

Arthur McGachieⁱ

Born and brought up in Lochore, Arthur started work in 1917 at the Mary Pit when he was only 14 years old after his father had been killed in action in during World War I. When not working at the Mary Arthur spent most of his free time developing the footballing skills which would eventually take from the Mary Pit to life as a full-time professional footballer.

Arthur signed for East Fife from Crossgates Primrose in 1927 as a defender and made his debut in a 3-2 win against Bathgate at Mill Park on 11 February 1928.

"I was very friendly with Johnny Thomson, Celtic's international; goalkeeper, and he told me that he received a signing on fee of £10, when joining Celtic. You can imagine how I felt when East Fife offered me £25 to sign for them – of course I had to accept it!"

He was a regular at left back for the remainder of the season and for the opening two months of the following season, when he was moved to centre forward. The story goes that regular centre Phil Weir was moved to outside right at the beginning of October 1928 and Arthur was asked to lead the front line as the team were having difficulty finding the net. When Arthur scored twice against Dunfermline Athletic at East End Park in a 3-2 win on 13 October 1928, the decision was made to keep Arthur in the attack.

In the next match, against Queen of the South at Bayview, Arthur again scored twice in a 6-1 win then, incredibly, repeated the feat in a 4-2 win against Alloa Athletic at Recreation Park the following week.

He made the centre forward position his own for the remainder of the season and scored no fewer than 31 goals, including hat-tricks against Clydebank (4-0 win at Bayview on 24/11/28) and against Bathgate (6-2 home win on 5/1/29).

The following season Arthur missed only two league games As East Fife won promotion to Division One for the first time in their history, scoring 42 times (including a couple in local cup competitions). Twice during the promotion season he found the net four times during the one match - against Stenhousemuir in a 7-0 win at Bayview on 30/11/29 and against Brechin City in a 7-2 win at Bayview on 25/1/30.

During season 1930/31, when East Fife was in the first division, Arthur was a regular in the forward line and missed only a handful of games, presumably due to injury. In the very first league game of that season, Arthur scored East Fife's first ever goal in the top league, against Motherwell in a 4-1 defeat at Fir Park on 9/8/30. The local press heaped praise on McGachie's 'great goal', and described the action: "a loose ball was lobbed down the middle by

Gowdy. McGachie collected and dashed between two defenders before unleashing an unstoppable shot into the corner of the net". Needless to say, with East Fife struggling at the foot of the table for most of the season, Arthur didn't find the mark quite so often and scored 'only' fourteen league goals (oh, for someone who could score 'only' fourteen today!).

Arthur did have the honour of scoring against Celtic that season in a 6-2 home defeat from the Glasgow giants. Unfortunately, he was also in the side that lost 9-1 at Celtic Park, when the legendary Jimmy McGrory scored five! Arthur appeared in his usual position at the head of the attack for most of the following season, but lost his place to McCartney in March 1932 when he was moved back into defence. Even playing at the back, however, he still managed to find the net and scored 27 times (including local cup matches). Season 1932/33 saw Arthur occupying the left back position for most of the season, although he did occasionally play in the attack towards the end of the season. He scored only ten goals during that campaign.

During the summer of 1933, Arthur was transferred to Dunfermline Athletic on a 'free transfer'.

"Arthur played 182 times for East Fife and scored 115 goals, not including appearances in local cup competitions such as the Fife Cup, the Wemyss Cup and the Penman Cup".

Arthur always looked back on his time with East Fife with great fondness and is on record as saying.

*"I had many happy years playing for East Fife, and I remember the many friends I made whilst at Methil. I'm very please to say that, even now sixty years later, some people still remember me."*ⁱⁱⁱ

Arthur was not happy playing in the Second Division with the Pars and was soon on his way to First Division Cowdenbeath FC. However his stay at Cowden was also short as they were relegated that season and he was placed on the transfer list. After a short stay with Kings Park, later to become Stirling Albion, Arthur found himself at Leith Athletic who were sitting top the Second Division. Now in his thirties Arthur decided he had to secure his future so he returned to the Mary Pit while still continuing to play for Leith.

Looking back on his playing career Arthur recalled;

"I have many happy memories from my playing career over the years. I well remember running on to the Parkhead pitch, against Glasgow Celtic, and I had to keep telling myself 'You're playing against the team that won the League and the Scottish Cup!'"^{iv}

As well as Dunfermline Athletic Arthur also played for Cowdenbeath and Kings Park, later to become Stirling Albion.

In 1935 with his football career over Arthur returned to the Mary Pit where he worked until his retirement in 1968. During his retirement Arthur was always active, he was a keen golfer, avid walker and a member of Benarty Mining Heritage.

ⁱ Based on original work by Jim Corstorphine adapted by Michael Payne

ⁱⁱ Benarty Mining Heritage Group. 1992 No More Bings in Benarty. Fife: Barr Printers

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