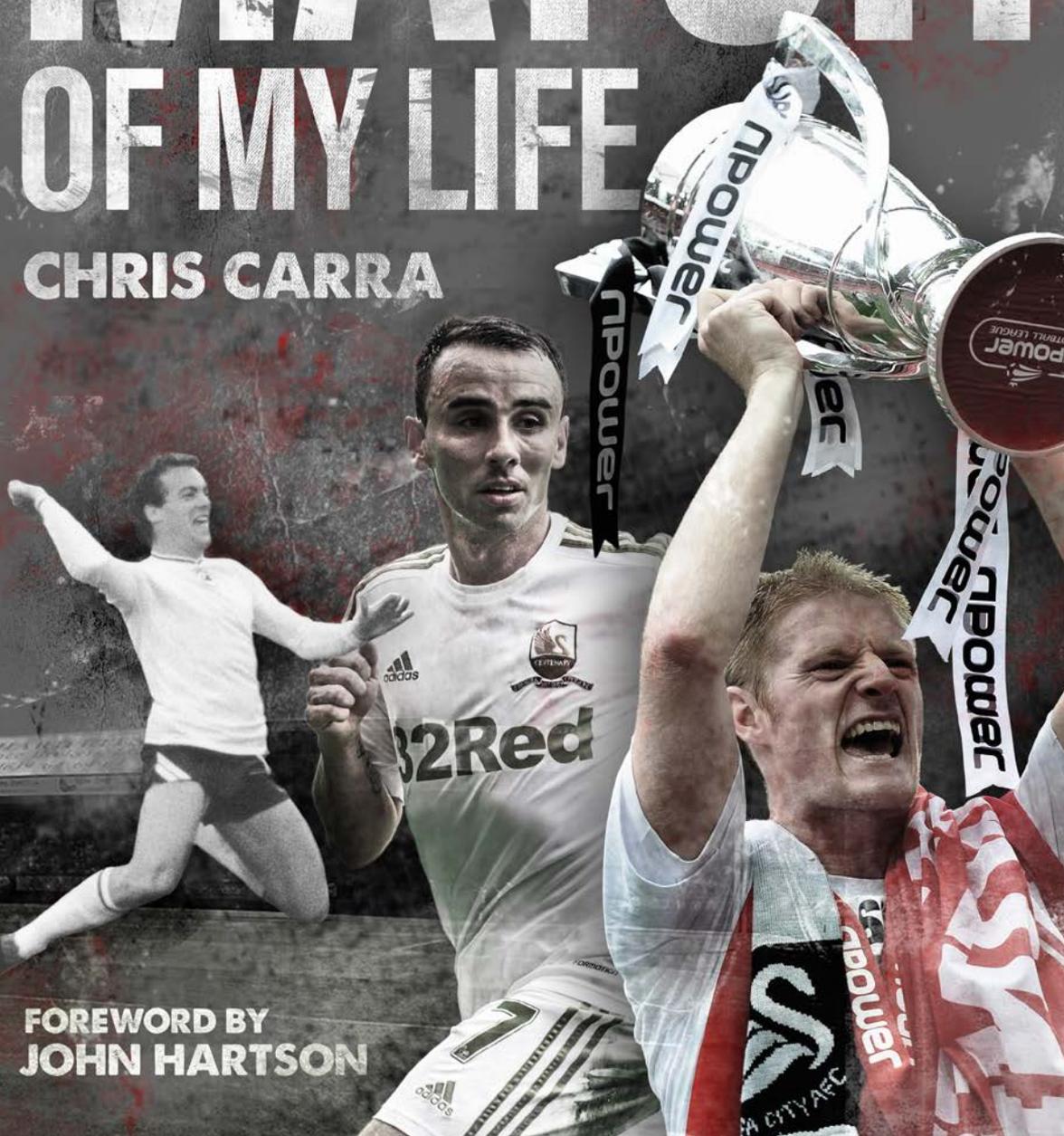


SWANSEA CITY

MATCH

OF MY LIFE

CHRIS CARRA



**FOREWORD BY
JOHN HARTSON**

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Foreword

John Hartson

Sunday, 28 January 2018

IT'S AN honour to have been asked to write the foreword for this book, which is a cracking collection of some of the club's biggest legends sharing their personal stories of their favourite matches.

Ever since I was a little boy, I've been the biggest Swansea City supporter.

