

JOHNNY

Huddersfield
1947—1955



Edgar Welfenden,
Cliffe Works, Birkby

1/-

JOHNNY

The Football Career of Johnny Hunter
in words and photographs, with detailed
records of his achievements in the
Rugby League game for Huddersfield
and Other Nationalities.

Compiled by A. N. Gaulton
in association with members
of the Huddersfield C. & A.C.
Supporters' Club Committee

Foreword by
HUBERT LOCKWOOD
(Huddersfield C. & A.C.)

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JOHNNY HUNTER TESTIMONIAL

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JOHNNY — A Greaves Studio Portrait



The "new boys" — taken on their arrival in Huddersfield



Lionel and Johnny training on the Town ground at Leeds Road, which was kindly loaned to the Fartowners for training purposes during the big "freeze-up" of the 1947 winter

FOREWORD

I WELL remember, in February, 1947, calling in at the Fartown Pavilion and being introduced by my father to a new Fartown player by the name of Johnny Hunter. Little did I realise that in the very near future I, together with a big following of Fartown supporters, was to see the same man introduce to our game a new type of full back play which created such enthusiasm and surprise to all who had the pleasure of seeing Johnny when he was really in the peak period of his career.

His fielding and catching of a ball has, in my humble opinion, never been surpassed, and what brought the crowds to their toes more than when he commenced one of those telling runs through the opposition.

This season, up to the time of his unfortunate knee injury, Johnny has been helping us out on the wing and not letting his side down in any way. He is the right type of player to have in any dressing room as he is blessed with a pleasing personality and is most helpful to the junior members of the team. From his first appearance at Fartown Johnny has always been eager and willing to serve the club in any capacity.

It is indeed a pleasure to have the opportunity of contributing to this Souvenir Brochure and I would like to convey my own personal good wishes to Johnny and also, on behalf of the Football Committee, wish him all that he could wish for himself.

HUBERT LOCKWOOD
Chairman, Football Committee

JOHNNY HUNTER

THERE was both elation and mystification among Huddersfield followers in the early part of 1947. Elation at the announcement that Lionel Cooper (whom everyone thought would go to Leeds) had been signed. Mystification at the news that the move was a "double deal" and that a full back named Johnny Hunter was to accompany Cooper to Fartown. Who on earth was Johnny Hunter?

That was a query for Fartowners in those few months more than eight years ago, but the query was soon to be answered, and the unfolding of the Hunter story has given considerable delight to many thousands throughout the Rugby League. Johnny had his own ideas of full back play and they were far, far removed from the old-time school of theory in which the full back "stayed at home" and kicked to save his forwards.

It is doubtful if any full back in the whole history of Rugby League football has spent more time inside his opponents' "25" lines than Hunter has. He was as liable to run a try in as anyone else in the side, the wingmen excepted of course, for he just could not keep out of things. Fortune favoured him, perhaps, in that much of his football was played with a really great Fartown team, but Johnny's "attack is the best defence" technique played a great part in the building up of that team.

Rugby League has never lacked enthusiastic players, yet Hunter brought a new zest to the game. He was always bubbling over with adventure, for he belonged not to this machine age but to the "Jolly Roger" era when men nailed their colours to the mast and did outrageous things. Johnny did outrageous things on the football field and the crowds loved him for doing them and so often getting away with them.

Not that he always did get away with them! How often have our hearts been in our mouths as we have watched Johnny juggling heroically with the ball over his own line at some tense moment with a horde of opposing forwards in the act of pouncing on him!! Sometimes the result was that a try was given away, but so often it was truly amazing how he would succeed in extricating himself from some impossible position.

The fact was, of course, that there was far more to it than just enthusiasm, hot-headedness and blind luck. Johnny is the type of player who plays on impulse. Not for him the cold reasoning of a Devery, who seemed to work out every move ahead with a mathematical precision even though he had only a second to do it in. When the gap is there for Johnny he is straight through it, almost as a natural re-action to there being a gap, and long before anyone has time to wonder whether or not he can make it.

Such a player will inevitably make mistakes, and some of them will be bad ones, but Johnny was better equipped than most for his position and style of play in that he possesses a remarkable ability for taking a rugby ball at any angle. High ones or low ones; in mud, slush, or on iron-hard grounds; driven by rain or snow, or backed by a glaring sun; it made no difference. Ninety-nine per cent of them were fielded cleanly and confidently, and he would be off up-field dodging oncoming forwards and launching another Fartown assault. Many opposing teams have discarded their policy of kicking through to the full back on finding that it often paid disastrous dividends.

How often have we seen Johnny, on his own line, pluck the ball out of the air with one hand, and within minutes a Fartown score has been recorded at the other end. That is the Hunter idea on how Rugby League football should be played, as opposed to the "stuff it up your jersey" method, and those of us who have, at times, had to endure the tight game revelled in this open approach.

Yes, Johnny Hunter has well and truly answered the question, "Who on earth's Johnny Hunter?" We know now, and in the knowing have been given countless hours of pleasure, not only at Fartown but on many other grounds.

Surprisingly enough, Johnny looked a better proposition than the more famous Lionel in their first few months here, for the latter took a little while to settle down. Lionel had been married only a day or two before they left Australia by air, and not until his wife arrived by boat and another season had come round did the wingman really start on his record-breaking exploits.

Neither of them will ever forget their first game in England—at Craven Park, Hull, on March 15th, 1947. It was a bitter day and the conditions were so bad that Hunter collapsed in the bath at the end of the game. The result, a pointless draw, was one of the few nil-nil matches in which the Huddersfield club has taken part.

Despite his early successes, however, there were some crudities in Johnny's play to be ironed out. One of his eccentricities was when he was about to change direction while running with the ball. You always knew when that was going to happen because he would whirl an arm violently as though it was an aeroplane propellor! Then there was his capacity for getting himself laid out. After a few doses of concussion he learned to temper his enthusiasm with discretion—and without losing anything of the attractiveness of his play in so doing.

