

Where are they now?



Aston Villa

Edited by Jamie Spoor



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Former Aston Villa Players

Jamie Spoor



www.where-are-they-now.co.uk/aston-villa

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Introduction

Aston Villa Football Club, one of the Football League's founding fathers and an iconic symbol of the English game.

Twenty one major honours and one of only five English clubs to be crowned champions of Europe, the Villa sit right up there with United, Liverpool and Arsenal in the upper echelons of the sport. Undoubtedly the pride of the Midlands, Villa regained their rightful place in the Premier League for 2019/20 after being led to play-off glory by one of their own, Dean Smith. I believe they're back where they truly belong.

It was on my second visit to Villa Park - under the floodlights in a midweek game - that I first got the feel of just why this is a special club in the hearts of so many. I could sense the history, the passion and the love the Villa faithful had for the club.

In this book, we take a look at the colourful, the controversial and the charismatic as we take you on a magical mystery ride through Villa's history featuring some of the greatest players ever to wear the famous claret and blue. You may think that most former players take the well trodden path of becoming a manager, coach or agent and whilst that may be true, often it is a tale of the unexpected. For example, have you heard the one about the former Villa star who became a taekwondo champion at the age of 65? What about the former European Cup winning keeper who continues to always deliver as a courier? It's all here.

From "Mr Aston Villa" Charles Aitken to journeyman Willie Young and just about everyone in between, this fascinating insight is a must have for any died-in-the-wool claret and blue. It tells the story of the famous, historic club's exploits through the eyes of those to have represented them - some with brilliant distinction, others considerably less so! It's the perfect gift you've all been waiting for.

We hope you enjoy reading the book as much as we've enjoyed writing it. UTV!

Thank you to everyone that has helped to put this together.

Jamie



AITKEN, Charlie

Defender

Born: *Edinburgh, Scotland*

Playing career: *Gorebridge Juniors, Edinburgh Thistle, Aston Villa, New York Cosmos (1959-1977)*

Widely considered to be Villa's greatest ever player, Charlie Aitken's appearance record is almost certain never to be beaten. The Scottish defender turned out 660 times in claret and blue during his 17 years with the club. He played in three separate divisions, as well as the League Cup, FA Cup and UEFA Cup—and the Charity Shield, too. Having signed from Edinburgh Thistle in 1959, the Scotsman had to bide his time before eventually making his Villa debut almost a full year after joining. From there, however, he established himself at left-back, making the spot his for years to come. Synonymous with the club's glory days, upon retirement he opened a jewellery and antiques shop in Birmingham after a short spell in the USA with New York Cosmos.

ADAM, Jimmy

Midfielder

Born: *Blantyre, Scotland*

Playing career: *Blantyre Celtic, Aldershot, Spennymoor United, Luton Town, Aston Villa, Stoke City, Falkirk, South Melbourne Hellas (1950-1964)*

Adam began his career in the lower leagues with Aldershot and Spennymoor, and then made 138 appearances for Luton. He moved to Villa Park after the Hatters relegation, and spent two seasons in the Midlands before moving on again to Stoke. He later migrated to Australia where he had a spell as player-manager of South Melbourne Hellas. Now aged 88, Adam still lives north of the border.

AGATHE, Didier

Wing-back

Born: *Saint-Pierre, France*

Playing career: *Montpellier, Raith Rovers, Hibernian, Celtic, Aston Villa, JS Saint-Pierroise (1992-2007)*

Agathe began his career at Montpellier in his native France, before moving to Scotland where he played for Raith Rovers and then Hibernian. A string of impressive performances earned him a move to Celtic, where he enjoyed the most successful spell of his career, winning three league titles and the UEFA Cup. After six years in Glasgow, he re-signed for former boss Martin O'Neill on a short term deal at Villa Park. He had an underwhelming spell in the Midlands, making six substitute appearances without starting a single game. Since retiring, he returned to his homeland to set up a football Academy.



