LEICESTER CITY LANDLORDS

Throughout the history of the professional game, players have faced the problem of what to do when they hang up their boots. Many Leicester Fosse and Leicester City players took over pubs, several of which have now disappeared. This season we will be rediscovering and revisiting these 'Players' Pubs' and uncovering the stories about them and about the landlords who ran them.

The Player: Mal Griffiths

Mal's place in Leicester City's history is assured. Only seven players have exceeded his 420 competitive games for the Club, only two have played more than his 36 FA Cup games and only one played for the club longer than his spell of nearly 18 years.

Born in Merthyr Tydfil, Mal signed for Arsenal in 1937 for whom he made his debut as an 18 year old in February 1938, playing alongside such greats as Bastin, Hapgood and Drake. Seven months later he signed for First Division Leicester City for £750. Within a year, the Second World War started and Mal was conscripted into the 2/5th Battalion in the Welch Regiment. He played in the Army team which won the 38th (Welsh) Divisional Soccer Competition in 1943. During the war, he guested for a collection of clubs including Chelsea, Fulham, Aldershot, Southampton, Bournemouth and Cardiff City.

He next played for Leicester in 1946 in the wartime Football League South. League football resumed in August 1946, and Mal played on Leicester's right wing for the next ten years. He scored in the 1949 FA Cup Final and he won a 2nd Division Championship medal in 1954.

He was capped for Wales 11 times caps between 1947 and 1954. He scored against England in a World Cup Qualifying game in 1949, and against Portugal in 1951.

The Pub. The Queen's Head Wigston

Following his testimonial match against an International XI at Filbert Street in April 1957 and a spell at Burton Albion, Mal and his wife Jesse took over the Queen's Head in Wigston in 1958. He was landlord until he died just after his 50th birthday in 1969. The pub was situated on Bull Head Street near the junction with Bell Street. This meant that it was very close to the Dennis Sharp's hosiery factory. Dennis was a Director at Filbert Street for 37 years (1946-1983) and he was Chairman twice. His factory, one of four hosiery factories on Bell Street in the 1950s, was demolished in the mid 1960s.

After Mal's untimely death, the Queen's Head was partly gutted by fire. Soon afterwards, the pub was demolished and replaced by a block of flats. The Club's photographic archive contains several photographs of Mal during his time at the Queen's Head, including the one shown here.

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