

No.42 Ernest Abel Robert Finch

Between the two World Wars was the great era for Hednesford Town as a recruiting ground for Football League Clubs. Bob Finch, born in Hednesford 31 August 1908, joined the ever-lengthening list in 1925.

Mr Goring, sports fanatic and headmaster at West Hill School, spotted Bob and persuaded him to join his school team as captain where Bob represented them in two big games: one was played at Villa Park and the other at Coventry.

Bob joined Hednesford Prims in 1922 and Hednesford Town in 1923, but after only a few first-team games he was approached by West Bromwich Albion, signing professional forms for them in 1925, making his debut at home to Leicester City, 27 February 1926, at the age of 17.

He played just five games that first season in Division One, earning the princely sum of £3/10 (£3.50) per week. He was still living at home in Hednesford and next door to Jackie Maund who later played for Hednesford Town and Aston Villa; Frank Corbett, another Hednesford lad, living 30 yards from Bob, partnered him in Frank's debut game away at Liverpool, 20 November 1926.

Bob made two England International trials, one of them for the Rest v England, opposite the great Dixie Dean. On 6 March 1937, he played against Arsenal in a 6th Round FA Cup game before 64,815 Hawthorn supporters.

Transferred to Swansea in May 1939, Bob managed only one game before War was declared; he returned to Hednesford and became PC 475 Finch in the Cannock Division of the Staffordshire County Police. In his spare time, he arranged many friendly games to entertain the local population, drawing on the Hednesford RAF camp where many professional players, including internationals, were stationed. For one game, a player short, Bob enlisted the help of a youngster who he played out on the wing to keep him out of trouble. His name was Arthur Rowley who scored four goals that day, and went on to score 434 goals for Manchester United and Shrewsbury.

Bob made 216 senior appearances for Albion and 231 more for their Central League side, many as captain, winning Championship medals in 1926-27, 32-33, 33-34 and 34-35, but was unlucky in being out of the Albion team for most of the 1930-31 season when they won promotion from Division Two and the FA Cup in the same season.

Bob died locally in 2000, aged 92.

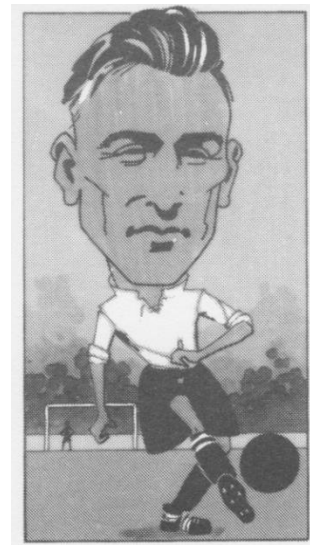


Bob pictured before his England trial.

From the Dave Shaw archive.



Bob, with Albion team-mates, seated extreme right, second row from the bottom. Frank Corbett is two away from him, same row.



From a set of 24 by Dave Shaw



Albion's 1932-33 squad. Bob sits extreme left.

