



Anstey Nomads FC

The Extraordinary Story of an English Village Football Club

The 1940s

Many football clubs have existed in Anstey - the Town, United, Athletic, Council Adult School, Congs, and before World War II, St Mary's and the Primitive Methodists. After the war when the 'boys' returned home from the services, the two major clubs of the village Mary's and P.M, decided to join forces under the name of Anstey Meths and Mary's, but after one season it was changed to the Nomads. The various clubs played on different pitches in Anstey before settling next to the Croston Road. These included sites on Spences farm, one near the brook at the rear of Mr. Martin's poultry farm, 187B Cropston Road, another in a field adjoining Plump Ford, which was used as a rugby pitch for one season and a further one near the Stew' off the Upper Green.

~1946-47~

In order to bring the best class of amateur football to be found in Leicestershire, Anstey Methodists and Anstey St Mary's clubs were fused together in March 1946 to create a new club known as Anstey MM. Based at Cropston Road, the first known match of the MM's took place on Easter Tuesday morning, when they were beaten 5-3 by South End.

Anstey's application to join the Leicestershire Senior League was formally approved at the AGM of the League held in Coalville on the first Saturday in June. Faced with the alternative of disappointing new applicants or swelling their ranks to unwieldy proportions, the Leicestershire compromised by deciding to create two self-contained sections, each with equal status and rights as follows:

Section A (Central): Coalville Town, Brush, Kettering Town, Gresley Rovers, Ellistown Colliery, Pegsons, Holwell Works, Morris Sports, Anstey MM, Quorn Methodists, Stewart & Lloyds, and Market Harborough.

Section B (Western): Barrow Old Boys, Measham Imperial, Moira United, Overseal Institute, Shepshed Albion, Sileby British Legion, Whitwick Colliery, Whitwick White Cross, Melton Town, Midland Woodworkers and Central Ordinance Depot.

There was no relegation or promotion, the winner of each league playing off for the 'Championship of Leicestershire' at the end of the season. The removal of the amateur status of the League resulted in several clubs strengthening their squads with semi-professional players. Anstey's League game with Pegsons (Coalville) at home in November was full of accidental mishaps. Ron Ford, the Anstey centre-half, in heading the ball sustained severe concussion and

also a fractured ankle and was taken to Leicester Infirmary. Two more Anstey players, Thomas and Mee also suffered injured ankles and had to retire, but their remaining 8 players battled on to make a 3-3 draw! MMs beat Harborough 8-1 at Cropston Road in May on a pitch inches deep in mud played in almost gale force wind and driving rain. Jarvis scored 5 of MMs goals. MMs who remained unbeaten at home finished in second place 5 points behind Gresley Rovers.

After beating Overseal Institute at home 3-2, the MMs were drawn against Melton Town in round 2 of the Senior Cup at Cropston Road. J. Moore had three near misses for the visitors, once hitting the upright with the goalkeeper out of position. Melton's Munroe received a kick which left him hobbling for the rest of the match. Anstey took advantage and were four goals ahead at the interval. Although the home team doubled their total, the Town fought back, scoring two late goals, the game ending 8-2. In round 3 they were well-beaten, 6-1 at Loughborough by Brush Sports, who beat Leicester City Reserves in the final after outclassing Barrow Old Boys (8-0), Gresley Rovers (3-2) and humiliating Pegsons AFC (16-0) in the semi-finals. It is worth noting that the Brush squad included several professionals including Foster and F Sharman both signed from Leicester City) and D Wood from Grantham Town. Brush also knocked out the MMs in the Coalville Charity Cup (R2).

MMs also entered two teams in the City League. By mid-August they received applications from nearly 60 players to take part in their junior trial on 20 August, from which a team was chosen to play against Leicester Junior Imperials (former City Schoolboys) on 3 September. Strangely enough 18 of the 60 were right-wingers and 13 inside rights, while there were only three full-backs and one outside left. Over 1,000 spectators watched an interesting game, the Imperials defeating an Anstey & District team by 6 goals to two. Eight of last season's Leicester City schoolboys were in the side and the goals were scored by Pollard, Tipton, Cave (og), Harrison, Hinks and Hallan.

