

Leighton James

Position	Left Wing
Clubs	Burnley, Derby County, QPR, Swansea City, Sunderland, Bury, Newport County
Honours	54 Caps for Wales 7 under 23 caps 12 Youth Caps 2 School Boy Caps
Medals	2 nd Division Burnley 1972-73 Promotions with Burnley, Swansea & Bury

- (1) *What was your first contact/association with the Swans?*
First memory of Swansea Town was 1959, official opening of floodlights versus Hibernian. Followed by Swans at home matches for next nine years before leaving for Burnley Youth Academy in 1968.
- (2) *Why did you sign for the Swans and how did this come about?*
In 1978-79 had gone back to Burnley from QPR. The Swans had been promoted to Division 2. In Sept 1979 Burnley played at the Vetch and lost 1-2 and I played well. John Toshack said "You would love it here" to which I replied "well get on with it then". Eventually at the end of the season I signed for £130,000.
- (3) *What did you think about Swansea, the city and the club, before you signed?*
I was born and raised in Gorseinon so I was and still am a Swans fan.
- (4) *What was your initial impression of the set-up, the players and the Vetch?*
I knew the Vetch very well having played for Swansea Schoolboys, Welsh Youth and Senior Internationals. I also knew John Toshack and Alan Curtis, Robbie James and Leighton Phillips through playing with them for Wales.
- (5) *Did you progress straight into the first team?*
I was signed as a Senior Player and remained so during the time I spent with the Swans.
- (6) *What can you remember about your debut?*
I signed from Burnley on May 1st 1980 which was after the official transfer deadline which means I had been signed for the following season. The last game of the season was against Charlton Athletic and Tosh being Tosh negotiated with them for me to play via permission from the Football League. We travelled to the game by train and I sat next to Tosh on the way up. I asked him if I could not wear No 11 because I was fed up with that number. Tosh's reply was "No problem you're wearing No 12"!!

I was put on at half time and within 30 seconds Ian Callaghan, playing his 'last' game for the Swans, put me through and with my first touch I scored the equaliser. We won 2-1 – what a debut.

(7) *What was the crowd at Swansea like?*

(8) *What was playing at the Vetch like?*

The crowd was on top of you because it was a small ground. The pitch wasn't the best and it was better to be a home player than a visitor

(9) *Did you have much contact with the fans, apart from playing in front of them?*

Swansea is not a big city and you bumped into the fans wherever you went and I was a local boy and was invited to many local club functions and presentations.

(10) *What were the arrangements for travel to away games?*

First class coach travel everywhere, train Friday morning and the travel away and stay in very good hotels.

(11) *What did training involve? Was it hard? Did it improve you as a player?*

Training was always enjoyable under John Toshack, we always worked with the ball. We trained depending on the opposition we were to face. I did improve playing with players like Alan Curtis, Robbie James, Bob Latchford and the Yugoslavians Rajkovic and Hadziabdic.

(12) *What was the general lifestyle like being a professional footballer in Swansea? Did you consider yourself well paid?*

Compared to the working men's wage, yes we were well paid, the lifestyle was good because we were successful – it opened the doors everywhere. People wanted to meet you and businesses would invite you to open stores etc for the publicity.

(13) *Why did you leave Swansea?*

Alan Durban who was manager at Sunderland and who I played with at International level picked me up on a free transfer. He wanted me as a senior player in a young side, contacted John Toshack and the old pals act went into action.

(14) *Did you keep in touch with the city, the club or anyone at the club after you left? Did you look out for the Swans' results?*

Of course I did, Sunderland & Swansea were in a relegation battle so you always looked for the Swans result.

(15) *What was your best moment as a Swansea player?*

16th Feb 1982 – Swansea City 2 Liverpool 0 it was also my birthday. A month before we had played them at the Vetch in the FA Cup and they had hammered us 4-0 so revenge was sweet and I scored as well.

(16) *What was your worst moment?*

On Boxing Day 1980 at Ninian Park we were 3-1 up against the Old Enemy with 2 mins to go and we drew 3-3. It felt like a knife in the heart. I can

remember it to this day – I was slumped in the corner of the dressing room. I had even scored with a header in this game.

(17) *What is your most vivid memory of Swansea?*

Preston 1981 – promotion Tommy Craig, Jeremy Charles and myself scored to send us up, I don't have to say anymore.

(18) *Any final thoughts on playing for or living in Swansea?*

It was a great time to be involved with the Swans but I am a local lad and still live locally.