

## The Aird Family

The Aird family came to Fife like so many others as miners from Ayrshire. Peter Aird was a coal miner. In the Great War, he served as a corporal in the 9th Battalion of the Gordon Highlanders. Peter also played for local side Glenraig Rovers alongside Mick Gilhooley (later Celtic and Hull) and Bob Rowan (later Cowdenbeath).

In 1927, twenty Glenraig miners were sentenced to terms of imprisonment at Dunfermline Sheriff Court, on being found guilty, after a trial which lasted six days, on charges of mobbing and rioting at a Glenraig on 22nd November 1926. The indictment charged the men with having formed part of a riotous mob at Glenraig, and, acting with common purpose, assaulted police officers and miners who had returned to work by throwing stones at them, and striking several of them with their fists; broke windows at Glenraig Colliery, set the engine in motion and caused the cage to be raised above its proper stopping place, and damaged the winding gear; and threw stones at and broke the windows of a house occupied by a police pensioner. Peter Aird was a member of the Communist Party. He actually opposed the acts of vandalism carried out by the rioters in the miners' strike battling with police such as wrecking the shaft at the Glenraig Colliery but ended up being made an example of! Peter was jailed for 9 months. He also was blacklisted and had to move to Bowhill to work after he came out of prison. Peter senior's other passion apart from politics was still football and he became a committee member of the Bowhill Rovers junior club.

Peter's son Willie Aird was born in March 1917 at North Glenraig. Willie was to make his name as a small but rugged centre half. He first came to the fore with the Edinburgh club St Bernards. He was signed by Saints from Inverkeithing Juniors in 1937. At the age of just 20 he was in the Saints first team at right half alongside centre half, Lumphinnans born, Jimmy Philp. Aird was real tough guy, he once was working on the erection of a bungalow on a Saturday morning when he fell through the rafters to the ground. He still turned out for Saints that afternoon. Willie played in the Saints side which reached the semi final of the Scottish Cup in 1938. Saints beat Motherwell at their Gymnasium ground in the quarter final but lost out in a replay to eventual Cup winners East Fife in the semis.

During the War, St Bernards closed down and Willie Aird moved to Dumbarton in 1941 and shortly after to Morton where he was once again to show his mettle as a defensive stalwart. He was centre half when Morton lost in the 1942 Wartime League Cup final at Hampden to Rangers by 1-0. Willie moved to Queen of the South in 1947 and became the skipper of the Doonhamers. 5 of the next 6 seasons were spent at Palmerston, the one year hiatus coming when club and player were in dispute and Willie played for Elgin City. Once all was forgiven, Willie came back to captain Queens to their B Division title success in 1951 and then in the 1st Division.

Willie moved to Wales to play for Llanelli and his career ended due to injury in season 1953/54. He then became trainer/coach of Thornton Hibs. Willie died in Glenrothes aged only 47 in 1965. Willie's son Willie Aird junior played in goals for Glenrothes Juniors in the 1968 Scottish Junior Cup final.

Willie Aird also had a younger brother Peter born in 1921. Peter junior worked in Bowhill Colliery from the age of 14 and he too was a centre half. It was from Bowhill

Rovers that Peter joined Hibs in 1943. Peter was in the Hibs side that lost in the Victory Cup final and was centre half when Hibs won the 1948 Scottish League title and lost in the Scottish Cup final. In 1951, he joined East Fife where he remained until 1954 playing for a spell in harness with his brother's old team-mate Jimmy Philp. Peter then went to Llanelli to play as Willie's replacement but didn't settle and returned home after a short while. He, like Willie, was small for a centre half and had the same red hair. Peter was 79 when he died in Glenrothes in 2000.

Jock Aird was born in South Glenraig in 1926 and was a cousin of Peter and Willie Aird. He played with Alex 'Ming' Menzies for Kelty St Josephs and then was playing for Jeanfield Swifts in 1948 when he joined Burnley. He spent 7 years as a full back at Turf Moor. Jock was capped 4 times by Scotland and played in the 1954 World Cup finals. In 1955, he immigrated to New Zealand and joined a club named Gisborne. He ended up playing 5 times for New Zealand and scored in one of these matches v Australia. He also played for Eastern Union in New Zealand before, in 1959, he moved to Australia to join Hakoah. Jock gained representative honours in Australia as well with Northern New South Wales. As late as 1965 he was playing for South Sydney. Later he coached in Australia with Hakoah and Melita Eagles and he now lives just north of Sydney. In 2009, he made a sentimental journey back to Turf Moor.

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