The result was that Hunter became one of the greatest attacking full backs the game has known and thousands flocked to watch him play. The try scoring record for a single season from the full back position stood to the credit of Jim Sullivan, who had scored as many as twelve, but Johnny beat that easily during season 1948-49 when he crossed for no fewer than sixteen tries. It is a rarity for a Rugby League full back to score three times in one match. Johnny has performed that feat on two separate occasions and it may well be that he holds a record in this respect.

Back in Australia, Johnny had had plenty of rugby experience as a centre three-quarter. Born at Kogarah, in Sydney, he started playing Rugby League football as a school-boy. On passing for high-school he went to St. Joseph's College, where he played at centre for three years in the Rugby Union team.

He went into the Australian Army on leaving school and became a close friend of Ray Lindwall, who was later to develop into a Test cricketer and one of Australia's greatest fast bowlers. Like Johnny, Ray played a lot of Rugby League football in the Army. He was a full back, and Johnny considers that if he had not chosen the cricketing path to sporting fame Ray would have become equally well-known as an international R.L. star.

Ray Lindwall gave Johnny Hunter quite a few tips on full back play and Johnny's improvement was such that in his first full season in the Sydney Competition he was considered to be in line for a Test place against the touring England team. That was in 1946, during which year Johnny had joined the Eastern Suburbs club, for which Lionel Cooper had chosen to play. Lionel's forceful running brought him Test honours, but Johnny's chances were ruined by a knee injury.

Still, there was adequate compensation on the way when Huddersfield's offer came. The call was for Cooper, but Lionel was not keen on going by himself, so Johnny Hunter came with him—and a great move it has turned out to be for all concerned. During their stay at Fartown the club has won each of the major Rugby League trophies, as follows:

R.L. Challenge Cup, 1952-53.

R.L. Championship Cup, 1948-49 (runners-up 1949-50).

Yorkshire Challenge Cup, 1950-51 and 1952-53 (runners-up 1949-50).

Yorkshire League, 1948-49, 1949-50 and 1951-52 (runners-up 1947-48 and 1952-53).

Johnny hasn't been idle in the summer months either. A natural ball-player, he excels at tennis and has also played a lot of League cricket. His cricket clubs have included Bradley Mills (Huddersfield & District League), Rochdale (Lancashire League), Salts and Lightcliffe (Bradford League). Many local cricket enthusiasts will remember his first game for Bradley Mills. He rattled up 178 runs in no time. Cricket being the game it is, and Johnny being Johnny, he got a "duck" in his next innings!

He gets a lot of pleasure out of playing cricket, and it should be mentioned that in addition to being a forceful batsman he is well above the average as a wicket-keeper. He enjoyed a successful season last summer when his team, Lightcliffe, won the Priestley Cup. In the Semi-final, against Bradford on the Park Avenue County ground, he pulled things round with a valuable knock just when it was most needed.

One of the last things Johnny could have expected when he came to England was that he would eventually be the successor to Lionel Cooper on the left wing in the Fartown team. Yet so it has proved. Lionel's retirement and the emergence of Frank Dyson have given Johnny the difficult job of replacing Cooper. He has undertaken this task in his own inimitable way and while, as a wingman, he may not be a Cooper, he rarely fails to make his presence felt. The knee injury which, at the time of writing, is keeping him on the touch line has been a great disappointment to all at Fartown.

Ever ready with a word of advice, encouragement and—when needed—criticism for young Dyson who has succeeded him at full back, Johnny can still give much to Rugby League football and to the Fartown club. That he will continue to do so for quite a while is the hope of the many thousands of his admirers.

Personal Tributes to Johnny

Great Capacity for doing the Unexpected

by **SIDNEY H. CROWTHER** ("Auſolyous" of the Huddersfield Examiner)

It is not easy to find a single adjective to fit Johnny Hunter. He is very individual, like no one else who ever donned a claret and gold jersey, and though a fitting successor to a great line of full backs we have had at Fartown, there is in him no point of comparison with any one of them.

He does things like picking up the ball with one hand that no-one else would dare, and he does it with as few mistakes or knocks-on as any full back who takes his time and uses both hands.

He has a great capacity for doing the unexpected. Few players in recent times have so often made a crowd gasp because he has done the last thing anybody, either on the field of play or round the touch lines, expected. Even his errors, like his strokes of success, have fallen within the category of unaccountable.

There never was anything of dull science about Johnny. He takes risks—few full backs more so, but always for the sake of enterprise. Yet he is essentially as level-headed as any Australian who ever came to England. If he takes risks it is never because he is reckless, but because by temperament he knows that you'll never get much out of football unless you play it adventurously.

And, of course, he's right. Johnny has got a lot out of football. You get the impression many a time as he sets off on one of his runs that he's really enjoying a bit of fun. There is a lot of the schoolboy left in him that pops out when he plays Rugby.

That's why he and Puig Aubert, the French full back, have been the two most entertaining footballers of these times. And I use the word *entertaining* in no disparaging sense. I mean simply that both of them have given us thrills of an unexpected

kind, that they have had the rare gift of making a game interesting and full of character merely because they were taking part in it.

Johnny has had some training as a boxer and he knows how to use his fists, but you never see him raise a hand where he shouldn't. He's too level headed—and an exception among men who are level minded in that inspiration often comes to him.

He's popular on "away" grounds as well as at Fartown—so much so that it has been rare indeed for "away" spectators ever to get angry with him. He's a sportsman in every sense of the word.

Exuberant and Carefree Style

by **RUSS PEPPERELL**, Huddersfield, Cumberland and England

Fartowners have been extremely fortunate in post war years in having secured from Australia and New Zealand players of such outstanding ability as Cooper, Devery, Hunter and Henderson. These brilliant players have helped to enhance the already distinguished records of Fartown.

We have appreciated them all in their own rights but none has given more pleasure to the spectator than Johnny Hunter. His exuberant and carefree style—his uncanny sense of timing which enables him to take the most difficult ball from the air or the ground, with apparent ease—and by his elusive running bringing his team from defence to attack, have been a source of wonder and admiration since he joined us in 1947.

