

= Andrew Crofts (footballer) =

Andrew Lawrence Crofts (born 29 May 1984) is a Wales international footballer .

He started his career with Gillingham , for whom he made his Football League debut at the age of 16 , and made over 190 appearances for the Kent @-@ based club . He had loans at Peterborough United and Wrexham during the 2008 ? 09 season and joined Brighton & Hove Albion in 2009 . After a successful season at Brighton he transferred to Norwich City in 2010 , before moving back to the South Coast club in 2012 .

A tough @-@ tackling midfielder , Crofts represented Wales , where one of his grandparents was born , at under @-@ 19 and under @-@ 21 level and won his first senior cap in 2005 . In 2008 he won his 12th cap , breaking the record for the most international caps received by a Gillingham player .

= = Early life = =

Crofts was born in Chatham , Kent , and began playing competitive football at the age of six for a club in nearby Rainham . Between the ages of 10 and 15 he attended weekly training sessions organised by Premier League club Chelsea . He also tried out on two occasions for the English Schools Football Association 's national schoolboy team , but was unsuccessful .

= = Club career = =

= = = Gillingham = = =

In September 2000 , Crofts joined Gillingham as a trainee and was a regular in the club 's youth and reserve teams during the 2000 ? 01 season . At the end of the season , shortly before his 17th birthday , he was a surprise inclusion in the first team squad for a match at home to Watford , and made his Football League debut as a late substitute , replacing Marlon King . The following season he suffered a broken leg during a reserve team match and missed several months of the season . Although he returned to action in early 2002 , his next appearance for the first team did not come until October , when he came on as a substitute in a League Cup match against Stockport County . This was to be his only senior appearance of the 2002 ? 03 season . He finally secured a regular first team place towards the end of the following season , featuring regularly during March and April 2004 .

Crofts was a first team regular in the 2004 ? 05 season , making 27 Football League appearances , and scoring his first senior goal for the club in a defeat to Brighton & Hove Albion on 26 December . In January 2005 , he signed a new contract designed to keep him at the club until 2009 . He was omitted from the team for most of March and April , but was recalled for the last match of the season , in which a draw with Nottingham Forest led to the " Gills " being relegated from the Football League Championship , the second tier of English football , to Football League One , the third tier . In the 2005 ? 06 season , he made the most appearances of any player in the Gillingham squad , missing only one of the team 's 46 matches in League One . Although the team struggled in the league , finishing in the lower half of the table , they defeated Premier League team Portsmouth in the League Cup , with Crofts scoring the winning goal . The following season , he again made over 40 appearances and also scored eight goals , his best total for an individual season , but Gillingham again finished the season in the bottom half of the table . He made his 100th start for the club on 18 December 2006 in a match against Bournemouth , and marked the occasion with a goal . At the end of the season , he won four awards at the club 's Player of the Year event and was dubbed Mr Gillingham by then @-@ manager Ronnie Jepson . He took over as team captain in the 2007 ? 08 season , but it was an unsuccessful season for the team , who were relegated from League One . The following October he was stripped of the captaincy , which was instead given to Barry Fuller . Manager Mark Stimson stated that he felt that the captaincy might have been too much of a burden

for Crofts , and had a negative effect on his form . Soon afterwards , the club made Crofts available for transfer .

=== Peterborough United and Wrexham (loans) ===

In November 2008 , he joined Peterborough United on loan . Shortly after returning to Gillingham the following January , he went on a second loan period , this time to Wrexham until the end of the season . He made his debut on the same day in a 2 ? 1 defeat to Burton Albion . Upon his return to Gillingham from his loan spell , he was released from his contract .

=== Brighton & Hove Albion ===

On 29 June 2009 , Crofts agreed to join League One club Brighton & Hove Albion on a two @-@ year contract . He made his debut for Brighton during the 1 ? 0 home defeat to Walsall on 8 August 2009 and scored his first goal for Brighton during the 2 ? 2 draw at Yeovil Town on 10 October 2009 . Crofts was given the role of captain by new manager Gus Poyet before the 3 ? 1 away victory at Southampton . Crofts was later confirmed as permanent captain at the beginning of January 2010 .

=== Norwich City ===

On 21 May 2010 , Norwich City announced the acquisition of Crofts from Brighton , for an undisclosed fee , believed to be in the region of £ 300 @,@ 000 . He became the club 's first signing of the summer transfer window , signing a three @-@ year deal at Carrow Road . On 6 August 2010 , he scored a goal on his debut against Watford . He subsequently gained promotion to the Premier League with the " Canaries " in his first season at the club . He initially kept his place as a regular starter for Norwich in the top tier , but in the second half of the 2011 ? 12 season he gradually fell out of favour at the club .

=== Brighton & Hove Albion ===

Crofts was transferred back to Brighton in August 2012 .

=== Gillingham ===

On 19 March 2016 , Crofts re @-@ joined Gillingham on loan until the end of the season .

=== Charlton Athletic ===

On 22 July 2016 , Crofts signed a one @-@ year contract with Charlton Athletic .

== International career ==

As one of his grandparents was born in Wales he was eligible to play for the Welsh national team , and after representing the country at under @-@ 19 and under @-@ 21 level he won his first senior cap , an award given to a player representing his national team , in 2005 . In 2008 he won his twelfth cap , breaking the record for the most international caps received by a Gillingham player . Crofts was selected for the Welsh national under @-@ 19 team in 2002 , qualifying due to having a Welsh grandparent . He made his first appearance for the team in the Milk Cup tournament in Northern Ireland , but was forced to return home after suffering an ankle injury in the Welsh team 's first match . In total he made eight appearances at under @-@ 19 level , including appearing in a second Milk Cup in 2003 .

After moving up to the under @-@ 21 level Crofts was selected for the national under @-@ 21 team for the first time for a match against Germany in February 2005 . He went on to gain 12 caps

at this level , scoring one goal .

He made his debut for the Welsh national team against Azerbaijan on 12 October 2005 , coming on as a substitute for Carl Fletcher . At the end of the 2005 ? 06 season , as part of manager John Toshack 's policy of introducing young players to the team , Crofts gained two further caps , both as a substitute , against Paraguay and Trinidad & Tobago , and also played in an unofficial international match against a Basque Country XI .

He was included in the starting line @-@ up for an international for the first time in August 2007 when he played the full 90 minutes of a match against Bulgaria , but was back on the substitutes ' bench for the UEFA Euro 2008 qualifying match against Germany the following month . He became established as a regular member of the Welsh squad during the UEFA Euro 2012 qualifying tournament .

= = Career statistics = =

Statistics correct as of 11 January 2014 .

= = = International goals = = =

Under ? 21

Score and results list Wales U21 's goal tally first .

= = Personal life = =

Crofts is a fan of Chelsea and at one time shared a flat with the club 's future captain John Terry . During his time as captain of Gillingham , he was involved with a number of charity events , including acting as a celebrity waiter at a Gillingham pub and presenting a signed shirt to a brain damaged teenage fan . In January 2005 , he dedicated a match @-@ winning goal to his grandmother Lily , who had died several months earlier .