalists.

Trinity's last Christmas Eve tie was a visit to Mount Pleasant in 1972 when Batley were defeated 20-13. With a busy schedule ahead, Trinity made a few changes to the programme after their recent 44-11 win over Hull KR, and with a visit to Headingley coming up in two days time. Jack Marston and Terry Crook came into the centres with John Hegarty moving to stand off in place of David Topliss. Ken Endersby replaced David Knowles in the second row.

BATLEY		WAKEFIELD	
Full Back:		Full Back:	
1—DEWHURST		1—WRAITH	
Threequarters:		Threequarters:	
2—MASKILL		2—SMITH	
3—LINGARD		3—LAYTON	
4—HOLMES		4—HEGARTY	
5—MARSH		5—MAJOR	
Half Backs:		Half Backs:	
6—WATTS		6—TOPLISS	
7—WILLIAMS		7—BONNAR	
Forwards:		Forwards:	
8—GRINHAFF		8—VALENTINE	
9—PIWINSKI		9—MORGAN	
10—BROOKE		10—LYONS	
11—BELL J. S.		11—KNOWLES	
12—FOX		12—BALLENTYNE	
13—BELL J. N.		13—FOX N.	
14—		14—	
15		15—	

Referee—
Mr. E. LEACH (St. Helens)

Touch Judges—
Mr. N. CLARK
Mr. C. A. SMITH

Geoff Wraith (two), John Hegarty and George Ballantyne scored the tries with Neil Fox kicking four goals to Batley's one try and five goals.

Boxing Day

For many Trinity fans over the age of forty, Boxing Day rugby league usually meant Headingley with an 11.30am kick off, with BBC's Grandstand screening the game, turkey sandwiches at half time and a 'whiff' of whiskey floating across the terraces, but looking through the history books Trinity only played Leeds, away, at Christmas on twenty seven occasions but apart from four seasons, this was our regular fixture from 1945 to 1978.

As with most Christmas games, these fixtures were generally local derbies with Trinity's first Boxing Day opponents being Halifax, a 0-15 defeat in 1895. For the next four years, we alternated venues with Castleford, although not the present day team from Wheldon Road. This Castleford team was the original side that disbanded in 1906, playing at the 'Sandy Desert', just off Lock Lane. Bramley, Holbeck, Dewsbury and Pontefract provided our opposition in the early 1900s before Huddersfield became regular Boxing Day opponents before the outbreak of World War One.
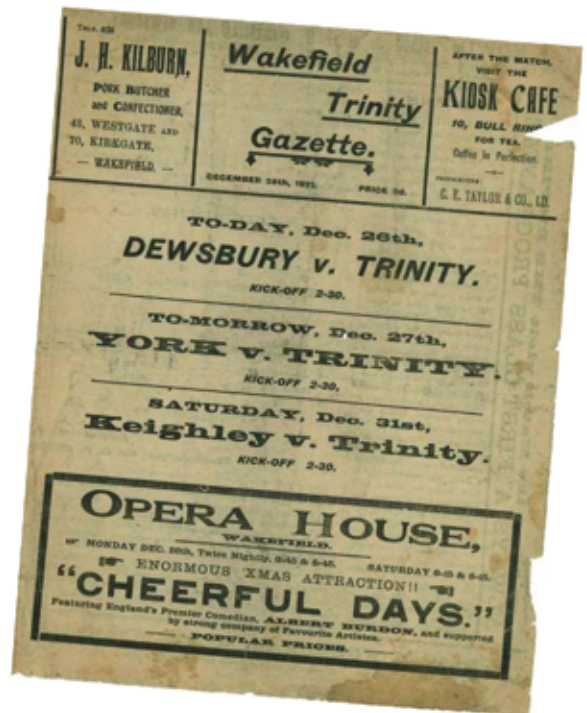
The pre-war Huddersfield side was classed as the 'Team of All Talents' and the likes of Harold Wagstaff, Albert Rosenfeld, Ben Gronow and Douglas Clark gave us some tough beatings. Australian winger, Rosenfeld scored eight tries against us in a 62-5 defeat in 1911 to go with other heavy losses in 1914 (5-44) and 1919 (12-51), our own legend and 'Hall of Famer', Jonathan Parkin, playing as a teenager in 1914.

Dewsbury (1921), Featherstone Rovers (1923-25), Dewsbury (1927), Leeds (1928-32), Dewsbury (1933-36) and Leeds (1937) were our inter-war Boxing Day games but it was not a happy era with only seven wins coming in those fifteen games. The 22-7 win at top-of-the-table, Leeds in 1931 was worth plenty of 'column inches' in the local paper with 'Hall of Famers' Mick Exley, Bill Horton and Harry Wilkinson totally dominating the Leeds pack.