I had the pleasure of befriending Johnny when he first arrived in Huddersfield and the ensuing years have proved what must have been apparent to all who have seen him play—that he is a sportsman in the truest sense of the word and a gentleman at all times.

It therefore gave me great pleasure to hear that his loyal service is to be justly rewarded by a "Testimonial" and I trust that it proves to be a happy and successful event.

I conclude by wishing Johnny and his family good health, prosperity and several more years at Fartown.

Cavalier Spirit

by **EDDIE WARING** (Sunday Pictorial)

I wrote in an Australian magazine called "Sport" some months ago an article on John Hunter. Amongst the things I said of him were, "There have been better players than Hunter at Fartown from Australia, but none who have given more entertainment to the crowd and played rugby in the same cavalier spirit." And paying tribute now to Johnny, who is having a well deserved Testimonial, I can only endorse what I previously wrote.

I could tell many stories of this "lad" whom I was instrumental in bringing to Huddersfield along with Lionel Cooper. I had seen Hunter playing in an unimportant match on the Sydney Cricket ground and when Huddersfield decided to sign Cooper and another player was offered I was reminded by Ray Stehr about this game that Hunter had played. My memory was sufficiently strong enough to realise he would be an asset to the Fartown club and my judgement has been proved accurate.

I can still recall that cold, frosty day on the Huddersfield platform when we met the pair in after their trip from Australia. One female fan waiting said of Johnny, "Doesn't he look a happy lad?" And that is 'J.H.'

He plays football in a happy way and his contributions to English football have been of such a character we shall be sorry when the day arrives when he hangs his boots up for good. A first class sport, a first class footballer and a Rugby gentleman—what more can I say.

Brilliant Unorthodoxy

by **DAVE VALENTINE**, Huddersfield, Other Nationalities and Great Britain

When rugby fans talk about attacking full backs Johnny Hunter's name is one which invariably crops up. "The best catcher of a ball I have ever seen," they say. His bursts up the middle from the full back position have given the spectators at Fartown many a thrilling moment.

Johnny's brilliant unorthodoxy had much to do with Fartown's great post-war record in which Johnny has won every medal available to a player with a Yorkshire team. Along with the players at Fartown I wish Johnny every success in his testimonial.



Another Greaves Studio Portrait of Johnny



A 1947 FARTOWN TEAM GROUP

Back Row: A. E. Fiddes (trainer), R. Nicholson, H. Whitehead, P. D. Thomas,
R. S. Robson, A. Givvons, H. Wood, L. Baxter, D. B. Madden
Front Row: J. C. H. Hunter, J. Anderson, G. R. Pepperell, W. G. Morgan,
L. Howard, J. Bawden, L. W. Cooper



INTERNATIONAL R.L. STARS TURN CRICKETERS

Back Row: Ernest Ward, Johnny Hunter, Lionel Cooper, Arthur Clues
and Barry Tyler
In front: Bert Cook seems to be enjoying his job of nursing Johnny's son, Glen

Hair-Raising Bursts

by A. L. DREWRY (The Yorkshire Post)

Perhaps the testimonial which Johnny Hunter will cherish most is that his successor at full back in the Huddersfield team, Frank Dyson, thinks the world of him.

It is not often that the ambitious understudy reveres the star who stands in his path to fame, but then, it is not often that the star tutors the understudy to the extent that Johnny has helped Frank.

It is in no small measure due to the hours that these two have spent together in practice that the youngster is now a candidate for higher representative honours. Need I say more about Hunter the man?

Hunter the full back came to Fartown with Lionel Cooper early in 1947, but whereas Cooper had already achieved Test honours, Hunter was an unknown quantity. Even we who had been on the tour with Risman's team in 1946 knew little about him, for it was not until we were almost on the point of leaving Australia that he made the grade in the Eastern Suburbs senior team.

Hunter had watched Martin Ryan demonstrate the then new technique of the full back who never kicked. He did not copy Ryan slavishly, but he still did more running than kicking. And what running!

Who will ever forget those hair-raising bursts to take the loose ball at full speed? His fearlessness cost him several bouts of concussion, but it also paved the way for many a spectacular Fartown try, and it is a tribute to his mettle that he went in just as fearlessly next time.

As the years passed he learned discretion, but never at the cost of valour. And who ever has seen him commit an act in the slightest degree questionable?

Huddersfield have been lucky in the players they have brought from Australia. They have never had a more loyal clubman than Johnny Hunter.

A Tonic to the Team

by LIONEL COOPER, Huddersfield, Other Nationalities and Australia

It is indeed a privilege for me to have the opportunity of writing a few lines on Johnny's behalf. Our Rugby League careers commenced together in Australia, and during the past 10 years I have seen Johnny give many brilliant performances and possibly give more entertainment value on a Rugby League football field than any player in post-war football.

In the early days Johnny was a centre but always had a liking for the full back position and I feel that no-one will contradict me when I say that had it not been for an early season injury he would most certainly have been Australia's full back in the 1946 Test series against Great Britain. It was only fitting, therefore, that he should gain the honours that he has gained since coming to England, and they have been many.

There have, from time to time, been critics who have said that he was too venturesome and that as the last line of defence he should have adopted safety tactics, but suffice it to say, that having been one of his team mates it was a tonic to the team every time Johnny ventured into the threequarters or set off on one of his long weaving runs into the opposition's territory.

It is hard to compare contemporary players with old timers but I think everyone will agree that Johnny's catching of a ball high in the air or the brilliant scooping up of a greasy ball from the feet of oncoming forwards has not had its equal in the Rugby League game. These two aspects, combined to the tremendous filip he gave to the team when he returned to the field at Wembley in 1953 in the memorable match against St. Helens will long live in my memory.

Johnny had a reputation in Australia as a lovable character and a first class all round sportsman and that reputation has been enhanced still further in this country by his displays not only on the football field—where he has played in any position required of him—but also on the cricket field, and the manner in which he has conducted himself off the field.

There is no question about his popularity with the Huddersfield officials and his team mates, but to be popular with opponents and their spectators in any form of sport is a very

difficult thing. I feel it is no exaggeration to say that Johnny can class this as one of his achievements.