My earliest memories were going down to the Vetch with my dad and sitting on his shoulders in the old North Bank, which I absolutely loved. You had the steel bars separating the rows that I used to sit on too, with my dad standing behind me to make sure I didn't fall off!

The North Bank always used to be jam-packed and swaying as one. Over to my right you would have the chanters and singers, around 300 of them pointing and singing at the away end – sometimes they would be trying to get over the fence and into that end!

When I got to around 14 years old, I was playing for teams like Lonlas Boys' Club and Winch Wen on a Saturday. We would kick off at half two and, being youngsters, we would only play 30 minutes each way. Then we'd all pile in the back of my father's van, he'd drive us down to the Vetch and we would all go in to watch the second half of the Swans match.

As I got older again, I started my own football career. I left home at the age of around 16, but whenever I was injured, or whenever I had a suspension – and I had one or two of those over the years! – I would come back home to watch the Swans. It was around £4.50 to get in back then, and I would go and sit in the stands with the other Jacks.

This was Swansea in the old Third and Fourth Division. The highest-paid player would have been on around £600 a week, and sometimes the crowds were as low as 3,500. But I still got the same enjoyment then as I do now, because – to me – it was my club, and it was somewhere I was always going to go.

I think that stemmed from a very early age, as my father was a big Swans fan, as were the whole family, and I don't think that ever leaves you.

FOREWORD

I went on to play for eight clubs; some of the biggest teams in Great Britain – the likes of Arsenal, West Ham and Celtic. But all the while there's only ever been one team for me, and that's Swansea City.

As I first went to watch the club I can vaguely remember players like Alan Curtis, Nigel Stevenson, Jeremy Charles and Dai Davies playing for us. I can remember those were the days of the Swan on the shirt and tight, tight shorts. I'm not sure I could have ever fitted into those shorts in my playing days!

But the team of my era was certainly late 1980s and early 90s. I always remember the likes of Tommy Hutchinson, Chris Coleman, Paul Raynor, David D'Auria, and Jan Molby. We weren't making history on the pitch, but it was a good team to watch.

Of course, growing up, it was an ambition of mine to play for Swansea, but it was never made to happen. This was because – and no disrespect to the club – when Swansea were playing in the Third and Fourth Division, I was banging in goals for Arsenal and West Ham in the Premier League.

When I was getting a bit older – a bit heavier in my shorts, if you like – the biggest opportunity to join Swansea presented itself.

There were serious conversations at one stage. It was around 2007 when I had a meeting with Roberto Martinez, Huw Jenkins and Martin Morgan. We sat around a table in Morgan's Hotel and nearly got it done. I nearly, nearly signed for Swansea City.

But nothing materialised in the end. At the time Swansea were going well, and were on the way to winning the league, back when Roberto had them playing great football. Attacking-wise they already had Andy Robinson and Lee Trundle, with Ferrie Bodde behind them, so they had plenty of talent in that sense.

To this day I have no real regrets that it didn't happen. I had a great career and, like coming through cancer, I played the hand that I was dealt. Let's just say that it was a disappointment not to play for the Swans, although I don't lie in bed awake at night worrying about it.

However, as a footballer, you do dread the day you play against your home club and, for me, that day came in January 1999, in the FA Cup third round. Reading Roger Freestone's chapter in this book brings back some memories of a very tough game.

It was really hard to play against the Swans that day, being such a big supporter and with the Swans fans singing my name. Don't get me wrong, if I had the chance to score, I would have scored, but it didn't make it any easier.

It was a difficult match when Swansea came to West Ham, but Julian Dicks scored a long-range effort in the last minute to equalise and force the replay.

We actually came down to Swansea three days before the replay to prepare. Harry Redknapp loved Swansea, and he took us to the beaches and for walks along Mumbles. We had a cracking build-up, with my friends and family coming down to the hotel to visit me. It was great.

But we got completely turned over on the night! Swansea really got in our faces, and they weren't in fear of the big names. We had Ruddock, Dicks, Cole, Ferdinand, Lampard, Kitson and myself – all senior Premier League players.

It was a windy, rainy, swirly sort of night, and there wasn't a free seat in the house – the Vetch was bouncing. That atmosphere was amplified as soon as Martin Thomas's 20-yard winner flew in.

There were no excuses from us though. I didn't play particularly well, and as a team we didn't turn up. Swansea were the opposite – right up for it and they deserved the result.

Oddly, I didn't know it at the time, but that would be my last match for West Ham.