Didier Agathe

ALDIS, Peter*Defender***Born:** Kings Heath**Playing career:** Hay Green, Aston Villa (1948-1960)

Birmingham-born Aldis played 294 games for Villa in league and cup, having joined from local club Hay Green. In the early post-war years, he moved to Hinckley Athletic and then on to Villa in 1949. An integral part of the Midlands club 1957 FA Cup win under Eric Houghton's management, his headed goal against Sunderland was not only his solitary goal for Villa - but also a 35-yard header! Now aged 81, he had a spell as player/manager of non league Alvechurch before drifting out of the game.

ALDRIDGE, Albert*Full-back***Born:** Walsall**Died:** 1891**Playing career:** Walsall Swifts, West Bromwich Albion, Walsall Town Swifts, Aston Villa (1889-1890)

Twice capped by England in the fledgling days of the professional game, Aldridge began his career at hometown club Walsall Swifts where he spent six seasons. Moving to West Bromwich Albion, Aldridge won the trophy with the Baggies in 1888, then moved back to Walsall Swifts before a move to Villa followed in 1889. He made 14 appearances as they finished runner ups in the First Division that year. Aldridge tragically died at only 27 years of age due to illness, at his home in Walsall in June 1891.

ALLBACK, Marcus*Striker***Born:** Gothenburg, Sweden**Playing career:** Lyngby Boldklub, Bari, Heerenveen, Aston Villa, Hansa Rostock, Copenhagen (1992-2011)

A much travelled Swedish international, Allback arrived at Aston Villa in 2002, but became third choice forward, behind Juan Pablo Angel and Darius Vassell, throughout his two year stay in the Midlands. At the end of his contract, he joined Hansa Rostock and then moved on to Copenhagen before he rejoined his first professional club Orgryte. He played in five major tournaments for Sweden and later became assistant manager of the national team. Since stepping down from this role after Euro 2016, he has done some coaching and commentary work back in his homeland.

ALLEN, Jimmy*Defender***Born:** Poole**Died:** 1995**Playing career:** Portsmouth, Aston Villa (1932-1944)

Allen played 132 times for Pompey, scoring once and earning an FA Cup runners up medal. Villa smashed the British transfer record when they signed Allen in 1934 for a fee of £10,775. He played in 147 league matches for Villa, scoring two goals and captained the side to the Second Division title in 1938. He was in his prime when his career was disrupted by the outbreak of war. Forced to retire through injury, he had a five year tenure as manager of Colchester United before going on to run a pub in Portsmouth. Allen died in a Southsea nursing home in 1995 at the age of 85.

ALLEN, Malcolm*Striker***Born:** Deiniolen, Gwynedd, Wales**Playing career:** Watford, Aston Villa, Norwich City, Newcastle United (1985-1995)

No relation to namesake Jimmy, Welsh-speaking Allen began his career with Watford, scoring in an FA Cup semi final for the Hornets.

Marcus Allback



He was loaned to Aston Villa by new Watford boss Dave Bassett but made only four league appearances during his brief spell in the Midlands. Allen retired through injury in 1995 and returned to Wales where he became a coach at Aberystwyth and a television pundit for Welsh Channels S4C's Sgorio and Radio Cymru's Camp Lawn. In 2006 he appeared in court in Watford for assault charges and in 2008 he was handed a suspended sentence for drink driving offences. Allen played 14 times for Wales and scored three goals. Originally from Deiniolen, Malcolm Allen released his autobiography in 2009. See: <https://www.ylolf.com/authors/702/malcolm-allen>



Malcolm Allen

AMOO, Ryan

Midfielder or right-back

Born: *Leicester*

Playing career: *Aston Villa, Northampton Town (loan), Northampton Town, Highfield Rangers, Lincoln City, Barwell, Solihull Moors, Thurnby Nirvana (2000-2011)*

Amoo started his career at Villa and featured in the Youth-Cup winning side of 2002. He never made a senior appearance though in two years at Villa Park and moved on to Northampton in 2004. A succession of lower and non-league clubs followed, notably at Lincoln City where he played over 70 times for the Imps. Amoo, still only 35, continues to ply his trade in the lower echelons of league football for his hometown side Leicester Nirvana of the United Counties Premier Division.