In conclusion, I would like to say thank you, Johnny, for your sincerity in our friendship and may your testimonial be the success that your efforts, your enthusiasm and your team spirit so richly deserves.

Quality of Fearlessness

by ARTHUR HADDOCK (Yorkshire Evening News)

Most overseas players have come into the Northern R.L. game with a fanfare. Not so Johnny Hunter. He was quite the "lesser light" on arrival at Fartown with his famous countryman, Lionel Cooper.

I well remember dashing across from Leeds to Huddersfield with a photographer to take a picture of the two newcomers from Australia. "Who's the other chap," I asked, pointing to Johnny. "That's Hunter—he's a full back," came the reply.

And, at that time, few know little more than this about the man who was to develop into yet another brilliant Huddersfield star. It wasn't long before Hunter was answering all the questions in the best possible way—by sterling performances on the field.

Not only has Hunter been one of the best full backs ever to wear the "Claret and Gold" but he very quickly showed that in addition to possessing abundant skill he was endowed with what sportsmen are pleased to call "a big heart."

Few players have displayed greater courage on the football field; as an attacker or defender Hunter has never been known to quit. That quality of fearlessness has in the course of his career brought him more than the normal quota of injuries but he has always come back smiling.

In short, then, Johnny Hunter has been, and continues to be, a grand personality; a credit to Australia and to the famous club with which he came to prominence.

Miraculous Handling and Catching

by JACK BENTLEY (The Daily Dispatch)

Way back in Australia, Johnny Hunter used to talk about coming to England to play Rugby League football, but he was told: "You won't do any good over there." How wrong were those dismal prophets!

Even so it was mainly as a companion for Lionel Cooper that Johnny came here, for Fartown badly wanted Lionel, who did not fancy coming by himself. Thus Huddersfield told Johnny to come along too. "But it was the other fellow they wanted," Johnny once told me.

Fartown's luck was in, however, and so was Johnny's in a way, for in his own branch of Rugby League—at full back—he turned out to be just about as much of an attraction as that "other fellow."

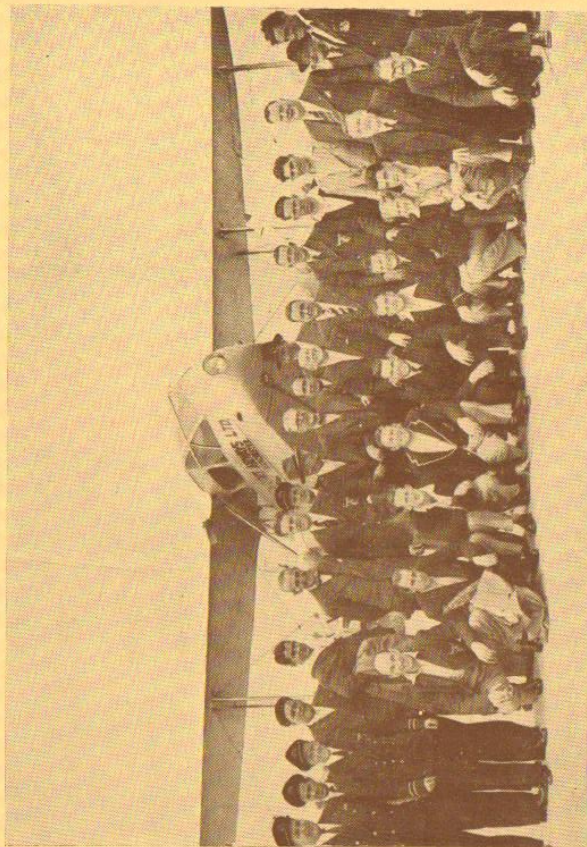
He wasn't always a full-back and for some of the many thrills that he has given them R.L. followers over here owe something to that great Australian cricketer—Ray Lindwall. Ray is a good friend of Johnny's and it was he who gave Johnny many tips about the art of full-back play, for Lindwall was a first-class No. 1.

But no matter how many tips Lindwall gave to the young Hunter they would not have been much use without the obvious flair for the full-back position which Johnny undoubtedly possesses. Kicking is usually reckoned to be one of the necessary attributes of a full-back and yet Johnny has excelled in the position without shining particularly as a kicker.

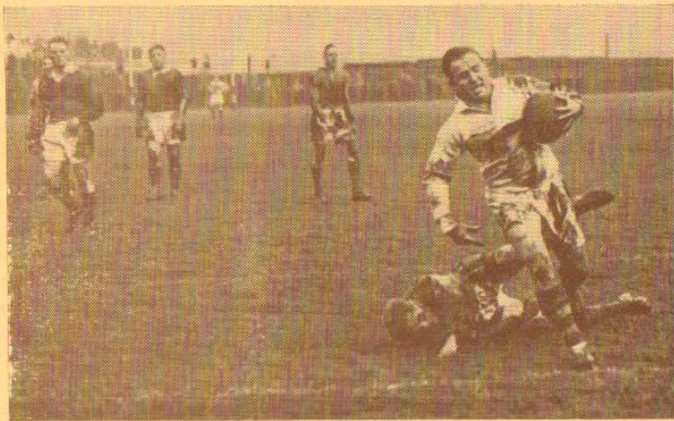
The Hunter brand of full-back play is, indeed, peculiar to Johnny Hunter. It is hazardous and thrilling, spectacular and profitable, as all who have seen Johnny play will know; especially Fartown supporters who have often seen him return to the field, bandaged or strapped up, to plunge once more into the fray.

