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IAN THOMAS

One of the best...says Alex Murphy

Ian is undoubtedly one of the best clubmen Huddersfield has had over the years.

For me, he could be among the top four wingmen in the country because he still hasn't realised his full potential.

I have had the pleasure of working with him over the last two years and, in times of constantly changing player personnel, he is one player I would go all out to keep.

His play has come on in leaps and bounds over the last two years and he most definitely has the potential for the top flight.

He has bags of pace and ability and only needs to realise that he has what it takes to reach the top.

He has a great attitude and his

unique sense of humour makes him a true asset in the dressing room.

There have been many clubs chasing him over the years but he is proud to play for his home town team. Nobody deserved a championship winner's medal more than Ian when he lifted the Third Division title in 1992.

His professionalism was illustrated at the end of last season when he was chosen by the Yorkshire Federation of Supporters Clubs as fairest and most loyal player.

I hope the people of Huddersfield rally round and give him the bumper testimonial he thoroughly deserves.

Alex Murphy.



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IAN THOMAS

In this modern game of ours, very few players remain with the same club for more than ten years. Even fewer play top class rugby for that length of time. Huddersfield Rugby League Football Club has been very fortunate in having the services of Ian Thomas, one of the fastest

wingers in the game fall into that category. Unfortunately Ian's decade with the club has been a mixed one, and has ebbed and flowed with the fortunes of the club. However, Ian's performances have always been consistent and he has thrilled the crowds with some magnificent tries.

By Mick Murphy

Ian has always been a loyal club player, never complaining, or asking for ridiculous contracts. With a more successful Huddersfield or a First Division club, I am sure Ian would have gained more Great Britain caps to add to his earlier honours as a Great Britain Under 19 winger.

There is still time yet and let's hope we can see him for a further ten years in the Claret and Gold colours. Congratulations Ian on your benefit season, I hope you make as much of it as you deserve.
Michael A. Murphy,
President.



Ian beats Des Drummond to the ball in a match against Leigh in 1985



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THE IAN THOMAS

STORY



▲ Ian signing for Huddersfield back in 1983 as Ken Scaddon (left) and Roy Light look on.

Loyalty is a priceless factor in a sport in which players are often viewed as items of merchandise rather than Human Beings.

With the much criticised contract system having considerably reduced a players average stay with their club, never have testimonials been so richly deserved.

Ian Thomas is the first Huddersfield player to qualify for a benefit for five years, which is in sharp contrast to the situation a decade ago when players were literally queuing up for a testimonial and frequently had to share.

Glenn Knight and Jimmy Johnson were Huddersfield's beneficiaries in 1988-89, sharing £8,500 and before that came Trevor Leathley/Derek Wroe, Peter Cramp/David Schofield, Mick Shepherd, Tom Davies, Malcolm Branch and Dave Hooson.



Ian, Huddersfield born and bred, was snapped up by the Fartowners in May 1983, despite fierce competition. Oldham had offered him £2,000 to turn professional and Wigan and Leeds also

expressed a definite interest in the gifted winger who had caught the eye playing for the Fartown Supporters' Under 18 team.

▲ Ian adding to his tally back in 1989 against Halifax with Wilf George and Steve Smith in pursuit.

Continued on page 9



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THE IAN THOMAS STORY



Picture: Ian on his way to scoring yet another try...this time against Ryedale York.

Continued from page 7
French club La Reole were so impressed by his speed and natural talent while Ian was playing for the Supporters on a tour of Southern France that they instantly offered him playing terms for the following season. Only 16 at the time, Ian was naturally loathe to leave his roots and the home loving former Royds Hall High School pupil jumped at the chance to sign for his hometown club the following season. Not that he lacked ambition. Playing for Yorkshire and Great Britain Colts in 1983-84 gave him a taste of the big time and he liked what he saw.

Ian made his debut at Barrow in the opening match of the 1983-84 season and scored a try while making his home debut in a 24-24 draw against Rochdale Hornets. A week later, he kicked four goals as Huddersfield went down bravely 36-20 in the first round of the Yorkshire Cup at Castleford. It's a remarkable scoring rate that Ian managed to maintain for the next ten years. His goalkicking fell by the wayside but a total of 115 tries in 216 senior appearances up to the start of the 1993-94 season is a proud achievement. He has topped the club's try-scoring charts no fewer than five times and is currently averaging a try every other match. It's a record that would make many bigger named wingmen green with envy.

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THE IAN THOMAS STORY



▲ Ian takes the tackle in this seasons first home game against Rochdale Hornets.

Continued from page 9

No player can go through 10 seasons at a club without having the occasional hiccup.

Ian Thomas was once transfer listed at £80,000 after asking for a move and several moves were put in motion only to fall through at the final hurdle.

He was poised to join Leeds in August 1987 after then Fartown coach Jack Addy made it clear that he wouldn't stand in the way of the ambitious young threequarter.

The move broke down when the clubs failed to agree on a suitable player exchange and Bradford Northern then emerged as a strong contender for his signature.

Northern coach Barry Seabourne, who went on to coach Ian at Fartown, had agreed to take him to Odsal on loan for a month but the loan papers were never signed.

