

NUNEATON FOOTBALL HERITAGE HEROES

No. 9

Tommy Whitcroft



There are few players who have spent a longer period with Nuneaton Borough than Tommy Whitcroft, his blond head being a regular feature at Manor Park for 12 seasons. Tom joined Nuneaton Town in 1949 from Ansley Hall Colliery FC.

Tommy was born in Ansley Common in 1925 and he never left Nuneaton other than in the 1940s when the war took him to sea.

Before that he had begun to play football for Ansley St Johns in the Bible Class League. In 1946 he joined Ansley Colliery FC, where he attracted attention with his polished performances. It was from Ansley that Whitcroft signed for Nuneaton Borough in the summer of 1949.

Tommy began his Borough career at inside-left and had scored 10 goals in 11 games, before he broke a leg playing against Atherstone. This caused him to miss the club's great FA Cup run of that year. If Tommy had a weakness in that class of football it was a lack of pace, and when he returned from injury he resumed his career at left-half, a position where Tommy would make the best use of his qualities, an impressive combination of firm tackling, ball distribution and positional sense.

Some of Tommy's best games were reserved for the famous FA Cup runs of the time and he had an outstanding game against Watford, starring in a 3-0 win. He again excelled himself in the next round against QPR, playing his part in one of the club's most magnificent half-back lines: Kernick, Hughes and Whitcroft. That season and the following one, in which Borough won their first Birmingham League title, were probably Tommy's best two years.

When Borough were elected to the Southern League in 1958, Whitcroft took over as Reserve team manager and stayed in that position until the Reserves folded. Earlier in his career Tommy had better offers to go elsewhere, but remained loyal to the club, which was typical of his unselfishness and modesty.

Tommy passed away on October 25th 2014, aged 89.