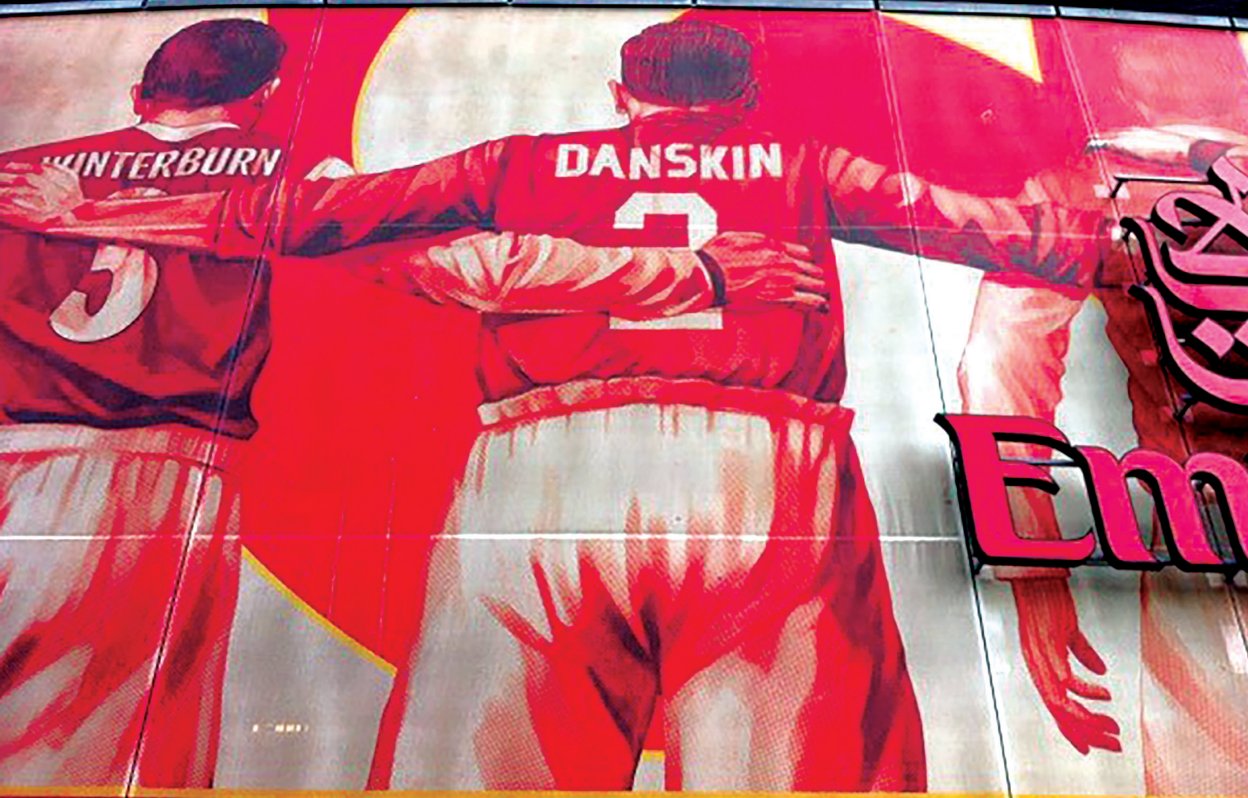


EMIRATES



DAVID DANSKIN, ARSENAL, SCOTLAND

IF YOU were asked to name the bigger clubs south of the border, then Arsenal would surely be up there. However, if asked to name players that have played for Arsenal and for Scotland then it may be more of a struggle. Recently, Kieran Tierney (albeit born on the Isle of Man) has reached 30 Scotland caps, and although only 18 of these have been whilst he was at Arsenal, he is now their most capped Scotland player... but before that? Not only has there been a lack of players representing Scotland of late, but there have been no Scottish-born players at Arsenal – in fact, the last Scottish-born footballer to play for Arsenal was Scott Marshall in July 1998.

However, this may in part be explained by the recruitment policy under the long-serving manager Arsene Wenger – until his arrival, Scottish players were well represented at Arsenal, with almost half of their squads from their foundation until the 1960s being Scottish. Probably the most famous player pre-WW2 was Alex James. Capped from 1925 onwards, and a Wembley wizard in 1928 as a Preston North End player, he joined Arsenal in 1929, winning a further 4 caps, and an Arsenal legend in 1930s under Herbert Chapman, when they won 4 titles and 2 FA cups. And, of course, during WW2, one of the famous Glenbuck crop of players, Bill Shankly appeared for Arsenal from 1942-43.

From WW2 onwards, Arsenal players with Scotland caps include Tommy Docherty (1958 – 1961), Bob Wilson (1963 – 1974), George Graham (1966 – 1972), and Charlie Nicholas (1983 – 1988), but only Nicholas and Tierney have more than 10 caps whilst playing for Arsenal.

