

GIVVONS, ALEXANDER (1913 - 2002), rugby player

Name: Alexander Givvons
Date of birth: 1913
Date of death: 2002
Spouse: Eunice Givvons (née Clayton)
Child: Alexander Givvons
Child: Trevor Givvons
Parent: Alexander Givvons
Parent: Johanna Givvons (née Dunn)
Gender: Male
Occupation: rugby player
Area of activity: Sports and Leisure Pursuits

Alexander Givvons was born on 2 November 1913 in Pillgwenlly, Newport, Monmouthshire, the eldest child of Alexander Givvons (b. 1888), a merchant seaman from St Thomas in the West Indies, and his wife Johanna Dunn (1896-1987). He had five siblings, including a half-brother Trevor Williams (b. 1925) from his mother's second marriage. He was known as Alex (pronounced Alec).

Alex attended Holy Cross Roman Catholic School, well known locally for its sporting prowess. He joined the school Rugby Union team at the age of nine and soon became its captain, and also played for the Monmouthshire schools' team.

He enjoyed playing rugby at Newport's Rodney Parade, however he often spoke about not being able to afford to socialise with the college boys who returned home for the summer months. He therefore preferred to play for his local club, Pill Harriers RFC, until he joined the Cross Keys team aged 19 playing at scrum-half. Givvons impressed immediately due to his speed and agility, and during a match against Pontypool, Welsh International Clem Lewis noted that 'he is the biggest discovery that I have seen since the war' (*Daily News*, 1932).

The committee at Oldham Rugby League Club were informed of Givvons's capabilities and he was signed in January 1933. As other codebreakers made their way north from Wales, it became very important to Givvons that people knew his leaving Newport was not a result of racism. Newspapers at the time report heavily on the new player and there was much interest in his potential ability to play for Wales.

Givvons played a total of 241 first class matches as halfback and later loose forward for Oldham from 1933 to 1949 (with a break between 1944 and 1948 where he played for Huddersfield). He earned six caps for Wales between 1936 and 1939, and was the second Black player to represent Wales in Rugby League (after George Bennett, also from Newport, in 1935), finishing on the winning side in all six games. He also toured France twice with the Great Britain Rugby League team.

In 1934 he married Eunice Clayton and they had two sons, Alexander (1935-2017) who also played Rugby League, and Trevor (b. 1946).

Givvons encouraged his half-brother Trevor Williams to follow in his footsteps and play for Oldham. However, following his transfer from Cross Keys he didn't get on with the Oldham coach and despite also being tipped to play for Wales Trevor gave up playing. Givvons later attributed this to racism that he suffered.

After the end of his playing career, Givvons became a coach and kitman for the Oldham 'A' team. Much loved, he could often be seen at the club, supporting the players and guarding the sacred changing rooms from the gaze of reporters and photographers. When asked about this he replied with typical modesty, 'I'm just doing my job'.

In 1995, when the Oldham Rugby League Hall of Fame was introduced, Givvons was chosen to unveil it and was later inducted into it. A street was later named after him, 'Givvons Fold' near the former stadium in the Watersheddings district of Oldham. Never to be forgotten in Wales, photographs of him are to be found at the Pill Harriers RFC where he played as a young man.

Alex Givvons died on 14 June 2002 in Oldham.

Author

Rebecca Eversley-Dawes

Sources

Personal information from son and niece

[Oldham Rugby League Heritage Trust](#)

Ancestry

South Wales Argus, 4 October 2020

Daily News (London), 10 October 1932

Western Mail, 19 January 1933

Philip H. Melling and Tony Collins (eds.), *The glory of their times: crossing the colour line in rugby league* (2004)

Further reading

Wikipedia Article: [Alex Givwons](#)

Additional Links

Wikidata: [Q4717057](#)

Published date: 2022-05-03

Article Copyright: <http://rightsstatements.org/page/InC/1.0/> 

The Dictionary of Welsh Biography is provided by The National Library of Wales and the University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies. It is free to use and does not receive grant support. A donation would help us maintain and improve the site so that we can continue to acknowledge Welsh men and women who have made notable contributions to life in Wales and beyond.

Find out more on our [sponsorship page](#).