At the January 1947 general meeting of Anstey MM FC, Mr. E Jackson (treasurer) informed the nearly 100 members and supporters that the club had a credit balance of £82. It was suggested that the name of the club be altered to Anstey Town or Anstey Nomads and by 36 votes to 26 it was decided to adopt the latter.

~1947-48~

The Nomads ran three teams – Seniors (1st), Reserves and Colts. The team selection panel was restricted to 6 (G Draper, M Waun, H Gunby, R Draycott, J Kenny and Sutherland) plus the captain of each team.

Entrance fees and subscriptions paid in 1947-48

Subscriptions

	£	s	d
LFA	1	1	0
Senior League	2	2	0
City League	2	2	0

Entrance Fees

	£	s	d
Senior League	1	1	0
Senior Cup		10	6
Senior KO Cup		5	0

Junior Cup		5	0
County Medal		5	0
Coalville Cup		5	0
Rolleston Cup		5	0
Sibley Cup		5	0
	8	4	0

The following competitions were entered: 1st Team: Senior League, Senior Cup, Senior KO Cup, Coalville Charity Cup, Rolleston Cup; 2nd Team- Junior Cup, Sibley Charity Cup; 3rd Team: County Medals.

In November 1947 Nomads signed Bob Yates, 22 years old inside left from the Falkland Isles. After recent demobilisation from the RAF, Yates, who had been approached by Leicester City to sign amateur forms, decided to stay in Great Britain. In the same month goalkeeper Rawlings was transferred to Ibstock Penistone Rovers. This was Rawling's third club of 1947-8 – he was with Coalville Town before moving to the Nomads. Outside left Stanley Weston, 21 year old, who had played 2 seasons for the Nomads signed amateur forms for West Bromwich Albion. Goalkeeper, Len Bright was transferred to South End, the City League Division 1 club in December 1947. Bright, who had played for Wellington Victoria last season, became the third goalkeeper to leave the Nomads in just 4 months.

Anstey finished the season in fourth place. Gresley dropping just 7 points on their way to retaining the title. Averaging nearly four goals a game, Anstey were free scoring, and started the season in some style with a 9-2 demolition of Holwell Sports. Bill Spencer netted 6 times. He scored twice in the first three minutes and completed his hat-trick after 35 minutes and even missed a penalty. Harlot blazed over the bar from another spot-kick for the Nomads. Not to be done, Albert Mee scored 8 goals in the Nomads 12-1 success over Coalville Town in January 1948. Thirty eight teams entered the Rolleston Cup. Anstey Nomads and 7 others – Wellington Vics, Moira United, Newbold Jubilee, Whitwick Colliery, Symington's and Whitwick White Cross were exempt until the third round. After overcoming Whitwick Colliery, they were eliminated by Stoney Stanton in round 4. The game was originally scheduled for 21 February, but the game had to be postponed until late March after the referee failed to put in appearance.

Bob Brawn who had just recovered from a two month spell in Leicester Infirmary, scored 10 of Nomads' 11 goals against Newark Works. A native of Canada Bob played for the RAF during the war in the same team as Joe Calvert (who played as a goalkeeper for Bristol Rovers, Leicester City and Watford and was still playing in the Football league in his forties) and Jack Lee (who played as a forward. He scored 136 goals from 231 appearances in the Football League playing for Leicester City, Derby County and Coventry City, and was capped once by England). He married an Anstey girl and lived in the village.

In April 1948 Anstey Nomads 'A' made sure of the championship of the City League (Division 5) by beating LNER. Alan Gunby, 15 years old left-winger, scored four of the winner's goals, and three of these were direct from corner kicks. This was claimed to be a record for local football.

A large crowd saw Anstey British Legion beat Quorn British Legion in the final of the British Legion Charity Cup held at Cropston Road on 29 April 1948. Anstey's goals were scored by Burdett, Dalby and Stafford, and Hudson replied with one for Quorn. The cup was presented by Mr. Quain, hon. Secretary of Leicester British Legion. Proceeds were in aid of Dennis Fox of Anstey, a former member of Quorn Methodists FC, who, after seven years in the forces, lost a hand in an accident at work.

