

A Brynmawr Sporting Hero

As many of you know, Brynmawr has and had more than its fair share of sporting heroes and the Brynmawr and District Museum has a very good display of those who participated in various sporting conflicts. But I wonder how many of you are aware of Roy Francis who was born in Cardiff (according to Wikipedia) in 1919 but brought up in Brynmawr. The family lived in Well Street before moving to Windsor Road. His mother was Rebecca Francis. He possibly attended the St Mary's Church School on Queen Streets as some of his relatives did. (There are still some of his relatives living in Brynmawr).

As a teenager he played Rugby Union for the Brynmawr R.F.C. but at 17 years old he decided to sign on as a player for Wigan, an English Rugby League club in November 1936 and made his debut for that team on Friday, March 26th 1937.

Wigan was not the only Northern side he played for, during his career he played with Barrow, Dewsbury, Warrington and Hull F.C. He served in the army during the Second World War and reached the rank of Sergeant and naturally played rugby for the Northern Command XIII. He also represented Great Britain and Wales in international competitions. He played his last game in 1955 before becoming a coach which is where he made his mark.

His coaching methods with Hull F.C. for example were forward looking and he took the team to title success then went on to coach Leeds when they won the Challenge Cup. He then moved to coach an Australian team before returning to Leeds and then Bradford Northern before he retired from the game.

Roy was married and had two sons, Ian and Jeffrey, sadly Roy died in April 1989.

(Any additional information gratefully received).

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