I never really got to grieve about the result with my team-mates because, out of the blue, I was sold the next day.

I always remember on the bus on the way back to London, Harry Redknapp sat next to me all the way home. We talked about life, my family, my parents, what school I went to – everything.

The next morning, we had a day off, so I went for a game of golf. I was putting out on the fifth hole and the club pro turned up on his buggy.

'Is John Hartson part of your team?' he asked.

'Yeah, here I am,' I said.

'We've had a phone call. You need to get to this address in the centre of London, to meet Sam Hammam and Joe Kinnear.'

I signed for Wimbledon the very next morning.

Harry Redknapp had sat next to me for four hours, got to know me, then sold me the next day. It was very strange. Regardless, I went for £7.5m, which would have been £72m, in today's money.

So, I had broken the Arsenal transfer record, I had broken the West Ham transfer record, and now I had smashed the Wimbledon transfer record.

Going back to Swans, this book is full of legendary names, including John Toshack, who is my hero. What he did for Swansea is remarkable, a real one-off. I can't speak highly enough of him – he's a top manager with an amazing CV, and an all-round great man.

You've also got other club legends such as Mel Nurse (even though his 'Match of My Life' was a bit before my time!), John Cornforth and Alan Curtis.

I enjoyed Alan Tate's story of the Championship play-off final in 2011, when Swansea finally made it into the Premier League in front of 40,000

FOREWORD

Swans fans. I was at Wembley with my son for that match and it was genuinely like a home game – bumping into old friends and people that we knew from Swansea.

I remember we were 3-0 up at half-time and we had gone down for a cup of tea in the break. As we were coming back up the steps a little into the second half it was 3-2. Bloody hell, we had missed two Reading goals! We sat anxiously for another 20 minutes, then Scotty Sinclair had his penalty, completed his hat-trick, and we ended up winning 4-2.

As the final whistle went, you realise – after all the players, all the managers and all those years, we had finally made it into the Premier League. Just like Tatey, we sat at Wembley for two hours after everyone else had left, just taking it all in.

In the last ten years or so, we have been spoiled as Swans fans. I'm the biggest Swans fan out there and can admit that.

We've seen promotions, we've been to Wembley several times, we've won the League Cup, and played in Europe. We've had some really good managers that have always been able to take us forward.

In the last two years we've spent a lot of time at the bottom of the table, but we were always going to hit a wall. The last decade has been such a high, naturally our luck would even itself out.

As I write this foreword, Swansea are fighting for survival in the Premier League table, and we seem to have lost our way a little bit, both on and off the pitch.

I can't predict exactly where we'll be when this book is published, but I know that whatever happens, the Jack Army – myself included – will always be there, a force to be reckoned with.

Once again, I'm honoured to be part of this excellent book, and I hope you enjoy it.

John Hartson

MEL NURSE: BORN 11 OCTOBER 1937, SWANSEA; 257 GAMES, 12 GOALS



Mel Nurse

Swansea Town 6-1 Leicester City

Football League Second Division

The Vetch, 24 March 1956

Mel Nurse is a name synonymous with Swansea for many reasons. Starting his journey with the club as a member of the ground staff in 1954, he went on to make 257 league appearances for the Swans over two spells between 1955 and 1971. The robust centre-half played alongside some of the most iconic names in Welsh football – Ivor Allchurch, Mel Charles, Cliff Jones and Harry Griffiths, and himself earned 12 caps for Wales. His involvement with the Swans continued after he had retired as a player, where he became a director of the club, saving them from extinction on three separate occasions. There are few men who have done more for Swansea City as a football club, and Mel Nurse rightly wears his nickname 'Mr Swansea' with pride.

Swansea Town: King, Willis, Thomas, Charles, Nurse, Beech, L. Allchurch, Griffiths, Medwin, I. Allchurch, Jones

Leicester City: Anderson, Cunningham, Ogilvie, Froggatt, Fincham, Ward, Riley, Morris, Gardiner, Rowley, Hogg

Swansea Scorers: Terry Medwin (3), Harry Griffiths (2), Len Allchurch

Leicester Scorer: Jack Froggatt

Referee: J. Kelly

Attendance: 16,920

THEY said I was a better cricketer than footballer!

But I only played cricket to keep fit for football. Through the summer months, as a professional footballer, you used to break up at the end of the season and there was at least eight to ten weeks vacant. So, I played cricket all through the summer. I just wanted to keep running.

