

Scarborough Sea Wall Heritage Trail Project.

Harry Dunn – His Career with Scarborough Football Club.

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Today I'm talking to Harry Dunn, born and bred in Scarborough, Harry became a legendary player for Scarborough Football Club. When I read about the club's history from the 1950s, I came across the surname Dunn several times, but Harry tells me that none of these players were related to him. So today I'm going to try to understand how Harry, with no inherited pedigree in football, became this legendary player.

Harry, in your young days you clearly developed into a skilful footballer. What eventually led to you being taken on by Scarborough Football Club?

It was Eddie Brown who asked me to go down and train with Scarborough Football Club. He had previously played with Birmingham City and was Scarborough's manager at the time. I think one or two of his mates had seen me play and they thought he should have a look at me.

How old were you at the time?

It was in 1964, I was 16 years old and it progressed from there. I went into the A-Team and then into the Reserves. I made my debut for the first team when I was 17 on 27th of November 1965 against Grantham in the Midland League. That was a proud moment for me. I'd been a keen fan all through my childhood and then the next thing you know, I'm playing for them. I'll never forget that first match against Grantham. Terry Blyth was playing against me. He was six foot five and I was five foot six, so I was very nervous.

From that debut match how long did it take for you to become a regular in the team?

I was a regular at every game from then on. I played all the time and because I was playing with and against better players I got better.

Two weeks after your first match, player-manager Albert Franks was sacked for the team's poor recent performance. Did that affect you?

You don't know until the next manager comes in how things are going to be. I just hoped that whoever was going to be the new manager would have me in the team. You soon get used to the turnover of managers. Each one has his own ideas about how the team should play and I just worked to try to achieve what the manager was looking for from me.

People refer to you now as a legendary player for the team. Very few players are described as legends in their own lifetime. Why do you think you're described in those terms, Harry?

I suppose it was because I played for Scarborough Football Club for so many years and the fans seemed to like me because they thought that I gave a hundred percent effort every match which is what I did.

So you were playing week in, week out against some team or other, some of which would surely be on the lookout for young and developing players. Were there any approaches made to try to attract you away from Scarborough and were you ever tempted?

Well, I did get an invite to go to Manchester City for a fortnight's trial and I played three games for their A team during that time. I stayed with a nice family who, funnily enough took me to see Manchester United play. I think I did get a bit homesick during that time. It did make me think whether I really wanted to live away from Scarborough. I was also a bit nervous playing at such a big club. In the end I decided that playing for Scarborough was what I wanted to do. Perhaps if I hadn't been so far away from home, and with a Yorkshire club it might have been different but we'll never know.

From that debut performance and for the next 20 years, you were a regular in the team, playing most, if not all of the matches every season. Tell us about that.

It was hard to play 70 games each season especially when you're working full time as well as travelling to away games. But when you love the game, you can do that and also my family always supported me and helped me through it.

Leaving out the Wembley experience for a moment, tell us about some of the standout moments for you during that 20 years.

The best day of all was when I got married. That was at 11 in the morning but the only thing was that I was playing football at 2:30 that afternoon. The only bad thing that day was that we lost that game.

Tell me about the wedding.

The church was really full and there were a lot of supporters outside. It was just wonderful. We went to Malton for our honeymoon and we had a replay on the Monday.

What were the other highlights in that long career?

We had some really good FA Cup experiences. We played against Brighton and I know we got beat three nil, but we gave a good account of ourselves. And then we played Crystal Palace at Scarborough Football Club in the third round of the FA Cup and there were 8,000 people watching that match. We got beat 2-1 but again we gave a good account of ourselves.

In 1973 the Club introduced its first Player of the Year award and you were the first winner of that award. What did that mean to you?

It was a great honour and a wonderful feeling especially because this was awarded based on votes of the fans. There's no better feeling than when the fans thank you because they know that you're giving 100% commitment to the team. I got the same award in 1984. A few years ago the local newspaper also asked its readers to name the all-time best Scarborough FC team from the best players in the history of the Club and the fans voted me into that fantasy team which was also a great feeling to be named with so many great players.

During a 22 year playing record you had two testimonial matches. Tell us about those.

Yes, I had two testimonials, in 1974 and in 1984. In one of them, Emlyn Hughes played and Jack Charlton played in the other one. It was a great experience to see all the supporters coming down to support the testimonials. We had a do for the players and the wives and supporters were there as well. So everybody enjoyed themselves.

I want to move now to that 1970s period which included the four Wembley finals for the FA Challenge Trophy. From my research I think you were the only Scarborough player who played every minute of all of those finals. Is that right?

Yes, that's correct. Jeff Barmby played in all of them as well but came on as substitute in one of those. But we had some great teams in those days.

Tell me what it was like to play in those finals?

It was just amazing. Friends and family came down and everyone from Scarborough seemed to be there. The wives came down with the players on the team bus and they stayed at different hotels. My two daughters were brought down by their grandparents. On match day, the pressure was building up inside you. You came out of the tunnel and even though the ground was only about a quarter full, the roar of the crowd was something we never experienced in any other matches and it gave me a lump in my throat and just realised how important it was to try to meet the expectations of so many fans. Once the match got started you forgot about all that and just got on with it. The match was really hard and we were giving it everything we had. Both the Wigan and the Stafford Rangers matches went to extra time. In the Wigan match they equalised 20 seconds before the end of normal time and we had to start all over again in extra time. In the first half of extra time I passed the ball to Macolm Thompson and he scored and we were ahead again and we managed to hold on to that lead.

When the final whistle came, I was completely shattered but the realisation of what you've achieved kicks in and you just want to celebrate with the fans so we were running round the field cheering them for the help they'd given us and the lovely thing is as you go around you recognise friends and family and it's great. Then eventually you have to go up to collect the trophy and to be handed that as the team captain is just fantastic and you turn and show it to the fans.

On the way home it was incredible. On the journey from York to Scarborough, loads of people had turned out on the sides of the road to cheer us as heroes and for weeks after, wherever I went people would come up to me to shake hands and congratulate us.

And the manager for those Wembley matches, were they managed by just one manager?

The three winning matches were managed by Colin Appleton. Playing under Colin I thought that he was the best manager that Scarborough had, especially in the 1970s. Also we had Ken Houghton who was manager in 1975. That was the one we lost.

What for you, was the best moment of your long career in football?

It has to be the first win at Wembley in 1973. That has to be a great moment in any footballer's career and it certainly was for me.

Harry Dunn, in what was a 22 year period from 1965 to 1986 you played over 900 games for Scarborough FC, you scored many goals and created many more. You had well over twice the number of appearances of any player in the Club's history and well over three times the number of appearances by any local player. You have been described as:

- the ever present Harry Dunn*
- competent, reliable and dependable*
- a calm presence on the field*
- a gentleman on and off the field*

everything that was needed for a team captain to lead Scarborough Football Club to the success it enjoyed and particularly to those Wembley victories. I think I now understand why you are regarded as a living legend of Scarborough Football Club. Thank you for what you have done for Scarborough football and thank you for talking to me today.