A balance of £174 7s 7d was reported at the annual meeting of the Nomads when it was stated that expenditure had risen to £471. A balance of £68 17s 1d was reported. The first team were runners-up in the Senior League Knockout Cup. Tributes were also paid to Les Dalby who had played for the club for 14 years.

At the end of the season the Cropston Road pitch was levelled, re-turfed, and over 100 tons of virgin soil was laid to a depth of as much as eight inches in the lower places. Plans for the new pavilion and dressing rooms were passed and weather permitting it was anticipated that the structure would be completed in a month.

~1948-49~

Practically all of last season's players re-signed. Newcomers included Jeff Wilkinson, of Braunstone United, a goalkeeper, who was a guest player for York City during the war and C Pawley, centre-half, who was on the books of Reading last season. Other newcomers were goalkeeper Albert Wain, Duncan McCorquodale, cousin of the Olympic runner who represented the Senior League at inside right and last season played with Ellistown Colliery; Den Burditt, Barlestone's leading scorer, Fred Woodford, ex-City youth right-half, who had just been demobbed; Coleorton Rovers' six-foot left winger, Reg Turner; R Draper and D Orme from Quorn Methodists. Incidentally Woodford played for the RAF in the Berlin Stadium. Anstey's longest serving player, Les Dalby, was captain of the Senior League XI and Jack Wain took over the City League side.

Three players received offers from professional clubs. Jeff Wilkinson signed for Nuneaton Borough, while the other two, goalkeeper Roy Newball and left-winger Ted Farmer, remained at Cropston Road,

In October 1948, Bob Brown, Nomad's prolific goal scorer registered with Stead and Simpsons, where he had just begun to work. Brown's record in 1948-49 for the Nomads Reserves was: 3,3,3,4,1 – a total of 14 goals in just 5 matches.

During the match between Nomads Reserves and Enderby Town at Cropston Road in December Reg Wootten, Anstey's trainer, was on the touch-line when the ball struck him between the eyes and broke his spectacles. His eye was so badly cut that he had to be taken for treatment at the Royal infirmary,

Sam Raynor, the ex-Leicester City player was appointed official club coach in December 1948

Symington's United Counties League side defeated Anstey by five goals to four in their Leicestershire Senior Cup second round replay at Market Harborough. It was a match that had everything the not-too-discriminating football enthusiast could wish for. Plenty of goals, a glorious but in vain rally, glimpses of copybook association football, constant waves of excitement, end-to-end drama, and a penalty kick which brought victory to Symington's in the closing minutes. Anstey came back to draw level after being three goals behind. At four goals each and the light fading. Cleaver, the penalty expert for the south Leicestershire took the kick and made no mistake, sending Symington's into the third round.

With catlike agility a Narborough spectator ran on to the field and saved a penalty taken by Hadfield, the Anstey player at Narborough in January 1949. This incident culminated the City

League match, which was then abandoned. With the score six goals each after 91 minutes play, Anstey were awarded a penalty. The spectators did not agree with the referee's timekeeping and thought that the whistle should have been blown for time a minute earlier.

Goalkeeper Roy Newball, who recently had a trial with Wolverhampton Wanderers, sustained a broken ankle in March 1949. Given that the second team goalkeeper was also on the injury list, the Nomads signed Hawksley from Syston St Peter's

The balance sheet at the end of the season showed gate receipts of £278 8s 11d clear, and surplus of income over expenditure was £105 4s 5d. The general fund and ground development combined showed cash at the bank to be £347 1s 7d

The hon secretary Mr. W A Bramley and hon treasurer, Mr. T W N Boyes, resigned. Mr. Cyril Ford, "Ansford", Groby Road Anstey was appointed hon secretary and Mr. K Ford, the new hon treasurer.

