

Marcelo Bielsa's first season in charge was highly enjoyable for all fans. It ended in crushing disappointment when they lost to Derby County in the play off's however the sacrifice made by so many promising and talented players will put that disappointment of not being promoted into perspective. *By James Rhodes*

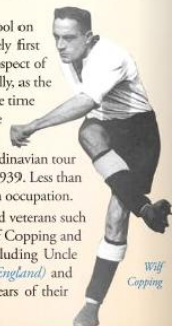


The Kop in the 1930s

Hargreaves. Having been in and out of the side since his debut in 1936, he played 28 times at outside left in 1938/39 scoring 9 times to finish second top scorer behind Hodgson.

Leeds had begun the season in sensational form and a 2-1 win away at Blackpool on 19th November put them in third place. Fans began to dream of an unlikely first League Championship title but these hopes proved to be as illusory as the prospect of lasting peace and the side's form slumped dramatically, as the shadow of war lengthened over the continent. By the time the season ended with Leeds in 13th place, the possibility of war seemed increasingly inevitable.

Despite this, Leeds embarked on a post-season Scandinavian tour culminating in three matches in Denmark in May 1939. Less than 12 months later, Denmark would be under German occupation. The squad for that tour contained a mix of seasoned veterans such as Hodgson and fellow England internationals Wilf Copping and Willis Edwards, as well as talented youngsters including Uncle Jack, goalkeeper Jim Twomey, inside left Eric Stephenson (*twice-capped by England*) and centre forward George Ainsley. If war had not robbed these players of six years of their careers, **who knows what this talented Leeds side could have achieved?**



Wilf Copping



Jack and Madge Hargreaves



Upon his return from Denmark, Jack married my grandma's sister, Madge and they honeymooned in Scarborough and were pictured walking arm in arm together through Peasholm Park.

In the run up to the start of the 1939/40 season, Leeds United optimistically advertised for corporate season ticket holders to entertain clients at Elland Road blithely ignoring the imminent likelihood of conflict. The season itself began on 25th August but league competition was annulled after three games following the outbreak of war on 3rd September 1939. Although wartime games were played throughout the war, official league competition did not resume until 1946/47.

Although Jack survived the war and resumed his professional career with first, Bristol City and then giant-killing Yeovil Town, several of his team mates sadly did not.

Eric Stephenson was killed on active service in Burma, whilst attacking an enemy bunker, on 8th September 1944. Including wartime games, Stephenson played 154 times for Leeds United, scoring 29 goals, and gained two full England caps. He could potentially have been one of Leeds's finest players.

He was a Major in the Gurkha Rifles and part of the 'Chindits' special operations group operating behind enemy Japanese lines. In a letter to his widow, Olive, Stephenson's commanding officer said that *"Eric had died a happy warrior. He was killed instantly on the edge of a Japanese position in a remote part of Burma. We buried him where he lay on top of a jungle covered mountain. A service of remembrance was held at his graveside shortly afterwards."*

Leeds United played Celtic in a benefit match for Stephenson's family on 26th May 1947. A memorial to Stephenson can be found in a stained-glass window in Lidgett Park Methodist Church, Roundhay.

On 27th April 1944, former youth player **Robert Montgomery** was piloting a Lancaster bomber during a raid to Schweinfurt, Germany. It was his tenth combat mission. The flight path was heavily defended by German night fighters, one of which flew up beneath Montgomery's aircraft and raked its belly with cannon fire – a tactic known as 'Schrage Musik'.



Eric Stephenson