

# NUNEATON FOOTBALL HERITAGE HEROES

**No. 6**

## **Chris Sambrooke**



Prior to the signing of Chris Sambrooke from Coventry City, Nuneaton Town, in their first season at Manor Park, were struggling badly. They had more or less had to start from scratch after the First World War, with no ground and no players. They had achieved a single league victory up until his signing on December 6th 1919.

Chris had performed well for Coventry City in the War League, scoring 23 goals in 24 matches, and on the strength of their performances in the War League, Coventry City were elected to the Football League after the War. Sambrooke, aged 24, joined Nuneaton because Coventry City wanted all their players to be full-time, but the player wanted to keep his job outside football.

Sambrooke's style was described in a newspaper article, prior to his joining Nuneaton: "...Sambrooke goes full tilt for goal and knows no fear."

In just over half a season Sambrooke scored 33 goals, including all seven in the 7-2 defeat of Hinckley United at Sheepy Road in the Atherstone Nursing Cup Final, after which he was carried shoulder high by the rapturous Nuneaton supporters. At the end of that first season, the Nuneaton Observer announced that Sambrooke was "the finest centre-forward in the league."

The following season, Sambrooke continued with his goalscoring form, scoring 35 goals. At the end of the season he signed for Wellington Town, much to the dismay of Nuneaton Town supporters. After a year at Wellington, Sambrooke signed for Stalybridge Celtic of the Third Division (North), but after scoring nine goals in 20 matches for Celtic, the League club got into financial difficulties. Nuneaton took advantage by re-signing the centre-forward at Easter 1923 and he returned to the side for the Easter Monday game against Tamworth Castle, where 1000 travelling Nuneaton fans saw him score the first goal in a 3-1 victory. The next day, Nuneaton were at home against Bilston and Sambrooke scored twice, in front of 7,000 fans. Although he scored seven times before the end of the season, it wasn't enough to enable Town to take the title and their season fizzled out into disappointment. Sambrooke's final appearance was on May 5th, 1923 in an away game at Bilston.

As late as 1940, Sambrooke was remembered as a player, with Gilbert Till of The Observer naming him in a Best Ever Nuneaton XI.

Part of the From Town to Town Project