Today they play football throughout the year, but in our days for eight weeks in the summer there was nothing...bloody hell.

So I joined Highbury, a local team playing with local boys up in Cwmbwrla Park. We used to win the championship practically every year.

We used to have great players in those days. I remember Ray Davies, and Charlie Caswell – he used to play for Glamorgan, but was getting on a bit by then, so he played with us for a bit of fun.

He had these big size 13 boots, and when he ran those 20 yards up to the wicket – BOOM, BOOM, BOOM! – the sound was frightening.

Charlie was 6ft 4in and used to bounce them, but he wasn't as accurate. I was a fast bowler, on the other side from him. I wasn't as fast as him, but I was more accurate and used to grab all the wickets. That's how we played – he used to frighten them to death and I used to take the wickets!

But I didn't want to play cricket. I wanted to play football.

As a kid, I'd spend my life in Cwmbwrla Park. Central to everything in Cwmbwrla, it was fantastic. I would be there all night playing football. When one lot packed it in, I would go over and play with somebody else, then when they packed it in I would go and play with somebody else again. Until the park keeper blew his whistle, shouted 'everybody out', then locked the gate.

After that we would go to Cwmbwrla square and have a cup of tea if we could afford it.

It used to cost me three pence to catch the bus from Cwmbwrla to the bottom of Conway Road up in Penlan. To save that three pence I would run home – that was three or four miles, all uphill! But I thrived on it, I enjoyed it. I kept my three pence in my pocket, nobody was having that off me!

But that was building up my legs and building strength – another means of training. I wasn't necessarily doing it to train, but that's what it was. Everything I've done was with regards to progressing within the sport that I loved.

I always wanted to play football. As a child in infant school I used to play with a tennis ball. I went to Cwmbwrla school and played football for them, then went to Manselton school and played for them too.

While I was in Manselton they sent me up to Ynystawe Park because that's where the schoolboys held their trials and training.

I went up with Mr Morris, who was a teacher in my school linked to the schoolboys. He was a brilliant gentleman who helped me greatly during my time with the schoolboys.

Another player in the school with me was Colin Rees, who also played for Manselton. And there were another two boys, David Davies and Mel Charles, who were in my school, but in different age groups – a bit older than me.

When I went up to Ynystawe, there were boys of 15 years of age, where I was only 14. But I was a tall lad for my age. I was around 5ft 10in when I was in school, there was nobody taller than me. So even though I was only 14, I could hold my own. I was equal to them in size so I could get away with it.

The teacher at the time who used to select the schoolboys was Dai Beynon, from Townhill School. Now, there were loads of boys up there, all different age groups, all from different schools, all congregating at Ynystawe, wanting to play for the schoolboys.

There would be loads of matches, with everyone playing against each other – remove a player, put another one in, remove one, put one in. They were always changing people around to find out the best team.

Practice this was, so Mr Beynon could determine who would be playing for the schoolboys, because they can only have 11 on the field at one time.

At the end of the training, Mr Beynon would stand on a box so he could be above everybody, and he could look out at all the boys who were waiting for him to decide what he was going to do. Who would be representing the schoolboys on the Saturday?

He would call out all these other names, but not mine. I was there, head in my hands, agonising as he kept reeling off these names.

Then he *finally* called my name out. He had selected me!

Mr Beynon actually paid me a compliment many years later. I had finished playing and was sitting outside the front of my hotel, and he walked past. I hadn't seen him for about 50 years, but I instantly recognised him and called out to say hello. We stood talking and at one point he said to me, 'You know what, Mel – when I stood on that box calling out the names, I deliberately left your name until last.'

I'm there looking at him stupid. 'Why did you do that?' I said.

'Because I didn't want you to get carried away with yourself, thinking that you were one of my first selections. Of course, you were, but I left you 'til last.'

Life is funny. If you give a child everything, they get carried away with themselves. Their attitude to life changes.

I was brought up in an ordinary terraced house in Cwmbwrla, changed my shoes once a year, if I was lucky! If there were holes in them, my father would cobble them – with cardboard! – but that was the upbringing I had. And Dai Beynon kept me at that level.

I remember we then moved from Cwmbwrla to Prescelli Road in Penlan. While we were up there I was playing for the Swansea Schoolboys and the Welsh Schoolboys.

I played with some great players in the schoolboys. Every club in the country wanted the Swansea players. Our schoolboys were winning everything.

