

BANCROFT, WILLIAM JOHN (1871-1959), rugby player and cricketer.

Name: William John Bancroft
Date of birth: 1871
Date of death: 1959
Parent: William Bancroft
Gender: Male
Occupation: rugby player and cricketer
Area of activity: Sports and Leisure Pursuits
Author: Gareth W. Williams

Born 2 March 1871, son of William Bancroft, Carmarthen Arms, Waterloo Street, Swansea, the eldest of 11 children. He plied his craft as a shoemaker. He was born in Carmarthen but was brought up in the shadow of Saint Helen's sports ground, Swansea. He played for the local youth team, the Excelsiors, before playing his first game for Swansea on 5 October 1889. After only 17 games, and without a trial, he was chosen to play for Wales against Scotland in February 1890 after the first choice, Tom England of Newport, was injured.

Bancroft proceeded to gain 33 caps in consecutive matches between 1890 and 1901, a record which was not broken until 1954, by Ken Jones (Newport). He was an incomparable back with the keen eyes and sure hands of a professional cricketer; he spent long hours perfecting his kick, and it was his penalty drop-kick which won the match against England in 1893, when Wales gained the triple crown for the first time ever. He led Wales to its second crown in 1900. He was one of the first to be employed as a professional player by Glamorgan Cricket Club (founded in 1888) in 1895 at £2 per week. He died 3 March 1959 at Swansea.

His brother, JACK BANCROFT (1879 - 1942), was a notable back for Swansea and Wales, winning 13 caps between 1908 and 1912.

Author

Professor Gareth W. Williams

Sources

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South Wales Evening Post, 4 March 1959

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