

STORY BEHIND THE NUMBER – BILLY JARMAN



HERITAGE GROUP

Samuel William Jarman was born in Leeds in 1887.

Aged 21, Billy signed for his home city club, making a try-scoring debut in a home defeat by Wakefield on 28th December, 1908.

A back row forward, he became a hero of the Leeds faithful when scoring the winning try at Keighley in a Northern Union cup quarter final tie a year and a half later, capitalising on a long punt downfield by Frank Young late on to help the Loiners qualify for their first-ever semi final in the competition.

A narrow win over Warrington saw him line up in the drawn final with Hull, the first time the decider had gone to a replay and, two days later – also at Fartown - he featured in a record 26-12 triumph as Leeds' ribbons adorned the trophy.

Establishing himself as one of the eye-catching forwards in the game, there was surprise the following season when he was switched into the centre for a league game at home to Bramley, quelling the doubters with the match-winning try and establishing himself as a vital utility player.

He was superb during the 1911-12 campaign, almost beating Hull single-handedly on the opening day of the season with a hat-trick of tries – his only treble – and a goal – one of only four he kicked for Leeds – in a 16-13 triumph.

By season-end, he had grabbed eleven touchdowns, his best haul.

He was still in fine form as the next touring party was chosen, making the trip down under in summer 1914 with Headingley memories fresh of his virtuoso performance in a 22-5 home win over Bradford when he grabbed a try and two goals.

One of the oldest members of the squad, as the boat set sail, he had pulled on the Leeds jersey just short of 150 times and crossed the whitewash on 35 occasions.

The tour was significant not just in a quest to regain the Ashes but also as it was to break new ground with matches in Adelaide – where the Lions beat South Australia 101-0 in the opener - and Melbourne for the first time; Ipswich, Bathurst and Newcastle.

He was selected at full back for the opening Test at Sydney's Agricultural Ground on Saturday 27th June, 1914, the pitch heavy and the day overcast and, although he missed a conversion attempt, the Northern Union side ran out easy winners 23-5.

The second encounter was played two days later, a public holiday, with over 50,000 fans turning up at the Sydney Cricket Ground, the first such encounter to be played there. During the 12-7 defeat, Jarman suffered a serious knee injury which curtailed his further involvement, ruling him out of the series defining 'Rorke's Drift' Test the following weekend.

On his return, and with War having been declared, he was called up as a reservist to the second battalion of the Scots Guards, his knee condition seeing him initially ruled out of active service.

He returned home, where he was the assistant groundsman at Bramley Cricket Club and, his rehabilitation complete, Guardsman 6295 was posted to the Western Front in August 1915.

Almost exactly a year later, on 15th August 1916, he was killed in action on the Somme.

His name is listed within the Thiépval Memorial to the 72,195 missing British and South African men who died in the Battles of the Somme of the First World War between 1915 and 1918, with no known grave.

Back home, as news reached, he was feted: "As fine a forward as ever played for Leeds."