At the first annual meeting of the Anstey Nomads Supporters Club held at the Coach and Horses Hotel, a balance of £86 was reported. The club made 18 bus journeys with the team and stated their intention to erect a small stand on the ground as soon as possible

~1949-50~

After many hours of hard work by volunteers the Supporters Club (Mitchell's) stand on the Sheepwash Lane side of the ground was completed for the start of the 1949-50 season and so for the first time spectators were able to keep dry on rainy afternoons. A new hot water system was installed in the pavilion, along with electric lighting and a ray lamp.



Figure 1 Supporters stand

Training under Sam Raynor (coach) and Sid Smith (trainer) began in the last week of July. However, Anstey lost 16 players from the end of the 1948-49 season to the start of the following season. Amongst them were left-back Les Matts, wing-back George Preston, and goalkeeper Roy Newball who both signed for Corby Town. Shortly afterwards Roy Newball turned professional, and Bill Collins was transferred to Symington's of Market Harborough. Despite the club providing

a good ground, excellent dressing room accommodation with hot showers, insuring them against injury, paying their expenses and making them feel at home, Anstey Nomads and other clubs were unable to stop their star players from being poached. So great was the problem that Leicestershire Football Association established a committee to investigate the problem. The club had no option but to seek replacements. Two centre forwards returned to the club – Albert Mee who had a short spell with Ellistown Colliery and Den Burditt from Nuneaton. Nearly 60 players had signed for the club. Among the newcomers were John Batchelor, inside forward, who had played for Edinburgh PO United, T B Hoult [Morris Sports], and R Parry [Ellistown Colliery]. Ken Matts was appointed captain and Ron Ford, vice-captain of the senior side.

The season began badly for the senior team, they were slaughtered 10-1 away at Coalville. Having conceded less goals than any other team in the Senior League in 1948-49, Anstey let in 17 in the opening three games of 1949-50. Bizarrely, just seven days later, the Nomads upturned the form book by defeating last year's champions Coalville 5-3 at Cropston Road, with goals from Payne (2), Mee, Dalby and Yeomans. Anstey made the same score as they did in the previous season, drawing 3-3 away at Hinckley two weeks later, after beating Rothwell at home by the odd goal in seven. Chapman scored for the home side in an unusual way. When the Anstey goalkeeper took a goal kick which the centre forward immediately returned from near the halfway line straight into the back of the net. Cooper, Payne and Wade scored for the Nomads and Chapman (2) and Millward for Hinckley. In the return fixture in October Hinckley Athletic paid the penalty of not playing to the whistle. While they stood appealing for offside, Albert Mee went through to score the only goal of the game. Following a poor start to the season, honorary secretary Cyril Ford wrote to the Leicester Mercury stating that Anstey Nomads playing strength, far from being their lowest, was on par with any previous season. "Several players have left the club for private reasons, as it is strictly an amateur football club." However, the club did recognise that one or two positions in the team need strengthening and Ford indicated that they would be happy to hear from "players of the right type." But as for any spot of trouble in the camp, Mr. Ford just exploded the notion "sky high." They were also keen to make their ground and dressing room among the best in the county for a club of its kind. According to the sports reporter, "they appear already to have made appreciable headway towards realizing this ambition."

Nomads went on a long losing sequence from the end of November, which was broken in February when they beat Measham by the odd goal in 5. Ron Ford, centre-half, spent the weekend with a leg encased in plaster from the knee downwards, the result of an injury sustained in the 6-1 away defeat by Nuneaton Borough in November. This was not the first injury Ford sustained playing for the Nomads. During his 16 years he had broken his collar bone, left ankle, right wrist, a cartilage operation on his right knee and an overnight hospital stay with concussion.

Sixteen year old Malcolm Bramley, of Latimer Street, Anstey who scored 5 for the reserves at centre-forward on his club debut, netted a hat-trick on his first appearance for the seniors in the Nomads' 4-1 win in the Coalville Cup against Shepshed Abion at Shepshed. After making just 4 appearances in December 1949 in which he scored 10 goals, he attracted the attention of Derby County's manager Stuart McMillan. He signed professional forms after a trial at the Baseball Ground in the first week of 1950. In this trial young Malcolm's side lost 5-4, but he netted a hat-trick. Bramley did not take up football until he left school and was persuaded to turn out for West End Rovers. He signed for Anstey at the start of the season and before being converted into a centre forward had appeared at centre half and left back. Malcolm was the son of Mr. R. W. Bramley, former hon. secretary of Anstey Primitive Methodist FC, who sadly passed away in June 1950.

