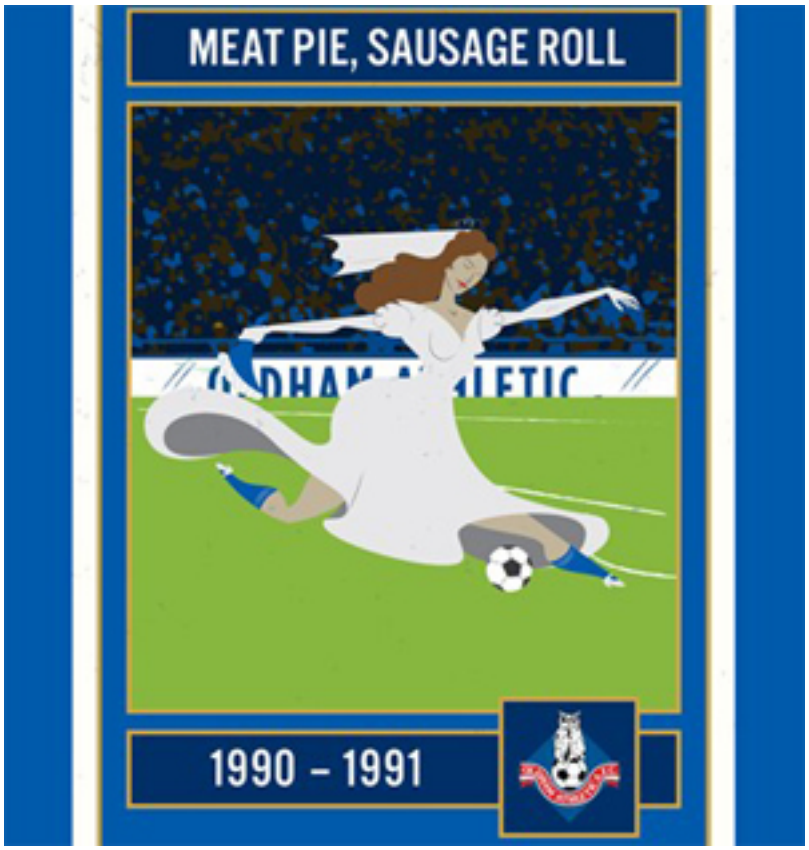

Meat Pie, Sausage Roll at Oldham Coliseum

By Cathy Crabb and Lindsay Williams
Reviewed by John Waterhouse March 2017

First and foremost, this is a play about football; the setting for the most part is a football stadium and when the action moves elsewhere, there is almost always a radio on hand (or even several radios) ensuring that the cast have live commentary of football matches, even if there happens to be a wedding taking place. Even the songs, or at least most of them, are about football (and the love of it).

It is true that a certain romance develops during the play but even here, the love of football eventually surpasses everything; a telling example being when Mandi, the bride- to-be (played with feeling and gusto by **Jenny Platt**) after admonishing friends and family not to talk about football during the ceremony, eventually feels compelled to lift up her wedding dress to reveal a small radio attached to one of her garters.

After being confronted with the play's overwhelming football credentials, the issue becomes trying to establish what else the audience is treated to. There are clear parallels with 'Fever Pitch,' the Nick Hornby novel made into a film starring Sean Bean and just as that story centres on the importance of football to a community in Sheffield. So too does **'Meat Pie, Sausage Roll'** - only for Sheffield read Oldham, only more so because if the audience is ever in any doubt that the play is about football in Oldham, the words 'Oldham Athletic' (at times illuminated) remain emblazoned in huge letters above the set through the show.

The love of football seems challenged only by the love of Oldham Athletic and half the songs are simply love letters to this team. In fact, the importance of the 'Latics' for most of the characters in the story could fairly be said to encompass those of mining, brass bands and most else besides to the Yorkshire community featured in 'Brassed off'.