



## Australian Tour Special



### Australian Masters were here!

The Australians Masters team made their 4th tour to our shores leaving all who met them with some wonderful memories. It was good to see Laurie Walker on his fourth tour as well as Paul Webb and Shaun Vosper on their third tours. A total of 19 players with 13 supporters came across for the three week trip.

The Queenslanders and New South Welshmen met up in Bangkok before the second leg of the journey to London Heathrow where they finally landed in England. Even after that gruelling journey they had a 5 hours coach journey to Blackpool.

After 24 hours to recover from all the travelling, to walk the Golden Mile and find the local casino, the Australians were treated to a meet and greet evening by the Blackpool Masters. A very convivial evening which ran on into the small hours bode well for the tour!



*Was this a cunning plan by the Blackpool lads?*

On the very next day the Australians played their first game of the tour against Blackpool Masters. An excellent game of Masters was played out on a warm and sunny evening with some very good skill on show. The World's oldest Masters player, Jim Airnes, from Blackpool turned out once again. Jim was, incidentally, the first Scotsman to play for Great Britain Masters v Australia in 2008.

Another very social evening followed the game where Mike Cross of Australia (definitely a Kiwi at heart?) scored two tries.

The party moved on to Bradford for the next part of the trip during which the tourists took the opportunity to visit several parts of Yorkshire and to experience the Grand Départ of the Tour de France. The highlight of their stay in Bradford was definitely playing at the iconic Odsal Stadium. The Baht'ats had arranged their fixture at the home of the Bulls as the curtain raiser to the Bulls- Catalans game. The Baht'ats drafted in Robbie Hunter-Paul as their guest player. Robbie put his Baht'ats kit and a signed Australian Masters tour jersey on eBay for the Marie Curie charity and raised over £100. The Baht'ats held their usual (aptly named!) "kangaroo court" and donated all the fines to the same charity.



The Bull gave the teams and their guest use of the Trevor Foster Suite and provided a beautiful buffet. Everyone enjoyed the Super League game and then switched venue to the Cue Gardens (home of West Bowling RL) for a hot meal and a few more beers.

West Leeds RL was the venue for the Aussies third game in 8 days as Leeds Masters Group was the hosts. In true Masters spirit, they invited local neighbours, Leeds Akkies, to join in the evening. Both teams played a 25 minute half against the tourist who had a lengthy half time during which Leeds took on Leeds Akkies.



Leeds Masters really pushed out the hospitality boat with a three course roast beef dinner being served up to all players and guests!

The tourists now based in Manchester spent time travelling around, with a sizable party visiting Scotland's capital Edinburgh, as they took advantage of the two daybreak prior to the International with Great Britain.



*On the Friday before the international, the team captains were invited to Warrington Wolves' training ground to have their International shirts formally presented by Joel Monaghan and Ben Westwood.*

The day of the International arrived on the 12th July. Crosfields RL was ready!! They had a team of people planning the not just the festival but also the Masters festival where 10 teams – 12 clubs were represented- played on 3 pitches following the international. The international, the 5th between the two countries, had a number of firsts: Chris Thomas was the first Welshman to play Masters for GB and Greg Mulholland the first MP. Ken Broadfield was Leyland Warrior's first ever international It was also the first to have a sponsored officials' kit - thanks to Chalk and Spit sportswear. It was also the first home GB kit to be sponsored – thanks to Titan Steel Projects.

The game was of the highest order! Fast and furious at times, but always passionate. It could be said that the 0-0 draw was marred only by a superb try from GB full back Richard Postletwaite!



All the international players and guests were treated to a post match meal supplied by chefs from the Istanbul BBQ, one of Chesters' finest and most well-known restaurants! A wonderful day at Crosfields with nearly 200 Masters out playing the greatest game and so well hosted by Crosfields!



The Australian touring party left the north of England the following day to head down to London where they stayed at the West Ham United Hotel. Many of the tourist on their first trip to England spent Monday seeing the sights of our capital city. Many expressed themselves – well, shattered after all the walking around all day.

The last stop on the playing part of the tour was the county of Kent and the final tour game with Medway Dragons at Gillingham. Medway, true Masters all, had invited a guest from both Sussex Merlins and Southampton Spitfires to join in the evening. With a hog roast to look forward to on a suitably roasting evening at Medway the two teams took to the pitch. This was perhaps the best game of the tour. Open rugby league played in great spirit with skill and speed – yes speed. Gold shorter Trevor Bristol matched his try scoring feat at Leeds (where he ran 40 m touch down) by going over in the corner to round off a 60 m Australian move . (yes I know Trevor is a Kiwi but he was in in Green and Gold!)



Hospitality from Medway was enjoyed by all and “Ed the Judge” Baldwin conducted an excellent court session – again all proceeds to charity.





And that was it! Two weeks of Masters, of sightseeing but above all of meeting old friends and making new ones! Masters was the winner and those of us who were lucky enough to take part will remember this tour for a long time. Malcolm Duncan, CEO of Masters of League Australia, commented that “this is the best tour we’ve done. The organization and hospitality has been first class and the friendships made will continue forever” He already had 16 players confirmed to return in 2016! Malcolm is also looking forward not only to the Baht’ats club trip in September this year to the Gold Coast Festival but also to having the opportunity to welcome a Great Britain side to Australia in 2015.

The touring party now have a couple more days in London before a day in Paris prior to their long trip back down under. Matt and Nicolle on Abbey Road.



**And finally.....**

### **RANDOM MASTERS PHOTO**



*Paul Field, Joe Nolan and Neil Wood at Masters game in Perpignan September 2010 prior to the Catalan v Huddersfield Super league game*