He would indeed be a dull dog who has not been excited by Johnny's miraculous handling and catching of the ball as he tears at full speed cross-field. And it would be an unappreciative

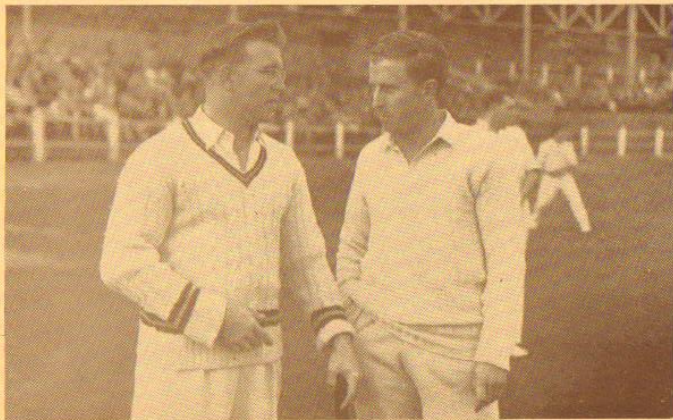
AN EMPIRE TEAM GROUP, MAY, 1949, AT TOULOUSE



There are seven Fartowners in this group: Devery, Hunter, Peppercell, Ban's, Valentine, Cooper and Daly, in addition to other well-known R.L. stars.



With the try line at his feet, this looked like a Fartown score against Keighley last season. Unfortunately, Johnny was brought back for a previous infringement



FARTOWN v. TOWN

Johnny Hunter and Vic Metcalfe, the rival captains, meet for the toss before the 1953 Cricket Festival at Fartown

fan, whether he supports Huddersfield or their opponents, who has failed to be stirred by Johnny's remarkable clearing runs up the middle.

One can always expect the unexpected from Johnny Hunter and for that alone he deserves the thanks of Rugby League followers in this country, for it is football geni like him who keep the turnstiles clicking.

His tries, as a full back, at least have generally had some remarkable quality about them and I well remember one at Hunslet in the 1951-52 season. Incidentally, that "other fellow" also reckons this a super try and he knows something about try scoring, but I'll tell you about it in Johnny's own words. They are an eloquent example of his kind of football—snappy, and to the point.

"I got possession from a play-the-ball on our own line and managed to score at the other end." That's all there was to it as far as Johnny was concerned! The very best of luck to him.

The Right Approach

by ARTHUR CLUES, Hunslet, Leeds and Australia

It is good to hear that the Huddersfield Club is giving Johnny Hunter a Testimonial. I have played with and against Johnny on many occasions and it will be generally agreed that he brings the right approach to any game in which he takes part. His approach has been one of adventure, tinged perhaps with recklessness at times, but none will decry him for that.

Rugby League football is a man's game. We all take risks and let ourselves go all out on occasions, but Johnny does it differently. The game never becomes grim to him. He really enjoys himself, and in so doing gives enjoyment to others.

Good Luck, Johnny, and here's wishing you a few more years in the game yet and a very successful Testimonial.

A Really Great Footballer

by RAY STEHR (Australian International, Toured England 1933/34 and 1937/38)

Johnny Hunter was a Rugby Union schoolboy star at the famous St. Joseph's College, Hunters Hill, N.S.W. before joining my club, Eastern Suburbs, Sydney. Being his first Rugby League captain, I feel I can add my tribute to a really great footballer. Johnny starred both as full back and centre with Easts, and his ability was quickly recognised by officials.

He went to Huddersfield unknown and on my recommendation, and I am sure that club has every reason to be proud of his achievements whilst representing them both on and off the field. Had he stayed in Australia he, without doubt, would have worn the green and gold of Australia.

Congratulations Johnny for a job well done for Australia and for the Rugby League code. I know I speak for all Australians when I say, "Best wishes for every success in your future life."

Good luck and God bless.

"Don't Kick to Hunter"

by ALEX FIDDES (former Fartown captain)

To be permitted to write a few words about Huddersfield's famous full back, Johnny Hunter, is indeed an honour. I had the pleasure of playing with him in his first game and it was apparent even then that Huddersfield had hit the jack-pot once again.

His catching of a ball was, and still is, something to marvel at. To describe his attacking qualities I can do no better than quote the words of some of Fartown's opponents, "Whatever you do don't kick the ball to Hunter." This, I contend, is the highest praise possible for any full back.

Johnny has been one of the game's personalities and I sincerely hope that Huddersfield's R.L. followers will rally round and make this a bumper testimonial.

Johnny's Fartown Playing Records

	App.	G.	T.	Pts.	'A' Team App.		
1946-47	16	...	—	2	6	...	—
1947-48	29	...	1	5	17	...	—
1948-49	38	...	1	16	50	...	—
1949-50	37	...	—	12	36	...	—
1950-51	28	...	—	11	33	...	3
1951 (Blackpool Comp.)	2	...	—	1	3	...	—
1951-52	27	...	—	5	15	...	1
1952-53	37	...	—	1	3	...	3
1953 (Blackpool Comp.)	1	...	—	1	3	...	—
1953-54	37	...	—	6	18	...	3
1954-55	33	...	1	3	11	...	2
1955-56	8	...	—	8	24	...	—
	293	...	3	71	219	...	12

Representative Honours

For Other Nationalities

- 1949-50 v. Wales at Abertillery, October 22nd.
v. France at Marseilles, January 15th.
(Was selected v. England at Workington, but unable to play).
- 1950-51 v. England at Wigan, April 11th.
- 1951-52 v. France at Hull, November 3rd.
v. Wales at Abertillery, December 1st.
v. England at Wigan, April 23rd.
- 1952-53 v. England at Fartown, October 18th.
v. France at Marseilles, November 23rd.

Other Matches

- 1948-49 Empire Team in France.
- 1950-51 British Empire v. Wales at Llanelly, May 19th.
(Was selected for Rest of League v. Tourists at Wigan on October 4th, but unable to play).

Press Cuttings

I liked Hunter, who had a lot to do. The Rovers' forwards gave him no rest but he went down to their feet with pluck. His fielding of the ball was good and his running into attack brought applause from the Hull crowd. It was a display of the greatest promise for the future. He has an elusive run and a nice hand-off

(Hull K.R. v. Huddersfield, March 15th, 1947)

Huddersfield's second Australian, Hunter, was the only other Fartown fighter. A full back with ideas of his own, his very courage often got him into difficulties, but he pleased the crowd and I think he will give good service to Huddersfield.