ANDERSON, Willie

Winger

Born: *Liverpool*

Playing career: *Manchester United, Aston Villa, Cardiff City, Portland Timbers (loan), Portland Timbers, Wichita Wings (indoor), Portland Timbers (indoor) (1962-1982)*

An FA Youth Cup winner in 1963-1964 with Manchester United having joined them straight from school. Made his league debut as a 16 year old on the opposite wing to another rookie, George Best. He found that his chances were limited even though he played in a FA Cup and European Cup semi-finals and was sold to Aston Villa in January 1967 for £20,000. Moved to Oregon, USA to work as an executive with a local radio station. Anderson also coached BSC Portland and covered Portland Timbers matches for US TV network KPTV.

ANGEL, Juan Pablo

Forward

Born: *Medellin, Colombia*

Playing career: *Atletico Nacional, River Plate, Villa, New York Red Bulls, LA Galaxy, Chivas (1993-2014)*

The Colombian international striker is fondly remembered as a cult hero at Villa Park. He joined the club as a record signing, for £9.5 million in 2001 from River Plate and quickly became a fans' favourite.

During his time in claret and blue, Angel hit 62 goals in 205 games in all competitions - only Dwight Yorke and Gabriel Agbonlahor have scored more in the Premier League era for the club. Angel only retired from playing in his native Colombia three years ago, and has enrolled on the UEFA B Licence Course as he looks to return to the game in a coaching capacity. Now lives in Medellin, Columbia and acts as an ambassador for Mercedes Benz. Twitter: <https://twitter.com/JUANPABLOANGEL>

ANSELL, Barry

Defender

Born: Birmingham **Died:** 2018

Playing career: Aston Villa (1967-1968)

A Birmingham-born centre back who played a solitary match for Villa. Ansell can claim to have played alongside Claret and Blue legend Peter Withe - but only after he had moved on to South African second tier side Arcadia Shepherds. His one and only match for Villa came in a 3-0 defeat at Cardiff on Boxing Day 1967 - long before Withe arrived. After moving to South Africa, Ansell worked as a property developer and flew back for a reunion at Villa Park in 2013. He died in March 2018 at the age of 70.

ANSTEY, Brendel

Goalkeeper

Born: Bristol **Died:** 1933

Playing career: Hanham Athletic, Bristol Rovers, Aston Villa, Leicester City (1911-1919)

Born in Bristol. Anstey was a goalkeeper who played for Bristol Rovers before signing for Aston Villa in February 1911. He made 55 appearances for them across four seasons until the outbreak of World War One. When football resumed after the war, he moved on to Leicester City before he moved on to non league football with Mid Rhondda and Wednesbury Athletic where he later became a coach. He died in Wednesbury in December 1933 aged 46.

ARMSTRONG, Bill

Defender

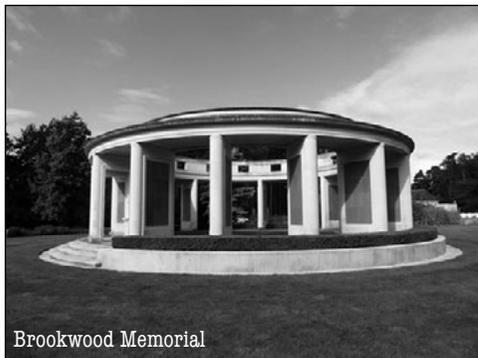
Born: Throckley **Died:** 1995

Playing career: Rochdale, Aston Villa, Swindon Town, Gillingham (1931-1938)

Armstrong played over 130 times in the Football League and moved to Villa from Rochdale in 1933. After two seasons at Villa Park, he dropped down a division to move to Swindon, then on to Gillingham. Upon retirement as a player, he ran a shop. He suffered ill health in later life and died in his native north east in 1995, aged 82.