If you look at the cup – the English trophy that's linked to the schoolboys – on the base of it reads: 'Swansea Town', 'Swansea Town', 'Swansea Town', 'Somebody Else', 'Swansea Town'.

When I saw that, even in those days, I couldn't believe it. Swansea appeared on it more than any other club. Most probably they have new cups today because they couldn't fit any more 'Swansea Towns' on it!

When I left school, I had the option to join four clubs – Arsenal, Chelsea, West Brom and Bristol Rovers. Back then, West Brom and Bristol Rovers were just as dominant as the other two.

Those four came in for me, but nobody from the Swans approached my mother, or my family, or the school, or anybody.

And I didn't want to leave Swansea. I'm a Swansea boy – what did I want to leave Swansea for? I'm playing football, I want to play for Swansea, and that was it. But then I remember this particular game I played for the Welsh Schoolboys. We had played away from home in Ireland. When I came back to Swansea I remember walking up Conway Road with my bag, down Prescelli Road to my house, then I knock the door about nine o'clock at night. After playing away for a week I was glad to get home.

My mum answered the door that night.

'Hello son,' she said. 'There's somebody here from the Swans.'

A big pause.

I couldn't believe it. They sent someone up. They wanted me!

The gentleman sitting in the living room was Glyn Evans. He was a scout for the Swans and a very pleasant fella. He came from the Valleys – we called him Glyn Buff because he was quite stocky, but a real gentleman.

Because he came down from the Rhondda to see me, and I was away in Ireland, he had stayed with my parents for two days. The manager of Swansea Town at the time, Billy McCandless, had seen Glyn and sent him up to our house to ask me if I would like to go down the Vetch.

Would I like to go down the Vetch? That's all I'd dreamt of!

A couple of months later Glyn died in a bus accident on the way back to the Valleys. It was very sad, but I was very grateful to him for coming up and telling me I could start my career at the Vetch.

I joined the Vetch as part of the ground staff at 15 years of age. There were eight of us on the ground staff, all from the schoolboys from different parts of Swansea.

Two out of the eight – those players who the club thought would make the grade – would be in the dressing rooms, helping the players, wiping their backs, getting them towels, getting their boots.

One would be in the first team changing rooms, one in the reserves. The other six players were outside with the groundsmen helping on the field, wheeling soil around, and the rest of it. It was a learning process. It stems from there and you work your way up.

I was out on the grounds at first for around 12 months, but I moved into the dressing room just before they signed me professionally. It was like a promotion!

In those days the club had four teams. First there was the Colts, which was the team for the schoolboys leaving school. It's changed today, because some now play in the first team when they are 17, but in those days that never happened. Very rare that happened – you had to be George Best or John Charles to play at that age.

After the Colts you would progress up to the Welsh League team, then the Combination team, which was the second or reserve team, and then the first team, where the stars would play.

So, I was part of the ground staff and playing for the Colts, and we were great. We used to win all the championships. Then I moved up to play for the Welsh League team facing local teams like Carmarthen, Pembroke, Haverfordwest, and Ton Pentre. It was a fantastic division, playing football around the local communities.

Then I got into the Combination team, which used to play in the Combination competition with teams from across Wales and England. And that's when you really started travelling.

Woah! I wasn't really familiar with travelling. I came from Cwmbwrla – we couldn't afford to go to the beach, let alone travel away!

Every journey away was something different, wherever you went there was something new to see. It was a novelty. Just think of the personal satisfaction of travelling around the country at that age.

In the Combination team I was around 17 years old. I was playing alongside two colleagues – at right-half was Brian Hughes, there was Malcolm Kennedy on the left, and myself at centre-half. We formed a half-back line and we didn't need anyone else on the field. Brian had the flair to go forward, which was a gift – you've either got it or you haven't. Malcolm was the safety player, with me in the middle. I was working off those two – they were brilliant, we had such a balance.

In 1956, the year I was selected for the first team, the first team were practically at the bottom of the Second Division table, while the Combination team was at the top of their table.

Brian, Malcolm and myself were all doing well in the Combination. That was probably why the manager suddenly took the whole half-back line from one team and swapped it over with the other!

It wouldn't happen today. I don't know why, but that's what he did.

It's no surprise that the Combination team suddenly started losing their form and the first team began going up the table!

And that's around the time we played Leicester City at home, which was my first game for Swansea.

At that stage, me and my family were living in a council house in Gendros. I was very fortunate that a few doors away from us lived a gentleman called Les Bailey, who worked as a writer for the *Evening Post*.