(Huddersfield v. Bradford N., March 22nd, 1947)

Hunter and Cooper were tried at centre. Their defence made Kitching a completely frustrated force and their opportunism brought a fine try for each of them. Hunter's was particularly good. He had to penetrate a screen of forwards and then to meet Carmichael on the line. Though partly checked he went on with a great burst and bundled Carmichael out of the way for a great try.

(Bradford N. v. Huddersfield, April 7th, 1947)

Hunter was outstanding at full back. He caught the ball cleanly and kicked well, and when he decided to run was too fast for the York forwards. He was given plenty of work to do and nothing was too much for him, and it was he who began the Huddersfield revival with a great run through nearly all the York team.

(York v. Huddersfield, April 19th, 1947)

Hunter again took the eye. His runs, after fielding the ball, were electrical, and after several of these the crowd roared in anticipation of things to come every time he set off. One great run did indeed pave the way to a score, and determined that a full back's role should not by any means be a defensive one. He was always in the picture.

(Huddersfield v. Batley, May 10th, 1947)

Hunter was delightful at full back. His skill in catching, kicking and running is blended with such evident enjoyment of his football. I fully expect to see him jump over the cross-bar one of these days—just for the fun of it.

(Halifax v. Huddersfield, September 23rd, 1947)

Hunter was erratic, but even when erratic he still looked master of his position, and his final try, a run of more than half the length of the field, wrung from the heart of one Leigh supporter this unintentional tribute. "Look at that! Eee! Ah could cry!"

(Leigh v. Huddersfield, December 13th, 1947)

Hunter played a big part in destroying Bramley's confidence. So often did he take a Bramley clearing kick and use possession for attack that Bramley, long before the end, gave up kicking to him—and then were not sure what to do.

(Bramley v. Huddersfield, January 10th, 1948)

Purists may criticise some of Hunter's ideas on full back play but no-one can deny his enthusiasm and team-spirit. On one occasion the ball was cleared downfield by Hunslet and dropped in the mud some ten yards in front of Hunter. He had plenty of time to pick it up and reply with a kick, or to fall on it if he wanted to make sure of possession, or to tap it into touch if he wanted the support of his forwards. Only Hunter would have dreamt of rushing up at top speed, scooping up the ball with one hand (an incredible feat in itself on that greasy surface), and initiating a telling attack—and only Hunter could have got away with it as he did on this occasion. Bad tactical play? Maybe, but great to watch!

(Huddersfield v. Hunslet, January 31st, 1948)

All the tries were good ones, with Hunter's the king-pin of the lot. The full back's destination was obvious from the moment he fielded the ball just inside the York half while going at top speed, and when he finally dived over the line his try was acclaimed by York spectators as the best seen on the ground this season. Thus Hunter redeemed his error which gave York their only try.

(York v. Huddersfield, March 6th, 1948)

By one of the most glorious displays of Rugby League football seen at Fartown for many years, Huddersfield humbled the mighty Wigan. . . . Hunter, in his most sparkling form, joined the three-quarter movements time and again, and as fortune favours the brave was never caught out of position.

(Huddersfield v. Wigan, August 28th, 1948)

If Hunter's defence in the first ten minutes was shaky he never allowed himself to be shaken by his own mistakes and in the second half he scored twice, each time brilliantly, coming up at full burst to take the ball and to leave the opposition on the wrong foot and hopelessly at sea.

(Huddersfield v. Castleford, September 4th, 1948)

Take Johnny Hunter out, and Huddersfield were a lifeless lot for most of the time. Hunter, playing in a head-bandage, looked like a visitor from another planet, but he contributed most of the things that were worth while. Spectators who left early to catch their buses missed a grand run clean through the Dewsbury team by the full back which gave Cooper his second try

(Huddersfield v. Dewsbury, October 2nd, 1948)

Hunter had a great day that had a disappointing end to it. He made the first try and it is a measure of his great football that the Hull crowd applauded him all the way off the field as he was led off, obviously dazed and suffering from concussion.

(Hull v. Huddersfield, October 9th, 1948)

Hunter was a shade less spectacular and rather more sound than usual. His taking of the ball and his tackling were of a high order.

(Wigan v. Huddersfield, League S.F., April 30th, 1949)

The most noticeable difference between the teams was in the play of the full-backs. Hunter was brilliant in clearing his lines by forceful running and was far superior to his Warrington counterpart.

(Huddersfield v. Warrington, League Final at Maine Road, May 14th, 1949)

Hunter sometimes comes up into the attack when the need is not there, but he timed his adventures happily on this occasion and made the overlap that produced three or four tries.

(Huddersfield v. Barrow, January 7th, 1950)

Hunter, not liking being left with nothing to do in the bitter cold, was often up in the thick of it, and we had, in truth, two very good displays of aggressive full back initiative.

(Leigh v. Huddersfield, February 25th, 1950)

If individual honour was to be awarded in a disappointing Fartown team I would select Johnny Hunter, for his honest endeavour.

Had there been an award for the best player in the match, such as there is at Wembley, I should hesitate whether to nominate Mountford of Wigan or Hunter of Huddersfield.

(Huddersfield v. Wigan, League Final at Maine Road, May 13th, 1950)

Huddersfield played good football during the last quarter of an hour at Crown Flatt and the transformation seemed to be the result of Hunter's initiative. The full back came up in a brilliant style that galvanised his colleagues as well as the spectators, and the team began a series of rousing attacks.

(Dewsbury v. Huddersfield, September 23rd, 1950)

Hunter had a very happy afternoon. His fielding and gathering the ball were impeccable. His try so roused the home crowd that a stranger might have thought it was a Castleford score! But after the first ten minutes the crowd was on their toes every time Hunter took the ball and I think many would have been satisfied to see Castleford lose if they could have had another try from Hunter like the one that electrified everybody. His initial pick-up of the ball was like a circus performer's trick, and his run down the touch-line past half-a-dozen opponents was dazzling.

(Castleford v. Huddersfield, October 14th, 1950)

Hunter, otherwise not very busy, came up to join the scorers, and in the second half showed that with the wind he could kick with as great length as Miller.

(Featherstone R. v. Huddersfield, March 27th, 1951)

Henderson scored one very good try and the others were both scored by Hunter, who, in each case, once on the right wing and once on the left, came up at full speed to make an extra winger.