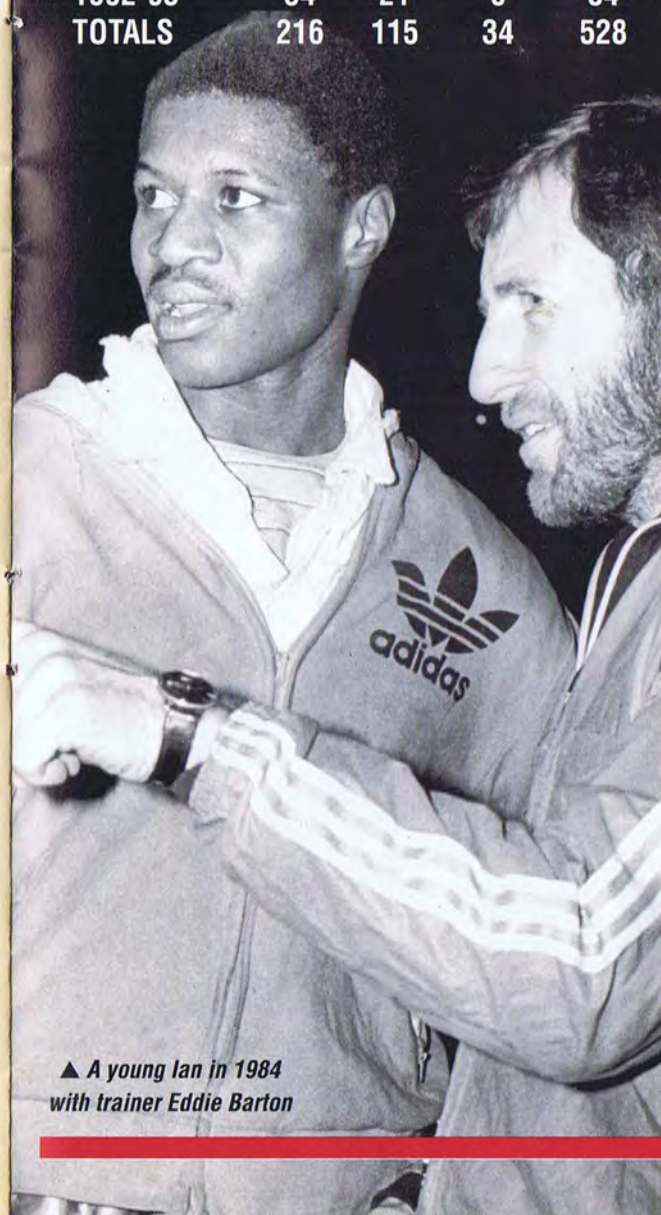
"The deal fell through and it was the worst thing I did at Bradford because Ian would have become an international," recalled Seabourne.

Castleford, Salford and Hunslet have also showed more than a passing interest in the exciting threequarter over the years and this was after Wigan and Oldham had made efforts to beat Huddersfield to his signature in the first place.

FOR THE RECORD

IAN'S CAREER WITH HUDDERSFIELD R.L.F.C.

Season	Apps	Tries	Goals	Points
1983-84	11	4	7	30
1984-85	22	10	11	62
1985-86	21	10	0	40
1986-87	20	8	10	52
1987-88	19	8	3	38
1988-89	22	13	3	58
1989-90	19	7	0	28
1990-91	22	16	0	64
1991-92	26	18	0	72
1992-93	34	21	0	84
TOTALS	216	115	34	528



▲ A young Ian in 1984 with trainer Eddie Barton



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One of the better aspects of coaching young players is that every now and then someone comes along and then oozes with talent. Smooth out the rough edges and you know he is destined for professionalism, Ian Thomas was just one such player. Ian joined the Huddersfield Supporters Under 17 team, more or less straight from school. He had already been pointed in the right direction by his sports master, Mike Creary, an ex Rugby League professional with Leeds, a great friend of mine who gave me some tips about Ian.

1. Cannot tackle.

2. Cannot catch a ball.
3. Cannot pass a ball.
4. He can run like the wind!
Ian said he wanted to play centre, but was always out of position, so, after a long chat, I persuaded him that the wing was his best position.

After a season of hard work and learning, Ian was improving fast, so much so that it was about then that we nearly lost him. On one of our tours to the South of France, we stopped off at a club outside Bordeaux called La Reole, who had just won the French Second Division Championship and they put out a strong team. On a

Friend and ex-Coach Neil Whittaker looks back at Ian's Early days with us here at Huddersfield.

warm day, Ian showed his true potential. On three separate occasions, he collected the ball from a deep kick near his own line, and with sheer speed, swerve and side step, went the full length of the field to score. After the match the La Reole officials could not stop talking about the 'Black Flash'. Through Cyril Tunnicliffe, the Supporters Chairman, they offered professional terms to Ian there and then. A flat, a car, a job!! and he could bring a friend.

Luckily for Huddersfield, he refused, came back to his grass roots and then went

from strength to strength. Huddersfield Colts, Yorkshire, International honours and then regular first team. The rest is history. He is still with us and playing well. It was a great pleasure to be a small part of Ian's early career, I would like to think it helped in some way. Congratulations on attaining your benefit Ian and I hope there are a few more seasons left.

Neil Whittaker
Ex Coach and still friend!

P.S. His pet hate is playing in the snow.



Ian in action against Carcassonne in 1991

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Above: the 1982 Huddersfield Colts team.
Left: Ian in his amateur days for Yorkshire.

...The story continues with Ian looking forward to a big season and beyond!



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