Juan Pablo Angel



Brookwood Memorial

ARMSTRONG, Matthew

Wing-half

Born: High Spenn

Died: 1941

Playing career: *Darlington, Aston Villa (1936-1939)*

Armstrong - no relation to namesake Bill - began his career in Division Three (North) with Darlington in 1936 and made 38 appearances *The Quakers*, scoring twice. He joined Aston Villa in 1939 but never played a senior match before the league was abandoned due to the outbreak of World War Two. Armstrong died on active service in July 1941, aged 22, while serving in the Middle East as a private with 149 Field Ambulance, Royal Army Medical Corps. He is commemorated on the Brookwood Memorial.

ASHE, Norman

Winger

Born: Walsall

Playing career: *Aston Villa, Rotherham United, Nuneaton Borough (1959-1963)*

The Walsall-born winger rose through the ranks from apprentice to senior team at Villa, making his first team debut in 1959 during the side's Second Division title-winning season. He made only five league appearances for the club, and moved on to Rotherham in 1962. After an expansive lower league career, where he plied his trade for numerous clubs in the south west, Ashe retired in 1985 to bring an end his 26 year playing career. He was part of the Falmouth Town side to reach the FA Cup first round proper in 1970 and later had a stint coaching the Cornish side before moving on to the club's board. Ashe later returned to the Midlands, where he still lives aged 75.

ASHFIELD, George

Full-back

Born: *Manchester*

Died: 1985

Playing career: *Stockport County, Aston Villa, Chester, Rhyl (1949-1959)*

Ashfield began his career with Stockport County, without making a senior appearance, before going on to play nine league games for top flight Villa in 1954. After a brief stint with Fourth Division Chester, he dropped into Non-league football with Welsh club Rhyl. He saw out the rest of his ten year career there, before retiring and drifting out the game. Went on to run a sports shop in Stockport. Ashfield died aged only 50 in March 1985

ASHMORE, Walter

Goalkeeper

Born: *Smethwick*

Died: 1940

Playing career: *Aston Villa, Aston Unity (1888-1889)*

Goalkeeper Ashmore first rose to prominence when he signed for the club that would later become West Bromwich Albion in 1886. He spent a couple of seasons there and then moved to Villa as back up keeper to Jimmy Warner. He would only make one single appearance in claret-and-blue, against Everton in in first ever Football League season (1888-89). Ashmore left Villa in 1889 and went on to play for Aston Unity. According to the Football League archives, it is believed that he may have gone on to play both football and cricket for the latter. Ashmore died in 1940 in Oldham.

ASHTON, Derek

Defender

Born: *Worksop*

Died: 1997

Playing career: *Wolverhampton Wanderers, Aston Villa, Wellington Town (1945-1949)*

Ashton was on the books at Wolves without appearing in senior league football, so he moved to Villa as football formalities re-commenced after the war in 1946. He played eight times across the following five years for the club before moving on to Telford based non league side Wellington in 1951. He later became their player/manager and then worked locally as a player scout. Ashton died, aged 74, in 1997.



ASPINALL, Warren

Midfielder/forward

Born: *Wigan*

Playing career: *Wigan Athletic, Everton, Aston Villa, Portsmouth, Bournemouth, Swansea City, Carlisle United, Brentford, Colchester United, Brighton & Hove Albion (1980-2000)*

A much travelled, versatile and controversial figure, Aspinall moved to Villa for a then club record fee of £300,000 from Everton in 1987. Aspinall finished as joint top scorer in his second season to help Villa back to the top flight at the first attempt. A series of ill-disciplined incidents saw him sold to Portsmouth, before he was forced to retire through a long-term ankle injury. After leaving the game, Aspinall turned to drink and gambling but has happily now recovered. Worked in a Sainsbury's distribution centre and then as a scout for Port Vale. He has remained involved in football and now works as a BBC Sussex radio commentator for Brighton & Hove Albion matches.

