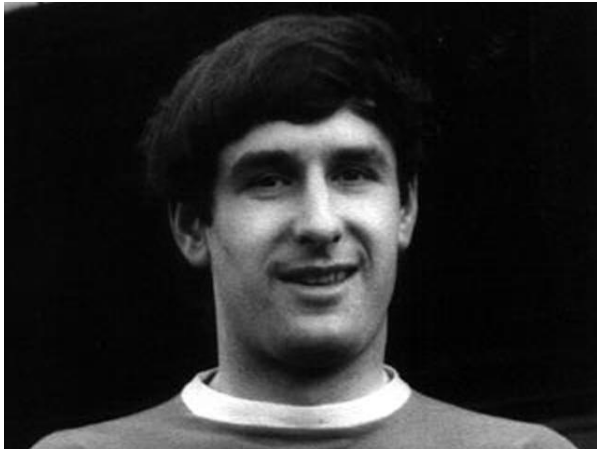




Kevin Randall gave up football after two Manchester United trials came to nothing; the experience convinced the bitterly disappointed youngster that he had no future as a professional. He returned to his old job as a clerk with the English Steel Corporation but, gradually, his disenchantment with the game softened, and he joined Droylsden on semi-pro terms before being spotted by Bury. After one season at Gigg Lane he

was freed, and was about to sign for Stockport when a letter arrived from Tony McShane. This offered a far better alternative, for Kevin: Edgeley Park was too near home and, like most twenty-year-olds, he was ready to leave the nest and travel further afield. So he came to Chesterfield, in the summer of 1966.

Kevin soon formed an effective partnership with Ivan Hollett and when Hollett departed, Kevin formed an even better spearhead with Ernie Moss. Indeed, it is almost impossible to consider the merits of them as individuals without reflecting on the role they played in each other's development. Kevin made it to double figures in each of his six seasons as a Chesterfield player, finishing as top scorer three times, and stands joint third (with George Smith) in the club's list of all-time League goalscorers. For many, his finest Chesterfield game was the memorable F.A. Cup tie at Stoke in 1971/72, where he ran Mike Pejic ragged and chipped Gordon Banks (!) for an equaliser.

With 258 league appearances and 96 Chesterfield goals to his credit, Kevin was sold to Notts. County just before the start of the 1972/73 season, and the club never quite found such an effective partner for Ernie. In his first season at Meadow Lane, Kevin's new side won promotion to Division Two. At Notts he became part of an odd record by being one of three players to take and miss the same, single penalty kick, at Portsmouth.

He and Ernie were astutely re-united by Billy Bingham at Mansfield and, with the old pair in harness up front, the Stags stormed to the Third Division Championship in 1977. Kevin then suffered a pelvic injury and, although Mansfield fans point to the loss through injury of Ernie Moss as a reason for their quick return to the Third, the sale of Randall to York had something to do with it, too, since it broke up the very partnership that had led them to promotion. He scored twice on his York debut and established himself as a crowd favourite there, becoming their youth coach in 1980 before taking on the mantle of caretaker manager for three months, leaving as Denis Smith took over.

Kevin joined Goole in January 1983 and was their manager at the time that John Duncan offered him a coaching position in his new set-up. Although the two had

never worked together, they hit it off from the start, taking Chesterfield to the Fourth Division championship at the end of their second season. After two seasons of Third Division football, Duncan left for Ipswich and Kevin took on the Manager's job. These were times of great struggle, though: gates were down to an average of 2,600, the financial situation was dire and a distracting background of boardroom squabbling had a tremendously unsettling effect.

Kevin made astute signings and the club fought off relegation in his first season, but became so stuck in a losing rut in his second that dismissal became inevitable. Kevin's departure was announced on October 16, 1988 and, although everyone had seen it coming, it was still an acutely painful experience for the man, the club's officials and its supporters, since no-one had ever found cause to doubt Kevin's wholehearted commitment to the job.

Within days, Kevin became Mansfield's Youth Development Officer, a position he held until February 1993, when John Duncan was invited back to Saltergate and asked Kevin to return as his assistant. For the third time, he helped his beloved club to promotion, this time via the play-offs. In May 1998.

A dreadful 1999/00 season saw the Spireites relegated to Division Three: Randall and Duncan were sacked in April 2000. Kevin, to his great credit, did not bear a grudge against the club: when the fledgling CFSS needed their support to come out of administration, this support was readily given, despite it costing Kevin a lot of money in compensation owed since his dismissal. The club was able to show its appreciation with a testimonial against Sheffield United in 2003. In recent years Kevin has worked as Chief Scout to a number of sides managed by his team-mate from the 1960's, Neil Warnock.

Even when Kevin was elsewhere it was clear that The Spireites held a special place in his heart, and his passing in 2019 was keenly felt by ex-players and by everyone who followed the club for any of the last thirty-four years of the twentieth century. His achievements with Chesterfield as player and coach will see him forever woven into the fabric of the club.

For Chesterfield: 258 Football League appearances, 96 goals.

Career: 539 + 17 Football League appearances, 182 goals.