

# STORY BEHIND THE NUMBER – ARTHUR LLEWELLYN



## HERITAGE GROUP

Leeds fans never got to see how good Arthur Llewellyn (heritage number 287) could have been. They witnessed his debut against Bramley at Headingley on 24 January 1914 and marvelled at his speed as he scored a try in an 18-7 triumph, further noteworthy as the Loiners crossed the whitewash six times but failed to land a goal.

His only other try was the sole one in a 16-3 defeat at Dewsbury in mid-April before the undoubted promise was snuffed out.

In a 1913-14 season of wholesale recruitment, especially in Wales, the Leeds management had travelled to Abertillery to sign centre Joseph Hopkins.

They were still looking for added pace out wide and went back to the Green and Whites to snare young wing prospect Llewellyn.

Born at 55 Blaenau Gwent Rows, Gwent, son of Thomas and Sarah in 1893, he was renowned initially as a sprinter, winning nine prizes as a schoolboy to earmark him. He joined Abertillery, who had recently been awarded 'first class' status by the Welsh RFU and made an instant impression.

Quickly elevated to the first team, he played 15 times in his debut season and was described as having, 'a capable place kick as well as a consistent try getter.'

His sprinting prowess, competing in Tonypandy at the prestigious Cambrian dash and winning two races over 80 yards at other meetings, saw him switch between the first and second teams the following season.

In one particularly productive spell, he scored 51 points in four matches for the seconds and his strong performance in the firsts, which helped defeat Gloucester, alerted him to the Leeds scouts in the Principality.

On 20 January 1914, the Yorkshire Evening Post announced that Leeds had signed 'A young, speedy player from Wales.'

It went on, 'He is likely to prove as fast as any man in the Leeds team. He is 5ft 7½ in. and weighs 10st 10lb.' Llewellyn went straight into the team outside Hopkins in a side that contained six Welshmen, Billy Jarman and Jimmy Sanders also scoring that day who were to suffer similar fate on the battlefields.

Settling in, at the start of the 1914-15 season, he kicked his only goals in the colours, three in a comprehensive 25-2 win again at home to neighbours Bramley, four weeks after a shock defeat to the Villagers at the Barley Mow.

Soon after, he joined the 13th Battalion Rifle Brigade as a private (service number 6050) but was injured in the field and also contracted enteric fever, a disease of the intestines.

Transported back home, he spent significant time in hospital in Manchester.

As an indication of his bravery, as soon as recovered, he immediately re-joined his regiment and was sent to take part in the Battle of Arras that began on 9 April 1917, an allied offensive intended to break through German front lines and attack their reserves of men and materials in Northern France on the Scarpe River.

The troops advanced before dawn through sleet, snow and strong winds and although ultimately deemed an allied victory, little ground was gained and there were over 150,000 British casualties. Llewellyn lost his life on 1 June 1917.

On the 23 June, the local newspapers reported. 'The death in action is announced of Private Arthur Llewellyn, of the Leeds Northern Union football team. Llewellyn joined the Leeds club the season before the commencement of the war, playing in the second, and occasionally in the first team. He was regarded as a very promising three-quarter back.'

The report continued that also fallen was second lieutenant Eric Thomas, who was a team mate at Abertillery.

Arthur Llewellyn is buried in bay 9 at the Arras Memorial, Pas de Calais.