(Swinton v. Huddersfield, April 14th, 1951)

Hunter's try was typical of him. He intercepted a Hunslet move right under his own posts near the end of the game and was away like a shot with the Hunslet men toiling away behind him. It seemed that Les Williams would overtake him but Hunter managed to keep ahead in his length-of-the-field run.

(Hunslet v. Huddersfield, September 25th, 1951)

Hunter was in fine form at full back, and apart from troubling Batley in attack he also saved his line on more than one occasion with some timely tackles.

(Huddersfield v. Batley, March 29th, 1952)

Hunter began in sparkling style, coming up to take the ball from Cooper to score the opening try. Thereafter he was twice injured and that took some steam out of his play, but, called upon to do a great deal of work he was a sound defender.

(Castleford v. Huddersfield, October 11th, 1952)

Hunter showed his defensive powers on two or three occasions when he stopped what many of us had given up as certain tries.

(Huddersfield v. Batley, January 31st, 1953)

There was an early shock for Huddersfield when Hunter misfielded the first ball sent to him. That seemed a bad omen for, whatever the Australian's faults may be, you can't name a better fielder of the ball in the game today. However, he soon rubbed that memory out with some good defensive work.

(Bradford N. v. Huddersfield, R.L. Cup, March 14th, 1953)

Hunter played without making a mistake and one of his tackles on Gee, whom he took straight from the front so that he had no chance of getting the ball away, looked very well.

(Huddersfield v. Wigan, R.L. Cup S.F. at Odsal, March 28th, 1953)

A magnificent Hunter-Henderson break after 22 minutes heralded Huddersfield's first try, Ramsden eventually finishing the attack after Cooper, Large and Bowden had been held short.

Langfield dropped a goal for St. Helens to equalise at 10-10 but the cheers he got were merged into even bigger cheers as Hunter was to be seen running back from the dressing rooms on to the field. With only 8 minutes left, prospects were arising of a replay, but the finest possible anti-climax came with 300 seconds left. The man who had been knocked out, carried away on a stretcher, and had come back to fight for his team, grabbed a loose ball well in his own half. He short-thrusted, then passed to Brown. Hauled down, Brown heeled, Banks flashed out the ball to Bowden, who probed ahead, then passed to Valentine. More yards were gained before Valentine re-fed Bowden. The gap was there and Bowden swung the ball for Ramsden, 19 on the day, to collect at speed and to realise the ambition of any youngster—to score the winning try at Wembley.

(Huddersfield v. St. Helens, R.L. Cup Final, April 25th, 1953)

Hunter's best piece of work was done when the Doncaster forwards were dribbling the ball down-field. He dived into the ruck right under their feet and miraculously scooped the ball up as clean as a whistle to emerge unscathed and start up a Fartown movement.

(Huddersfield v. Doncaster, February 20th, 1954)

Hunter provided three of the game's outstanding incidents—his tackle on Carlton (who was clean away); the way he made Henderson's first try; and his own superb scoring run

(Huddersfield v. St. Helens, April 19th, 1954)

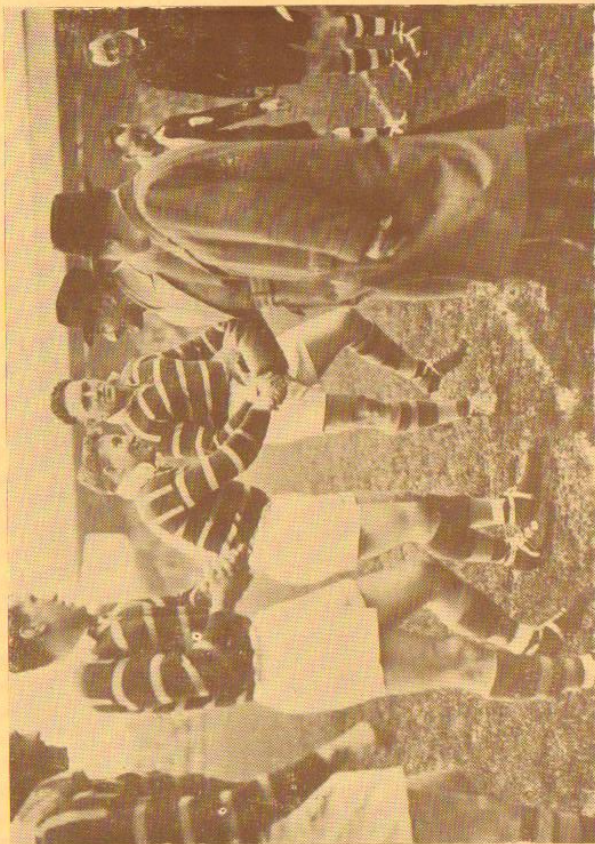
Pawsey and McGurrin seemed to have split the Huddersfield defence wide, but the roar of the crowd was suddenly changed as Hunter with the ball had cut down the middle and was able to go seventy-five yards before being stopped.

(Leigh v. Huddersfield, November 20th, 1954)

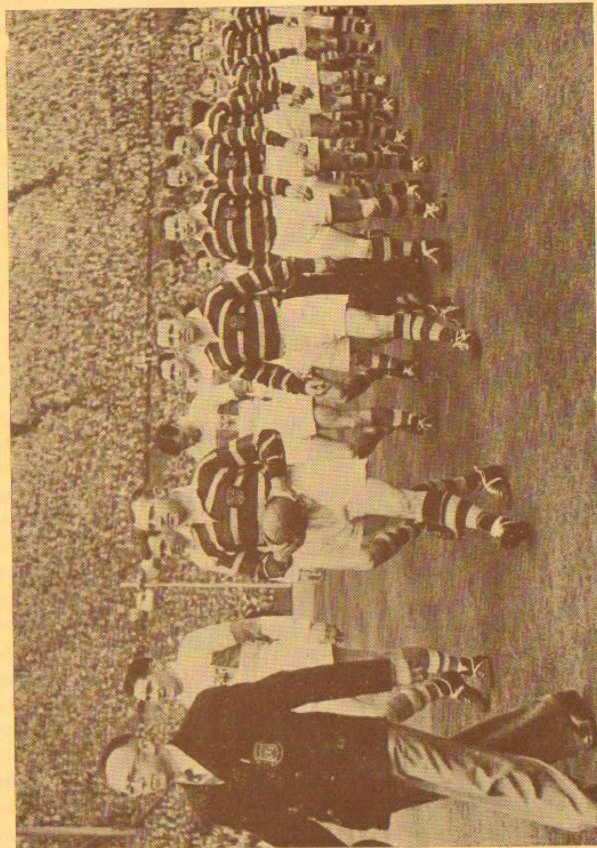
The star of the back division was Hunter, playing at centre. His handling of the greasy ball was marvellous, and the way in which he followed up a good run by Dyson and cut through to put Cooper over was a treat to see.