Once the Second World War was over, Leeds became regular opponents with Headingley and Belle Vue alternating venues. A one-off game against Hull in 1958 was then followed by regular visits to Leeds over the next twenty years. Batley (1969 & 1970) and Huddersfield (1975) were the only alterations to the Boxing Day fixtures up until 1978.

Castleford and Bramley then took up the fixture in the early 1980s, including Wally Lewis's visit to Wheldon Road in 1983, before five epic battles with Featherstone Rovers between 1987 and 1991 all at Post Office Road.

Trinity's last official Boxing Day game was in 1995, a 4-8 loss at Featherstone, again, but the strangest decision was a year earlier when Trinity were forced to visit Workington Town in 1994, losing 12-28. David Nelson and Robert Piva were the try scorers at Derwent Park with Nigel Wright kicking a couple of goals. Once the summer era started in 1996 official Boxing Day games finished but the Wildcats' returned to Headingley on regular occasions for 'Holiday Friendly' games in the Super League years.

Headingley, Boxing Day, 11.30am

As noted, Leeds away became a Boxing Day tradition from 1959 to 1978 with a morning kick off, many great games and big crowds. After under soil heating was fitted under the Headingley pitch in 1963, the game was scheduled for Leeds throughout the 1960s as the pitch was generally, always, fit to play on and was often the only league game played as others were postponed around the area.

The first of these games was in 1959 when Trinity won 39-5 with 14,490 seeing Fred Smith, Alan Skene and Neil Fox all scoring two tries each. A year later, Trinity won 14-9 but a big talking point was second rower, Albert Firth, being selected on the wing to counter the threat of flying winger, Wilf Rosenberg, a tactic that worked successfully in a top of the table clash watched by 30,514. Brian Briggs scored the winning try and an odd statistic saw Neil Fox kick his first goal in nineteen attempts (over three games) having missed his previous eighteen attempts at goal!!
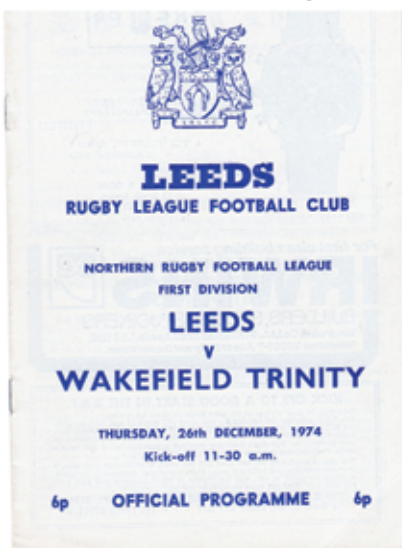
The 1961 (fog) and 1962 (snow) games fell foul of the bad weather but 1963 and 1964 saw two terrific Trinity victories; Neil Fox scoring four tries and four goals in a 32-8 victory in 1963 and kicking another seven goals a year later in a 29-6 win.

As the 26th fell on a Sunday in 1965, the game was moved to the 27th, Leeds winning 11-9 with a 21,343 attendance and the following year, Leeds gained another victory, with a 28-6 win, ex-Trinity star, Ken Rollin leading the Loiners to victory in front of a 16,000 crowd.

Trinity were League Champions in 1967 but travelled to Headingley in mid-table after a poor start to the season. This was the start of the Headingley glory years with a young back line of Smith, Atkinson, Hynes, Shoebottom and Seabourne leading Leeds to a 21-4 victory. This loss was a turning point, though, for Trinity as they went sixteen games unbeaten and would only lose two more matches that season, which included the Challenge Cup Final against Leeds, although Trinity retained the Championship Trophy. Leeds and Trinity would also finish in first and second place in the league table, respectively.

In 1968, Trinity asked Leeds to reverse the fixture to Belle Vue but Leeds refused and the 'traditional annual derby' game was withdrawn from the fixture calendar. Trinity were due to play Hull KR at home, but the weather eventually saw it postponed and 1969 and 1970 saw fixtures with Batley.

The Christmas visit to Headingley returned in 1971 with Boxing Day landing on the 27th and another good crowd of over 15,000 seeing Leeds win 13-2. Leeds were in the middle of a very successful period in the early 1970s with Hardisty and Hepworth 'pulling the strings' at half back and Ray Batten helping Bob Haigh set try scoring records in the pack. They defeated Trinity again 20-7, on Boxing Day 1972 and 19-14 in 1973. Trinity gained a creditable 13-13 draw in 1974 with David Topliss and Mick Morgan scoring tries and Ian Ellis kicking the decisive drop goal.

After another year off when Trinity entertained Huddersfield in 1975, we were back to Headingley on 27th December 1976 for one of Trinity's greatest victories in the 1970s with an 18-8 victory, John Archer, Geoff Gerard, Brian Lockwood and David Topliss scoring the tries with Willie Oulton kicking three goals. The following two years saw 6-22 losses on both occasions before further losses in the 1986 and 1993 encounters, the last official Boxing Day league game at Headingley.