



## Players – Dickie Morris – City’s first international

Welsh inside-forward Dickie Morris was the first Leeds City player to win international honours while on the Elland Road club’s books. Selection for Wales for the match against Ireland in March 1906 allowed him to add to the eight caps he already had to his name when signing for the Peacocks a year earlier.

Renowned for his energetic displays and excellent ball control, Morris was described as a “tireless runner and top speed dribbler”; he brought style and class to the City forward line as they sought to build on their admission to the first class game. As an established international forward, he was something of a jewel in the Elland Road crown.

Born in Newtown, Montgomeryshire, there is some speculation about exactly when Morris was born, though it is known to be between 1879 and 1883. Martin Jarred and Malcolm Macdonald suggest April 25 1883 in their later work, though there are a range of other sources that indicate January 1, 1879, and in earlier books Jarred and Macdonald had quoted 1879. The 1901 Census lists a number of men by the name of Richard Morris who were born in Montgomeryshire in 1879, 1880 and 1883. Circumstantial evidence strongly suggests that 1879 is the likeliest birth date.



Dickie Morris in his days as a Plymouth Argyle player

Dickie Morris joined the Army in his teens and saw active service in the Boer War. When the conflict ended in 1902, he returned to Wales and signed on for his home town club, RWW Newtown FC. Formed in 1875 as Newtown White Stars, the club is one of the oldest in the principality and among the founder members of the Football Association of Wales. They were the victors when the Welsh Cup was staged for the second time in 1879.

Almost immediately after joining Newtown, Morris was called up to the Welsh national team and won his first cap. He played on the left wing in a Red Dragons eleven that lost 3-0 to Ireland at the Arms Park, Cardiff, on February 22, 1902. Morris did enough to retain his place for the game against England at Wrexham a couple of weeks later, playing on the opposite wing to the legendary Billy Meredith, then of Manchester City. A penalty save by the renowned Welsh keeper Leigh Richmond (Dick) Roose was crucial in securing a goalless draw.

By the time of the following international, against Scotland at Greenock on 15 March (when he was switched to inside-forward), Morris had quit Newtown for Druids of Ruabon (nowadays NEWI Cefn Druids). The Scots hammered the Welsh by five goals to one in a game staged just three

weeks prior to the Ibrox disaster when 26 people lost their lives and 547 others were injured during the Scotland-England match.

Morris' spell at Druids was extremely brief and by the end of March he had been recruited by reigning First Division champions Liverpool, making his senior debut at home to Bury on April 19, 1902.

Over the next three years, the Welshman appeared in 38 League games for the Anfield side, scoring five times. Two of those goals came in a Merseyside derby clash with Everton in October 1903. Liverpool were relegated at the end of that season but regained their First Division spot at the first attempt in 1905.

During his time at Liverpool, Morris was a regular with Wales, playing in all their five fixtures between March 9 1903 and March 21 1904. The pick of those games was the 2-2 draw with England at Wrexham on February 29 1904. The result meant that the Welsh had beaten the English twice and drawn five times in 26 matches since their first pairing in 1879 and Morris had featured in two of the draws. Such results represented a vast improvement on recent heavy defeats, 6-0 in 1893, 5-1 1894, 9-1 1896, 4-0 1897, 3-0 1898, 4-1 1899 and 6-0 1901. Morris had every right to be proud of the part he played in his country's upturn in fortunes.



Dickie Morris at Anfield

In pursuit of regular first team football, Morris quit Liverpool in 1905 to sign for Leeds City as they prepared for life as a Football League club. The Yorkshire Post hailed his capture as a major coup, describing Morris as a "clever exponent of the forward game".

Morris quickly established himself as a favourite with the Elland Road fans after playing at inside-left in the club's first Second Division game on September 2 1905. The Mercury noted that he "was much in evidence, and his trickiness and deft passing to Singleton, his partner on the left wing, pleased the crowd".

His first City goal came in the 3-1 defeat of local rivals Hull City on September 23, and he added a second score to settle the issue. The Yorkshire Post: "Singleton and Morris were a capital left wing pair ... It was the old Welsh international's judgement which enabled him, when Hargraves could not get up to take a centre brilliantly made by Parnell, to rush up from the other wing and, with a fast oblique shot, give the home team their first goal."

Two weeks later, Morris scored four goals, a feat matched by centre-forward Fred Hargraves, as City hammered Morley 11-0 in an FA Cup preliminary round game.

He also showed up well in the next round when City beat Mexborough 3-1, netting the decisive second goal with a magnificent header.

Morris was an ever present until December 9, but lost his place in February, playing in just four of the Peacocks' final 15 games. This was partly due to a serious injury received in a 1-1 draw at Grimsby on March 17 when the home side kicked the visitors out of the game. The Leeds Mercury reported that Morris "had practically to be lifted out" of the train when it arrived back in Leeds.

Two weeks earlier Morris had returned to the Welsh side to earn his ninth cap, thus becoming the

first City player to appear in an international.

Martin Jarred: “Morris’ lone Wales appearance while a City player produced one of the principality’s finest results to date. The previous season, inspired by the great wing wizard Billy Meredith, they had beaten Scotland for the first time after 30 years of trying. But few gave the Welsh any hope of repeating the feat when they tackled the Scots at Tynecastle 12 months later, because Manchester City star Meredith was serving a suspension for allegedly bribing an Aston Villa player to lose a match.

“The Welsh selectors were also without several other regulars but the stand ins, some drawn from League clubs’ reserve sides, did their country proud. Meredith’s replacement, Lot Jones, opened the scoring when goalkeeper Jimmy Raeside allowed a shot to slip through his hands. Another Jones, Stoke reserve John, who had come in for Notts County’s Arthur Green, added another to give Wales a 2-0 win and surprise back to back victories against the Scots.”

After a promising season with Leeds City, it was something of a surprise when Morris decided to depart Elland Road at the end of the campaign. In fairness, though, his entire career consisted entirely of a series of short stays.

He scored five times in 25 League games for City, adding another five in 6 FA Cup appearances. In June 1906 he threw in his lot with the same Grimsby Town whose players had so adeptly kicked him out of the game in March.

He made a decent contribution in his time with the Mariners, scoring seven times in 24 Second Division games. It was enough to earn him a recall to the Welsh team in February 1907. He scored his only goal for his country in a 3-2 victory over Ireland that helped Wales on the way to securing their first Home International title.

Morris moved clubs again in the summer of 1907, this time to Southern League Plymouth Argyle. He became Argyle’s first international when he played his final game for Wales on April 11 1908 in a 1-0 defeat to Ireland at Aberdare.

At the end of the 1907/08 season Morris signed for Reading, leaving shortly afterwards for Huddersfield Town. He ended his career with the West Riding club, retiring at the end of the 1908/09 campaign.

Driven by his restless, nomadic nature, Morris failed to settle at any of his seven clubs, but he made an impressive and valuable, if short lived, contribution to Leeds City’s early days.



Dickie Morris ... clever exponent of the forward game