After overcoming Quorn Methodists 3-1 after extra-time and Shepshed 4-1 at home with Bramley claiming a hat-trick, the Nomads were drawn against Nuneaton Borough in the semi-finals of the Coalville Charity Cup at the Waggon & Horses ground, Coalville. After a goalless first half, North made no mistake from the penalty spot for Borough, after only five minutes of the second period had elapsed. Shortly afterwards Clare headed down a Jayes cross for the latter to run the ball over the line for Nuneaton's second. Measham, captained by amateur international Philip Aston beat Nuneaton 3-2 in the final witnessed by more than 3,500 spectators. Hon Secretary, Cyril Ford stated that he was keen on a good 'A' team for the youngsters of the village. The first step he took was to get them relegated from Division 4 to Division 8 of the City League since the 'A' team consisted of teenagers. He had signed no less than 14 players under the age of 18.

It was customary to admit old age pensioners free to Nomads' games, but this was not possible for the Senior Cup third round tie against Coalville Town. But three supporters club members saw to it that the old folks were not disappointed. Some posted themselves outside the ground, their pockets bulging with shillings. Each old age pensioner on arriving was presented with a shilling to pay for his or her admission. Coalville had ample revenge on the Nomads for their exit in the Coalville Cup, by beating them by seven clear goals.

Playing with one man short through the second half, Rugby Oakfield fully deserved their victory over the Nomads by 4-2 at Oakfield in February. The missing Kendall, Oakfields left half collided with two other players 5 minutes before half-time. All three fell to the ground, but Kendall was unable to rise. He was later taken to hospital with a fracture of the right leg.

In March, Kenneth Hagger (17), who had scored 43 goals for West End Rovers and recently transferred to Anstey badly damaged his ankle. He was involved in an accident when a truck loaded with over a ton of steel straps passed over his foot at Desford No.1 pit.

A benefit match was played between Anstey Nomads and Jones and Shipman for Keith Abell, one of the visitors players who had recently broken his leg playing against Anstey. Harold Hunt, the young Anstey outside left who scored the first half goal direct from a corner, was injured during the second half with a badly damaged left elbow! In the second half Smith scored twice for Jones and Shipmans to make them winners by 2-1

Cropston Road staged the replayed City Shield final, which was a real thriller. The Old Fosse Boys were worthy winners by 2-1 over Stead and Simpson's. Owing to the greasy ball, both sides missed many chances, with the only goal of the first half going to the Old Boys, J Smith scoring from close range. Just 10 minutes into the second half, McBean, Stead's goalkeeper was carried off with injuries to his ribs, and Simpson, the centre-half took his place. McBean returned later to play outside right. Fifteen minutes from the end Inglesant headed an equaliser, but close on time Chamberlain restored the Old Boys' lead. Fred Wain, the Anstey Nomads' president presented the Shed and miniature cups to players of both teams.

At the club's AGM, it was reported that the balance in hand of £56 14 6d was not as good as the previous season, which was due mainly to a decrease in gate receipt, £177 12s 6d against £276 8s 11d in 1948-49. J Sutherland, who had been connected with Anstey football since 1921 resigned from the Nomads committee.

Fundraising activities included a whist drive and a darts competition for Leicestershire-based teams. J W Raynor provided a cup. No less than 57 entries were received for the inaugural competition. The cup final was played off before a packed audience on Midsummers Day 1950 at

the Coach and Horses, when the Princess Charlotte beat Dixie Arms in three straight legs. The winners never lost a single leg and finished off the final leg with 12, double 16.

The past year had not been too good financially for the Anstey Nomads Supporters Club, but a surplus of \$49 7s 8d was not too bad given that £98 7s 8d had gone to the cost of the covered stand on the ground.