I can remember the night before the Leicester game we were in the house watching the telly. I was going to bed at nine, as I had to get up early in the morning to get down the Vetch. I was a fanatic, nothing was going to get in my way – football, football, football, that was all I was focused on.

All of a sudden, the front doorbell rings. Ding, ding. It was Les Bailey. We invited him in, where he delivered some news. He explained that the centre-half at the time, Tom Kiley, had had an injury with his ankle and he had hobbled off in training, so he was not going to be playing in the Leicester game.

So, they improvised. Ronnie Burgess was the player-manager at that time, after Billy McCandless had died in March the previous year, and he had chosen to put me in the first team. Les was one of the first to know it as he was so heavily linked to the club.

And who were we playing against? Leicester City.

They were a team that had all the big names at that time – Arthur Rowley, who was called 'The Gunner'. He scored around 250 goals in 300 games. They also had Willie Gardiner, another top goalscorer playing for them. These men were legends. And Leicester were top of the table, trying to get back in to the First Division.

And they were going to put me in as a 17-year-old?

But I was never afraid to go on the field. I was self-confident, not arrogant. I was so sure of myself. You have to be, and it has to come naturally. Some players will step on the field with all the ability in the world but they can't perform. When they get in front of a big crowd, they are knackered.

And we had big crowds. In those days football was *the* thing – it was like the Swans now in the Premier League.

In those days there was not much seating – only the Centre Stand and the West Stand had seating. There was no shelter on the East Stand or the North Bank. Just open banks. But we averaged around 25,000 to 30,000 people a game, standing.

But it was cheap – tickets were reasonable then. That was the only income the club had coming in, through gate money.

That's why there was a maximum wage – £20 and that's your lot. And it was only the privileged first team that would get that amount.

Football wasn't a money game in those days. You have to live, but players weren't going to finish their football careers with millions of pounds in the

bank. If they could finish their careers owning their own house, even with a mortgage, they would be grateful. But in our days, you weren't playing for money, you were playing for the love of the game.

We didn't actually have that big a crowd for the Leicester game, just a small gate of around 17,000. The crowd were depleted because the team were depleted. Because Tom Kiley was injured and one or two others weren't playing, it was just expected that Leicester were going to thrash the Swans. Some people didn't want to turn up for that.

Leicester were at the top and we were down at the bottom, struggling. It was a foregone conclusion that they were going to hammer us. But the reverse happened that day.

They had actually beaten us badly earlier in the season – 6-1 was the score, although I wasn't playing that day. But on 24 March, we went and beat *them* 6-1!

Now, you've got to turn the clock back and think about how you felt at the age of 17. You can imagine how nervous I was. I was a young kid, thrown in the deep end with all these legends. And, being a local boy, playing for a local team is something you dream about.

What a team we had. Len Allchurch – 'The Fox', we called him, because he was so clever and cunning. A great player. Terry Medwin – a great player. Ivor Allchurch – a legend, a great player. Harry Griffiths – a great player. Jonny King was in goal at the time. He was a nice lad from up the Valleys and a great player.

They were mostly local boys in that team, although Ronnie Burgess and Arthur Willis had come from Spurs. Willis was a full-back and Ronnie was a left-half.

On that day I was playing in defence alongside Arthur Willis, Gilbert Beech, who was left-back, and Dai Thomas, who was right-back. They were quality players too.

I was a bit cautious talking to all those players because they were at the top and I was down at the bottom, just coming through. Who was I to talk to those great players?

You were aware of your position, but you went out and did your best.

That's what I did in the game against Leicester. I could only give my best, but I had to because I wanted to progress.

Playing among quality players like those around me, you have every chance of doing something good. I wasn't a timid player, I was an aggressive player and that's what the Swans needed. That Leicester game suited me down to the ground because I had quality around me and I was aggressive in my attitude.

Don't forget, in those days you were playing in the mud, it wasn't turf. Centre-halves were six foot-odd, and centre-forwards were six foot-odd.

Every time a challenge for the ball came in – WHAM! – there were bodies flying.

I used to go in quite hard but I wasn't the only one, everybody did. They would come in at me and I would go in at them. That's why, throughout my career, I split my eyes, broke my nose, and spent plenty of time in hospital.

On my debut game we only let in one goal, which was scored by their left-half Jack Froggatt. But we scored six that day! Terry Medwin scored a hat-trick, Harry Griffiths had two, and Len Allchurch took the other. It was a brilliant result.