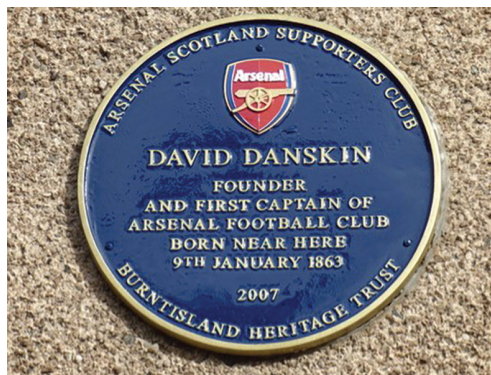
Of course, back in the day, David Danskin was never picked to represent Scotland as he played outside the country, and although there are a large number of Scottish international players who have played for/coached Arsenal since their foundation in 1886, there are only really a few whose time there is of significance – Alex Graham, who was captain for a brief period, played for the club for 12 years from 1912 – he in fact played in Arsenal’s last match at Woolwich before the club went to Highbury in 1913 (and then dropped ‘Woolwich’ from their name).

Why is this even of interest in this esteemed publication? Well, the number of Scottish players at Arsenal is even more surprising when it is probably not well-known that a Scotsman is credited with founding the club.

David Danskin was born in January 1863 in Burntisland, named after his father, also David, the family being from the Markinch area. The surname means a citizen of Gdansk– in fact, Danskins are found all along the east coast of Scotland and northern England. The family tree on my grandmother’s side goes back to David Danskin’s sister, Christina, David being the brother of my grandmother’s grandmother!

David at age 18 was an apprentice engineer in Kirkcaldy and in 1885, at the age of 22, he moved from Kirkcaldy to Kent, to take up employment at the famous Woolwich Arsenal munitions factory. He worked in the Dial Square gun-finishing workshop, making a very nice 35 shillings a week in 1886.

Although it is unknown where David learned to play football, he was quoted in a newspaper article in 1931 as wishing to play Association football like he had in Scotland. In October 1886, he was the main instigator in a group subscribing towards purchasing a football, organising a collection among his work colleagues - he bought a football and was instrumental in founding a football club called Dial Square, named after their workshop in the factory.



At the initial training sessions, he observed that his colleagues were not aware of the basic rules, rugby being the predominant ball game at the time, and he instructed them how to play football - he is therefore another ‘Scotch Professor’ who showed England how to play the passing and running game.

Their first fixture was played on 11 December 1886 against Eastern Wanderers at Millwall, and captained by David Danskin, they won 6-0. Of importance is that after the game, in the Royal Oak public house, they renamed the club as Royal Arsenal Football Club, which again changed name in 1891 to Woolwich Arsenal when they became a professional club, joining the league in 1893. The club changed name to the Royal Arsenal to Woolwich Arsenal and then Arsenal, moving to Highbury in 1913.

David Danskin appeared regularly at first as Arsenal developed, but then slowly faded from the scene, not playing after 1889. And that appears to be the end of his association with Arsenal – although he still had an interest in football - David plus several of the founders and early players were pushed out in 1892, founding the amateur team Royal Ordnance Factories.

In 1901, he established a cycle company in Plumstead, manufacturing and selling bikes under the name ‘Cushie-doo’ in a nod to his Scottish roots. In 1907, he sold the business and moved to Coventry, where he worked for the Standard Motor Company. He prospered for a while, but mobility problems led to retirement. He listened to the FA Cup Final in 1936 from his bed, and when Arsenal won it, they held a dinner in his honour. His house was damaged in a bombing raid in WW2, and when

he returned to it, all of his football memorabilia had been stolen. He was hospitalised in 1942, and remained so until his death in 1948, aged 85. He was buried in a cemetery in London Road in Coventry in an unmarked plot.

And that is where the story would have ended until in stepped Richard Wyatt, a grandson of David Danskin through his 2nd marriage. He wanted to find out more about his grandfather, and with the wonders of the internet, this then led to interest from the Arsenal Supporters Club of Scotland. They were instrumental in commemorating Danskin in by arranging a Blue Plaque at the approximate site of the birthplace of David Danskin being unveiled in 2007 in Burntisland by Bob Wilson.



relatives and Scotland-based Arsenal fans (the headstone being paid for by Arsenal).

Arsenal football club has not forgotten David Danskin's importance – his name is displayed on the exterior of their new home stadium as one of the 50 most influential players in the club's history.

To celebrate their 125th anniversary, Arsenal arranged for great grandchildren of David Danskin to be the team mascots on the fixture closest to the date that David Danskin and fourteen other workers from the Royal Arsenal munitions factory formed the new club.



However, what of his resting place? As mentioned above, David Danskin was in an unmarked plot in a cemetery in London Road in Coventry. Although his resting place had been established in 2008, it was not until 2018 that there was sufficient enough interest to commemorate and mark the final resting place of David Danskin.

Again, after a lot of effort from many parties, but driven by members of the Arsenal Scotland Supporters Club, a new headstone was arranged for the founder of the club, and in April 2019, his refurbished and rededicated grave was revealed in a ceremony attended by club representatives,

The different ways in which David Danskin's life and achievements are commemorated, again demonstrates the power of the family of football fans coming together to ensure that the pioneers should be remembered and acknowledged. It is great to see a club acknowledge their history and contribute towards its preservation – it is a shame that other clubs and national associations do not show similar interest.

Thanks to the following who helped with this article – Richard Wyatt, Ian Campbell Whittle, Burntisland.net and arsenalscotland.com