

No.1 Stephen Smith

Born in Abbots Bromley, 14 January 1874, Stephen Smith was to become the first Hednesford Town player to make the move to the highest grade of English football.

Having played for Cannock & Rugeley Colliery, Cannock and Rugeley Ceal FC, Steve joined Hednesford Town in September 1891. In those days the home ground was 'The Tins' situated behind the Anglesey Hotel.

Aston Villa's Fred Rinder took Steve into the 'big time' when he signed him in August 1893 after he had completed his ten-hour shift as a haulage machine operator at the coal face.

Steve managed 15 games in his first season, scoring two goals from his left-wing position. 18 goals from 31 in his second season led to his international call-up against Scotland, 6 April 1895, – England won 3-0 with Steve getting one of them. He also represented the Football League on two occasions.

In his Villa days, he was said to be "an accomplished winger, very tricky, who can pass or centre a ball with pinpoint accuracy and produce a stunning shot".

His eight years with Villa brought 42 goals in 194 games for the club, helping them to win the First Division Championship five times (1893-94, 1895-96, 1896-97, 1898-99 and 1899-1900) together with the FA Cup twice (1895 and 1897).

In May 1901 Steve moved south to help Portsmouth win the Southern League Championship at the end of his first season. Then, between July 1906 and May 1908, he was player-manager of Gillingham (known at the time as New Brompton FC), scoring 5 goals in 71 outings.

Steve lived in Portsmouth until 1932; managed the Roke Stores, Benson, Oxfordshire and died in Benson, 19 May 1935, aged 61.

Steve's son, Stephen Charles Smith, born in Hednesford 27 March 1896, played in the Football League for West Ham, Charlton Athletic, Clapton Orient and Queen's Park Rangers over a ten-year period from 1919, scoring 24 goals in 251 games. He died in 1980, aged 84.



Stephen Smith, seated extreme right, with his England colleagues before the Scotland game in 1895.



Stephen Smith, seated extreme right, with his Aston Villa FA Cup winning team in 1895.