Five games later I had to go to the army to do my National Service, which lasted two years. But it was a way of life, everybody had to do it. You knew when you turned 18 years of age, you had to do National Service.

I didn't want to do it, I wanted to play with the Swans. But you had to go.

Over the two years you spend doing National Service you grow up – you go from a boy to a man. I needed those two years to grow up. How I would have turned out otherwise, if I hadn't done that, I don't know.

I came out of the army in 1958 and went back to the Vetch, to re-join my old team-mates. I have lots of funny stories about my time with the Swans, but I remember this one well.

As I mentioned earlier, we had moved down from Prescelli Road to Gendros. Mel Charles used to live in a house in Gwylym Street, near me. Right opposite his house was a bus stop.

On this particular day we were playing at home, and we would both catch the bus to the Vetch from Gendros. Nobody had cars in our days – you were lucky if you had a bike!

I'd usually catch the bus from the top end of the road. That's if you could get on the bus... they would be packed with people because everybody would be going to the Vetch!

This day in particular I was waiting at the bus stop.

To be honest, I wouldn't usually stand in the bus queue, or you'd have too many people saying hello and asking for autographs. I would wait for the bus around the corner, and when it came I would run like hell and jump on the platform!

We would go down the road about 200 yards, turn right and there would be Mel Charles waiting at his bus stop.

So, this day, I shouted, 'Keep going driver!'

Because if I got there before Charlo I'd most probably have been the 12th man – the one sub. I wasn't a regular in the first team then, but I'd have been 12th man. If anybody cried off injured, I'd be playing. So, if I could leave Charlo behind, I'd be playing that day.

Anyway, the bus carried on, passing Mel because it was full.

The bus dropped me off in town. I walked up through the centre and came around the corner to the Vetch, where I could see huge queues of people waiting to get into the ground.

Poor Charlo was still stuck up in Gendros!

Now, there used to be a lot of rag and bone men years ago, selling firewood and all that. One of them men was coming along and Charlo had shouted to him, 'Give us a lift into town – I'm playing this afternoon and the buses are full!'

So, he jumped on the horse and cart, and came down to town. You can imagine all the people queuing to go into the Vetch, doing a double-take as they saw one of their star players hurtle past sitting on the horse and cart! 'Rag and bone!'

But that was the way of life in our time.

In 1962 I bought a house on the promenade, but within two months of me buying the house, the club sold me to Middlesbrough.

A lot of people say I asked for a transfer. But I never asked for a transfer from Swansea. Never. Why should I want to move from Swansea? Why would I buy a house if I wanted to move? That's the truth.

I didn't want to go. Not to be nasty to Middlesbrough, but I didn't want to go there. Manchester United and Manchester City wanted to buy me too. Loads of clubs wanted to buy me. But I didn't want to go anywhere. In those days I wanted to play for Swansea, and I didn't want to leave my mother and father.

But I was working. Football was work. And Middlesbrough put me on a pedestal, made me club skipper, player of the year... For the three or four years I was there I was lucky. I was captain of the club and if players didn't listen to me they'd have trouble!

After Middlesbrough, I ended up playing with Swindon for a few years, but then I came back to Swansea in 1968.

I finished playing professional football in Swansea, but then I went to Pembroke, played for them for a while, then up to Merthyr with big John Charles, and then I finished. I played in some charity games, but that was all. I knew what I was doing. I could have carried on. I was only 32 when I finished, but it wasn't viable for me to continue.

I believe that practically everything that happened to me was meant to happen. I'm very lucky, I'm a very privileged person. I can honestly say this – my life was planned for me. Every time something happens to me I say, 'Cor, I was lucky.'

I've been rewarded for playing football by the city I love. I also feel lucky because the public still remember me.

There's only one place for me, and that's Swansea. I won't even go to Port Talbot because it's outside the radius of the city!

MATCH OF MY LIFE – SWANSEA CITY

In fact, as a family, we've never been on holiday.

Only once we attempted a holiday. We went to the Isle of Wight for what was supposed to be a fortnight, but we were only there for a few hours, then jumped back on the same ferry. I didn't want to go. I didn't feel comfortable.

In 2016, I was awarded the freedom of the city, and at the time I made this statement. I only went out of Swansea when playing football and doing my National Service. Those two factors compelled me to leave the city.

Other than that, I'm not going anywhere. I ain't leaving Swansea.