

The 1980's must have represented the most miserable and traumatic time in the whole history of Huddersfield Rugby League Club. Coaches were to come and go, new talent was unearthed only to be sold to pay off the bills. The ground continued to crumble and the effects of the Bradford City fire cast a grim shadow over the very future of rugby at the Fartown complex. Season 81/82 under coach Les Sheard saw the club finish in 5th position in a 15 team second division from which Wigan were promoted in 2nd place behind champions York. The crowd averaged 1185, the club going out of the Challenge Cup in the first round with a score line 10-8 to St. Helens in front of 3,094 spectators.

Season 82/83 was equally mediocre while crowds slumped to an alarming average of 776. Most appearances were made by Jimmy Johnson with 35 and there was a new lowest ever crowd of 422 against Whitehaven on the 10th April 1983. The club finished in 12th position, just below Blackpool. During this season coach Les Sheard resigned to be replaced by Dave Mortimer.

Season 83/84 - Chairman Roy Brook had been in negotiation with a new consortium who wished to buy Huddersfield Cricket and Athletic Club, but on the 18th August 1983 new chairman John Bailey, John Hillam and Graham Ramsden joined forces with the existing board as new directors. Events quickly led to the resignation of Mortimer which was followed by the equally surprising appointment of director Mel Bedford as 1st team coach.

A typical team at this time and one that lost 32-10 to new club Kent Invicta was; Barton, Cramp, Leathley, G. Senior, Blacker, Knight, Greenwood, Johnson, Rowe, Wilson, Murray, Fitzpatrick and Dixon. Subs - Slater and Davies.

Chairman Bailey demonstrated his advanced thinking at an early stage when he proposed to offer the ground to a fledgling "professional rugby union circus" which was being mooted at that time. In November after a home loss to Huyton (Highfield) by 21-8 in front of 582 spectators Mel Bedford resigned to be replaced by an ex-Great Britain international Brian Lockwood. He effected a recovery to a mid table position.

In April 1984 whilst the team had lost 3-0 to Rochdale and were blasted by coach Lockwood as "prima donnas" a new group of talent was emerging in the colts team who won 88-0 on the same day. Names which were to become familiar in that team were Antony Edwards, Jimmy Lee and Mick Bostock.

Shockwaves rang around the Fartown complex when after just 8 months of Mr Bailey's chairmanship there were board resignations from Roy Brook, Edward Selby, Ken Scaddon and Mel Bedford. The team however had begun to take shape with the promise of a fine new crop of talented players. The winning team at Dewsbury in April 1984 was; Hirst, Thomas, Leathley, Senior, George, Knight, Paterson, Murray, Price, Rose, Dixon, Rowe, Davies, Blacker and Fitzpatrick.

June 1984 - enter "The Barracudas at Arena 84", another vision of Mr Bailey who once again perhaps was ahead of his time judging by the current vogue for American style razzamatatz evidenced by Keighley Cougars, Castleford Tigers, Sheffield Eagles, London Broncos, Carlisle Border Raiders etc. At the time it prompted merely cynical humour in some, such as "The Examiner" report of July 1984 headlined