ASTLEY, Dai

Striker

Born: *Dowlais, Wales* **Died:** 1989

Playing career: *Charlton Athletic, Aston Villa, Derby County, Blackpool, FC Metz (1927-1947)*

A prolific inside forward for club and country, Astley scored a remarkable 92 goals for Villa in 165 matches. After spells at Derby County and Blackpool, he moved to France and FC Metz after the war. Capped 13 times by Wales, he consistently plundered goals for the national side, scoring 12 goals during a seven year international career. Upon retirement, Astley took up a career as a manager, coaching in Italy with Inter Milan and Genoa, and then in Sweden where he took charge of Djurgardens and then Sandvikens IF. He died at 80 in 1989.

ASTON, Charlie

Full-back

Born: *Bilston* **Died:** 1931

Playing career: *Bilston United, Walsall, Aston Villa, QPR, Burton United, Gresley Rovers, Burton United, Watford, Leyton (1895-1908)*

Aston joined First Division Villa in 1898 and played 13 games in his first season as they won the league. Villa retained the title the next season, before Aston moved on to pastures new. He had one season spells at QPR, Burton United, Gresley Rovers and Burton United for a second time. Upon retirement, he remained in London and worked as a PE teacher at a local college. He was only 56 when he died in 1931.

ATHERSMITH, Charlie

Outside-right

Born: *Bloxwich* **Died:** 1910

Playing career: *Aston Villa, Small Heath (1887-1905)*

Athersmith was a key man in Aston Villa's Victorian-era dominance of the English domestic game. He won five league titles and two FA Cups between 1894 and 1900 and played twelve times for England scoring three goals. Before becoming a professional footballer, Athersmith was a clerk in Birmingham. Having left Villa in 1901, he moved on to local rivals Small Heath (now known as Birmingham City). After he retired, he became a pub landlord at the Vine Inn, and then spent two years as a coach at Grimsby Town. He returned to Redditch to take up ownership of another pub - the Royal George - and died soon afterwards at only 38 years of age.

ATKINS, Bill

Forward

Born: *Solihull*

Playing career: *Aston Villa, Swindon Town, Halifax Town, Stockport County, Portsmouth, Halifax Town, Rochdale, Darlington (1959-1975)*

Solihull born Atkins never made a senior appearance in his two seasons at Villa Park. He played in the Football League for six different clubs, including over 200 games for Halifax Town. A tall, rangy forward, he spent nine months at Fratton Park with Portsmouth but scored only twice in this time. Atkins later returned to Birmingham to buy a baker's and confectionary store which he ran for 30 years. Now retired, he is 80 and lives in west Yorkshire.



ATKINSON, Dalian

Striker

Born: Telford, Shropshire **Died:** 2006

Playing career: Ipswich Town, Sheffield Wednesday, Real Sociedad, Aston Villa, Fenerbahce, Metz, Manchester City, Al-Ittihad, Daejeon Citizen, Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors (1985-2001)

After finishing the latter stages of his career in the middle east and Asia, Atkinson returned to England to run sports consultancy "Players Come First" - an agency for clubs, players and agents. His time at Villa Park is often remembered for Atkinson's penchant for the spectacular - notably his goal in the 1994 League Cup final win over Manchester United and a stunning solo finish against Wimbledon in the first Premier League season. It was a goal later named as Match of the Day's best of the campaign. Atkinson played for many teams abroad, and retired as a player in 2001. Having suffered with heart and kidney problems, Atkinson died at the age of 48 after he went into cardiac arrest having been tasered by the police at his home in 2016.

ATKINSON, Ron

Wing-half

Born: Liverpool

Playing career: Aston Villa, Oxford United, Kettering Town, Cambridge United, West Bromwich Albion, Manchester United, Atletico Madrid, Sheffield Wed, Coventry City, Nottingham Forest (1956-1999)

Affectionately known as "Big Ron", Atkinson remains one of British football's most colourful and well known characters. He did not achieve great heights in his playing career, after moving to Villa in 1956. He never played a first team match before moving on to Oxford where he spent the rest of his playing days, making over 400 appearances. As a manager, he won the FA Cup with Manchester United in 1983 and 1985 and the League Cup with Sheffield Wednesday.

He returned to Villa Park as boss in 1991, winning the League Cup again three years later and taking the team to second place in the first ever Premier League season. Went on to manage Coventry City, Atletico Madrid, Wednesday again and Nottingham Forest. His later career as a TV pundit was cut short when he was forced to resign after controversial on-air comments.

