THE GOOD DOCTOR OF RANGERS AND ARSENAL

By Andy Mitchell

'Are you not playing for the wrong side?' There are some things a Scottish footballer can never be prepared for, and one of them is playing for England. Such was the fate of Dr Jimmy Paterson, who was born in London where his father, a Presbyterian minister, was preaching.

In all other respects the talented winger was a Scot through and through, and one hundred years ago this month, Paterson won the first of his Scottish League titles with Rangers. He repeated the exploit after being decorated for bravery in the Great War, and would surely have won Scotland caps were it not for the accident of his birth.

In fact, international recognition came instead in the white shirt of England: as his career seemed to be heading to a close, he had returned to the city of his birth and signed for Arsenal as an amateur. He did so well that he was selected to represent the English League against their Scottish counterparts.

He was greeted by his former team mates with affection as well as a ribbing that he was not really English. And, as if disoriented by wearing an England shirt, when Paterson was presented with a bunch of flowers by a young girl just before kick-off, he still had them in his hand as the referee's whistle blew. Too polite to throw them on the ground, he ran up and down the wing clutching them for several minutes until he found someone he could hand them to. It was a measure of the man, who had none of the failings proverbially attributed to the offspring of clergymen.

Brought up in Glasgow, he was sports champion of Bellahouston Academy, and his performances in the team that won the Glasgow Secondary Schools League attracted the interest of Queen's Park. Soon rising to their reserve team, the Strollers, he then caught the eye of Rangers manager William Wilton and the youngster signed at Ibrox in September 1910. Although he made his debut that month because of an injury to the veteran Alec Smith, Rangers were content to let him develop in the reserves, as he embarked on his medical studies at Glasgow University.

Paterson broke into the Rangers first team in November 1912, two months after his father's death, replacing Billy Hogg at outside right. He made an immediate impact and was widely heralded in the press, notably in a lyrical tribute from the legendary Walter Arnott. Rangers duly won the league by four points and Paterson made his first trip abroad on the club's tour of Denmark. The following season he switched to the left wing, where he developed a prolific partnership with Tommy Cairns that lasted until his graduation as a doctor in 1916.

In the depth of war, there was a severe shortage of doctors, and he was immediately appointed Medical Officer to the 14th Battalion the London Regiment, the London Scottish. With the rank of Major, for the next two years he had a torrid time on the front line, where 'Doctor Pat' earned enormous respect from his fellow soldiers. One of them wrote in the Regimental Gazette: 'We loved him for the trouble he took. We loved that kindly word of encouragement that did us more good than all the 'number nines' ever issued ex-stores. If that little medico works as hard in the football field as he worked that night, heaven help the opposition!'

There was formal recognition, too, and he was awarded the Military Cross for conspicuous gallantry in 1917: 'Under an intense hostile bombardment he hastened to the spot, dressed the wounded and cleared them from the road, personally seeing to their removal to the aid post. He then returned and cleared the dead from the road, setting a fine example of coolness and disregard of danger.'

When hostilities ceased, after three years away from football, he made a surprise return to Glasgow. A journalist later recalled: 'One day in September 1919, I learned from Jimmy's younger brother Bobby that Jimmy had been posted to a Glasgow hospital. He added that, if I turned up at Ibrox Park the following evening, I might see Jimmy playing against Raith Rovers or, on the other hand, I might not. Jimmy had just arrived in Glasgow, untrained, and carrying too much weight, and was scared stiff at the idea of being thrown into action so soon. His homecoming had not been made public but, quickly recognised by the Ibrox clientele when he ran on to the field, he was given a reception that nearly took the lid off the south stand. Despite his extra 'tonnage' he was at his brilliant best that evening, including a bonny goal that earned him another deafening ovation.'

Paterson's wing partnership with Cairns was restored and Rangers romped to the 1919-20 league title. However, he had a medical career to think of, and as early as December 1919 there was press speculation that Paterson intended retiring at the end of the season to join his brother-in-law, John Scott, in a London medical practice. Several city clubs were reported to be chasing his signature, among them Spurs and Chelsea, but the decision was effectively made for him as Scott was Arsenal's club doctor. Before he left Glasgow, the Rangers brake club supporters showed their appreciation by presenting him with a solid silver coffee and tea service, valued at 100 guineas (equivalent to about £3,000 today).

In the autumn of 1920 he signed as an amateur for Arsenal but continued to be rewarded by the club, although the form of reward was, well, different: he was presented with 'gifts' such as a baby grand piano from Harrods, a diamond-studded tie-pin, and a fine Venetian vase.

Following a series of outstanding performances on the wing, in March 1921 he was selected for the Football League against the Scottish League, coincidentally played at his new home ground of Highbury. Before the match he came into the Scottish dressing room to shake hands with all the players, and was photographed with three of the Scots, but the sentiment ended there and his cross led to the game's only goal, headed in by Charles Buchan late in the second half.

He clocked up over 70 appearances for Arsenal in four years although, as an amateur, he had to balance his football with work as a doctor. On one occasion he missed the team's train to Liverpool but Arsenal arranged for a later train to make an unscheduled stop at Edge Hill, where a car was waiting to whisk him to Anfield, arriving just in time for kick-off.

Paterson retired from football in 1924 but had a curious swansong two years later. Arsenal had an injury crisis in February 1926 and signed Joe Hulme from Blackburn, but he was cup-tied so manager Herbert Chapman turned to Paterson for a surprise recall in the FA Cup. He showed he had lost none of his magic by scoring against Aston Villa, and newsreel film of that goal can be seen online.

Not long afterwards he left London for good and moved to a country practice at Bramley in Surrey, staying there until he retired to Ayrshire in the 1950s. His daughter Mhairi, who now lives in Edinburgh and recently saw that newsreel footage of her father for

the first time, recalls him watching wistfully as soldiers prepared for D-Day: although he said nothing about his own wartime experiences, he knew what horrors lay ahead for them.

Dr Paterson died of a heart attack in 1959, aged just 68. Despite being considered one of the outstanding talents of his day he was never given the recognition he deserved with a Scotland cap, through no fault of his own. But in true amateur spirit he had no regrets and, despite playing for two of Britain's most glamorous teams, recalled in an interview shortly before his death: 'My happiest football days were at Good Old Bella'.

ENDS

Andy Mitchell runs the sports history website www.scottishsporthistory.com.

Newsreel of Jimmy Paterson's goal in 1926 is on www.britishpathe.com. Search 'Bravo Arsenal'.

Dr James Alexander Paterson MC

Born London, 9 May 1891
Died Newmilns, Ayrshire, 31 August 1959

Honours:
Scottish League championship, 1912/13 and 1919/20
Glasgow Cup winner, 1913/14
International: Football League v Scottish League 1921

Appearances (and goals)

Rangers

	League	Scottish Cup	Others
1910/11	2	-	3
1911/12	4	1 (2)	6 (1)
1912/13	21 (7)	3	15 (3)
1913/14	32 (6)	-	10 (3)
1914/15	30 (7)	-	8
1915/16	31 (7)	-	5
1919/20	36 (11)	8 (1)	5 (1)

Arsenal

	League	FA Cup
1920/21	20	-
1921/22	2	-
1922/23	26	2
1923/24	21	2
1924/25	-	-
1925/26	1 (1)	3 (1)