

ALLCHURCH, IVOR JOHN (1929-1997), footballer

Name: Ivor John Allchurch
Date of birth: 1929
Date of death: 1997
Spouse: Esme Allchurch (née Thomas)
Child: David Ivor Allchurch
Child: John Stephen Allchurch
Parent: Mabel Sarah Allchurch (née Miller)
Parent: Charles Wilfred Allchurch
Gender: Male
Occupation: footballer
Area of activity: Sports and Leisure Pursuits
Author: Richard E. Huws

Ivor Allchurch was born on 16 October 1929 at 66 Waun-wen Road, Swansea. He was the sixth of seven children born to Charles Wilfred Allchurch (1894-1956) and his wife Mabel Sarah (née Miller; 1895-1982), who were both originally from Dudley in the West Midlands. His younger brother Leonard 'Len' Allchurch, (1933-2016) was also a well-known professional footballer and Welsh international. Their parents had moved to work in Swansea shortly after their marriage in 1916. Charles had previously worked as a banksman, a colliery surface worker, at Dudley, but found employment at Swansea as a furnaceman.

Ivor attended Plasmarl School until the age of 14, leaving to work in an office and later as a porter in a fish market. Having been spotted by Joe Sykes, a scout and former Swansea Town player, he was signed as an apprentice by his home club in 1944, becoming a full professional in 1946, after completing his national service. He made his first team debut in a second-division match against West Ham United at Upton Park on Boxing Day 1949 which the Swans lost 3-0.

He soon developed a reputation as an elegant inside forward who would create chances for others with his incisive passes, but he also possessed a powerful shot, especially with his left foot, which made him a prolific goal scorer in his own right. Those who were fortunate enough to see him play, even in his latter years, will never forget the way he seemed to glide effortlessly past his bewildered opponents. With his mop of blonde hair the 'Golden Boy' of Welsh football soon became a national hero, and was generally acknowledged to be one of the most talented footballers to represent his country.

He was first capped by Wales in November 1950, in a 4-2 British Home Championship defeat to England. In total, he made 68 appearances for his country, scoring 23 goals. The highlight of his international career came in 1958 at the World Cup finals in Sweden, with Allchurch scoring two crucial goals as Wales reached the quarter finals, before bowing out to eventual winners Brazil.

He married Esme Thomas from Swansea on 13 June 1953. They had two sons, John Stephen Allchurch (born 1954) and David Ivor Allchurch (born 1961).

Allchurch made a total of 782 Football League club appearances (including all cup competitions), scoring a remarkable 284 times. He played for his native Swansea Town from 1947 until 1958, making a total of 358 appearances, and scoring 134 goals. In October 1958, aged 28 years, he requested a transfer and signed for first-division club Newcastle United for a fee of £28,000. Allchurch would surely have been a more recognisable name today had he moved at an earlier age to play in the first division, but his loyalty to Swansea at the time may well have hindered his career development. During his time with Newcastle he was much revered, playing 154 times and scoring 51 goals. From 1962 until 1965 he played in 127 matches for Cardiff City, scoring 47 goals. His final spell at a professional club was with his native Swansea which he re-joined in 1965 at the age of 35 and where he made a further 143 appearances, scoring 52 times. He played in non-league football until he was 50 years of age, and ended his career with Pontardawe Athletic in the Welsh League, after periods with Worcester City and Haverfordwest County. He later worked as a storeman.

Ivor Allchurch was voted BBC Cymru Wales Sports Personality of the year in 1962, and in the New Year's Honours List in January 1966 he was appointed MBE for his services to Welsh football. When Swansea City moved to the Liberty Stadium in October 2005 a life size bronze statue of him by sculptor Michael Field (born 1964) was unveiled outside the South Stand which was commissioned by the club's supporters. Some of the more superstitious supporters are in the habit of tapping Allchurch's boot as a good luck talisman before games. Allchurch was also inducted into the National Football Hall of Fame, Manchester, in 2015. A shy and modest man, his contemporaries all considered him to be a true gentleman.

Ivor Allchurch died at his home in Bishopston, Swansea, on 10 July 1997, aged 67. His funeral service was held at Swansea Crematorium on 16 July, and was attended by over 500 people.

Author

Richard E. Huws

Sources

Obituaries: *The Times*, 11 July 1997; *The Independent*, 12 July 1997; *South Wales Evening Post*, 10 July 1997

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Huw Richards, 'Allchurch, Ivor John', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004)

Further Reading

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Wikipedia Article: [Ivor Allchurch](#)

Images

Geoff Charles, *Wales v Rest football match at Cardiff, December 14, 1951*

Geoff Charles, *Wales against Portugal football match, May 18, 1951*

Geoff Charles, *Swansea Town Football Club, October 1951*

People's Collection Wales: [Ivor Allchurch](#)

People's Collection Wales: [Welsh international football shirt worn by Ivor Allchurch](#)

People's Collection Wales: [Wales international football cap awarded to Ivor Allchurch, 1950-66](#)

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