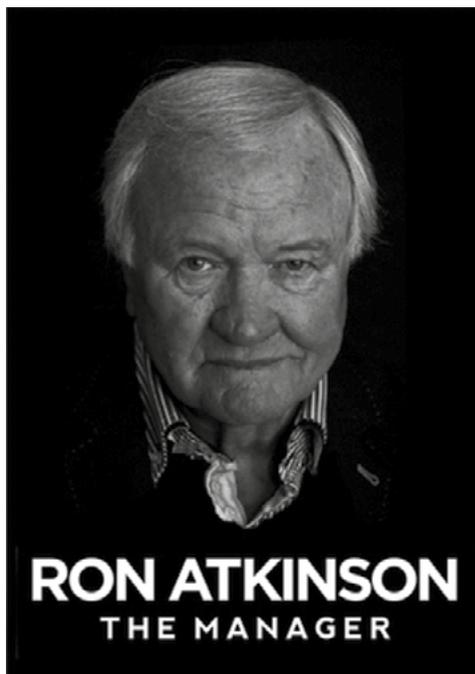
BACHE, Joseph

Inside-forward

Born: Stourbridge **Died:** 1960

Playing career: Aston Villa, Mid Rhondda, Grimsby Town (1900-1920)

Fourth on the list of Aston Villa's all-time appearance makers, England international Bache spent 14 years in the Midlands. During that time he played 474 times for the club, finding the net on 185 occasions. He was one of Villa's all-time greatest forwards, winning the FA Cup in 1905 and 1913, as well as the league Championship in 1910. Bache went on to serve on the Western Front during the First World War. Despite being involved in a number of actions, Bache survived the war and returned home to resume his playing career. He moved on to Mid-Rhondda in Wales and later Grimsby where he also became player/coach. He died in 1960 aged 80.



BAIRD, John*Full-back***Born:** Alexandria, West Dunbartonshire, Scotland**Died:** 1905**Playing career:** Vale Athletic, Vale of Leven, Aston Villa, Kidderminster Olympic, Kidderminster Harriers, Leicester Fosse, Clyde, Vale of Leven (1888-1896)

Defender Baird played for Villa briefly in 1889, before he returned two years later and made 60 appearances in the First Division across four seasons in the Midlands. Baird also turned out for Kidderminster Harriers and played 13 league games for Leicester Fosse before he returned to his homeland where he played for Clyde and then signed for amateur side Vale of Leven FC. He had a spell as their player/coach. He died in his native Scotland from a heart attack in 1905 aged 34.

BAKER, Alan*Forward***Born:** Tipton, Staffordshire**Playing career:** Aston Villa, Walsall. (1960-1970)

Striker Baker played for several Football League clubs, most notably Walsall and Aston Villa, where he spent the last five years of his playing career. He joined Villa as a schoolboy and went on to play 109 times for the club (92 league games and 17 cup appearances), scoring 17 times. He was a runner up in the League Cup final of 1963 as the side lost the two legged tie to fierce local rivals Birmingham City. He also represented England Schoolboys. Upon retirement, Baker went into the Leather trade in Walsall where he worked as a Castings Inspector.



Erik Bakke

BAKKE, Eirik*Midfielder***Born:** Sogndal, Norway**Playing career:** Leeds United, Aston Villa (loan), Brann, Sogndal (1993-2012)

Bakke was signed by Leeds in 1999 from Sogndal in his native Norway for £1.75 million. He hit the ground running, but injuries and poor forms meant he never became a mainstay at Elland Road. He joined David O'Leary's Aston Villa on loan for the 2005-06 season. The loan however was ended early after Leeds told Villa that they would only let Bakke go permanently, not on loan and Doug Ellis decided that it was not worth permanently acquiring his services. In total, he played 14 times for the claret and blue during his brief loan spell. He earned 27 caps for Norway, where he now lives again and coaches one of Sogndal's youth sides.



Bosko Balaban