

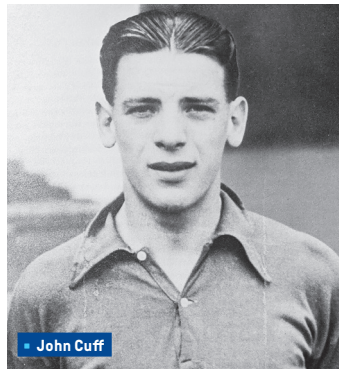


By Rob Sawyer

# JOHN CUFF - FROM GOODISON PARK TO THE MONTE CARLO RALLY!

A number of footballers have had a stab at other sports - notably Gareth Bale dipping his toe into the world of golf, recently. At Everton, Frank Sugg, Jack Sharp and Harry Makepeace all juggled playing top-level soccer and cricket. Several Toffeemen, notably Dixie Dean, George Burnett and Gordon Watson, tried their hand at baseball in the 1930s and 1940s, while Dean's teammate, Jimmy Cunliffe, earned a living playing professional bowls in the 1950s. But, to our knowledge, only one swapped football for motor sport.

Born in 1918, John Cuff was the son of a publican who ran the Pineapple Inn in North Shields. He played football in his teenage years for Newcastle's St Cuthbert's Grammar School, before signing for North Shields FC. He had a two-week trial with Aston Villa, but homesickness got the better of him and with other clubs showing



John Cuff

interest, John's uncle wrote a letter of recommendation in March 1936 to Everton's Board of Directors. The uncle's opinion carried some weight as he was Alan Grenyer, who had served the Blues as a wing-half for more than a decade, collecting a Football League winner's medal in 1914/15. Acting on Grenyer's

advice, the Blues' Board invited John, just turned 18, for a trial, before signing has him as a professional.

His appearances as an inside-forward in Royal Blue were restricted to the A and reserve teams, so a move to Northampton Town, managed by former Everton star Warney Cresswell, in May 1938, made sense for all parties. His only senior outing for the Cobblers was in the Third Division Senior Cup competition. At the conclusion of the season, John returned to Merseyside, signing for Tranmere Rovers but the outbreak of war stymied his chances of making a go of it at Prenton Park. He returned to Tynemouth to live at the family public house, before enlisting with the Black Watch regiment.

Having married, John then settled in Sheffield and, subsequently, Preston where he founded a successful dry-cleaning business. A car enthusiast, he moved into vehicle sales, running several franchises in the North West of England. This went in hand with rally driving in the 1960s when he became a semi-professional Jaguar driver and a full works team Rover driver. John successfully completed the Tulip Rally, Monte Carlo Rally, East Africa Safari and the Coupe Des Alpes. He even qualified for a private pilot's licence so that he could fly himself to and from rallies.

After many years of working and travelling to motor rallies, John retired in the early 1980s, still keeping himself busy by taking an interest in antiques and exploring the country in his caravan. He passed away in 2003.



Cuff, far right of the three standing by the car...