(Bradford N. v. Huddersfield, February 5th, 1955)

“ WAS THERE SOMETHING? ”



Johnny is introduced to the famous conedlan, Sam Costa, before the 1950 Yorkshire Cup Final against Castleford at Headingley



WALKING ON TO THE FIELD AT WEMBLEY, 1953

JOHNNY HUNTER . . .

Was born at Kogarah, Sydney, on July 21st, 1925.

Left Australia on February 15th, 1947, along with Lionel Cooper, and arrived in Huddersfield on February 24th.

Weighed 12 stons during his Australian playing days. Now weighs 13 st. 2 lbs.

Made his debut in a Fartown jersey at Craven Park, Hull, on March 15th, 1947, and his first appearance at Fartown was in a cup-tie against Bradford Northern on March 22nd.

Scored 3 tries against Featherstone Rovers on April 19th, 1949, and repeated the feat against Hull K.R. a year later—on April 10th, 1950. Unusual achievements for a full back.

Married a Sydney girl, Miss Gwyn Vincent, at St. Joseph's College, Hunter's Hill, Sydney, on August 5th, 1950. They now have a son, Glen (age nearly four) and a daughter, Jan (aged 16 months), and have named their house in Fartown "Kangarooobie."

Was coached during his schoolboy days by one of Australia's most famous coaches, the Rev Bro. Henry.



"Reminiscent of Gwyn Thomas"

The following tribute was paid to Johnny by an anonymous contributor to the "Huddersfield Examiner" Letter Bag in May, 1947:

"May I express a personal appreciation of the brilliant display given by Fartown's Australian full back, John Hunter, against Batley?"

"Rarely, or perhaps never, have I seen a player with such an evident enjoyment of the game, to say nothing of a display reminiscent of Gwyn Thomas at his best. It is evident that the Fartown supporters have some treats in store in the coming season, and it is equally evident that with more such ornaments to adorn the game the Rugby League would benefit greatly."

"Claret and Gold"

The Committee of the Huddersfield C. & A.C. Supporters' Club express their thanks to the following for permission to reproduce photographs: "Huddersfield Examiner," "Yorkshire Evening News," and Greaves Studios.

THANK YOU, HUDDERSFIELD

Every young lad has an ambition in life which he would like to fulfil, and one of my ambitions was to see England and my relations in Shetland. I became very pally with a chap called Lionel Cooper, in fact we started off as professional footballers with the same team.

Now this chap Cooper was becoming well known in both Aussie and England—a few English clubs were very anxious to sign him, but Lionel, being the shy type, wanted a companion. That's where I came in. The only snag was that the clubs were not prepared to sign Hunter, being an unknown. Anyhow Huddersfield did take the gamble and sign us. So my school boy ambition was fulfilled thanks to both Lionel and the H.C. & A.C.

Of memories on the field I have plenty, and many matches stick in my mind. The first one I played in England at Hull K.R.—it was so cold that even the goal posts had goose pimples. The match, Other Nationalities versus France, at Hull, could have been a battle in "No Man's Land." A game against St Helens at Fartown one Easter Monday, and the match against Hunslet when I scored after a length-of-the-field run.

Of course there is the memory that every Rugby League footballer will treasure, that Challenge Cup day at Wembley, especially as we were presented with winners' medals.

I do consider myself very fortunate to have played with such a great club as Huddersfield, for many reasons. I have met and played with some of the best sportsmen in the world. I wish to take this opportunity of thanking my team mates for all they have done and are doing on my behalf. The success and honours which I have enjoyed on the football field have been due to their co-operation and unselfish play. They are and have been a grand set of fellows and I am proud indeed to be associated with each and every one of them.

To the Club Officials and members of the Fartown Supporters' Club, and to all Huddersfield Rugby League enthusiasts, I thank you for the wonderful support you have given me. On behalf of my wife and family I would like to take this opportunity of thanking the people of Huddersfield for the way they have made us welcome and when we return to Australia we will take with us some happy memories of a very friendly town.

EXHILARATING JOHNNY

When Johnny Hunter plays full back
He likes to join in the attack.
He enjoys every match he plays
And has exhilarating ways.

He is one of the happy sort
Who's good at almost any sport;
He's entertaining on his day
And that's where his attraction lay.

He came with Cooper over here
And soon the crowds began to cheer.
His first game was at Hull K.R.,
There one could see he was a star.

To him there is no greater fun
Than when he makes a zig-zag run;
He races down the field "all out,"
That he enjoys it there's no doubt.

Then, very often, if he can,
He comes and makes the extra man
To turn a move into a score;
And this has brought him tries galore.

Sometimes, if Johnny's in a fix,
He'll use one of his long range kicks
And follow up to take his man
Or gain possession if he can.

Besides his own abilities
He has his little "oddties,"
And one to which he's quite devout
Is that of coming "last man out."

Now Johnny's playing in the "Threes,"
His Fartown followers to please.
His burst is making many tries
And proving his selection wise.

He's always liked to keep in trim
But injuries have haunted him.
Though he's been often out of luck
He's always come again with pluck.

Let's hope he'll have a few years yet
Crowned with success he won't forget.
Then, when he's finished his career,
He'll not forget his visit here.

BRIAN DONALDSON.