

No.77 Gordon 'Joby' Dyas

Gordon sported his nickname 'Joby' throughout his life; very few friends and colleagues were aware of his true Christian name.

Born in Hednesford, 17 May 1936, he began his education at West Hill – the boys school which, throughout the 1920s and 30s had become something of a football academy; a starting venue for more League Football players than any other junior establishment in the Cannock Chase area, possibly in the country.

Joby progressed to Littleworth senior boy's school at the closure of World War Two. One of his tutors at Littleworth was Hednesford legend and recently retired former Aston Villa hero, Jack Martin, who Villa allowed to continue to teach (training evenings) throughout his one club life as a footballer.

Beginning his working life in the building trade as a plasterer's labourer and then a bricklayer, Joby seized the opportunity to place one foot firmly on the football ladder by signing for Hednesford at the beginning of the 1953-54 campaign. He kicked off in a 1-0 defeat at Shrewsbury, 10 April 1954, going on to total 46 senior outings by the end of the following season.

He was equally at home in either of the wing-half positions, where he played alongside three other future League footballers: Gordon Westley, Norman Lawson and Gordon Lee. At the end of the 1954-55 season, Lee transferred to Aston Villa, Westley & Lawson both moved to Bury and Joby signed for Third Division Walsall, 1 June 1955. He played in the same Walsall team as former Hednesford man, Peter Billingham, and made twelve first-team appearances, plus one outing in the FACup, before joining non-league Burton, then Brierley Hill and also Halesowen prior to a return to Hednesford for a three-year stay.

Joby was a powerful little wing-half and his play reminiscent to that of Manchester United's Nobby Stiles, however, Joby was a stone or so heavier and much, much quicker. I remember watching him play on the old Cross Keys ground in the late 1950s when he overtook and dumped an opposing player in the stand, for the umpteenth time and, as the match official approached, Joby pleaded " Don't send me off ref., I'll play on the wing".

He finally assisted minor league Rugeley Villa and Brocton before concentrating totally on his day job in the building trade. In January 2011, I found him living in retirement, along with his wife Doreen, only a few yards from his birthplace in Pye Green.



The 1956-57 team, *Back row:* Ernie Rogers, Joby, Albert Tomkinson, Johnny Hancocks, Graham Cordell, Keith 'Katy' Marsh, Les Box and manager Ron Brindley. *Front row:* Barry Canning, John White, Cliff Kent, Albert Broadhead and Dave Sambrook.