

Member Profile – former 1st XV Player, Alickadoo John Elliott (better known to the younger element as Jack’s Dad)

(1st XV Caps - 24)

EDUCATION;

Askham House Prep School, Royal Grammar School, Kirkley Hall College

EMPLOYMENT;

Tenanted Family Farm till 1988, Northern Powergrid till 2017, since then happily retired!

FAVOURITE BAND/S;

Free, The Eagles and Andrea Bocelli

BEST MUSICAL EVENT/S ATTENDED;

Not many but a long time ago Ralph McTell and more recently the Illegal Eagles both in Newcastle

FAVOURITE FILM/S;

Difficult, as I am a bit of a film buff but if I had to choose, probably The Natural with Robert Redford

IF YOU WEREN'T A FLY HALF/CENTRE WHAT POSITION WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE PLAYED;

I played at all levels in the club until a recurring shoulder injury and eventual major operation led to an early retirement! The only position I didn't play was second row, even playing prop once for the Reivers against a touring Scottish side. I was captain that day and well and truly set up by John Durkin and Brian Lawrence and ended up against a 21 stone monster and it hurt, never again! The best position was undoubtedly open side but extremely tiring!

MOST DIFFICULT OPPONENT/S ENCOUNTERED;

One Easter Monday, many years ago, we had a first team fixture against the Army, and I was in the centre against a South Sea Islander. At the time, a big centre was 13/14 stone, this guy was about 18 stone, six feet square and quick! I couldn't do a thing with him and it was a very uncomfortable afternoon!

FAVOURITE/BEST MORPETH PLAYER/S IN SAME TEAM AS MYSELF;

Forwards;

I have thought very long and hard about this and it is difficult because I played with a lot of good players, all with different strengths. I have narrowed my choice to 3!

David Pringle - the best out and out openside I ever played with. (not quite as useful at scrum half!)

Ian Pringle – a brilliant No 8 who never had a bad game!

Peter Gordon – a fantastic athlete and ball player who could have gone further if he'd wanted to!

Backs;

Again, I will have to highlight 3.

Brian Keenleyside - the best kicker of a ball and powerful runner I have ever seen!

Richard Thornton – a great winger, balanced quick and deceptively strong!

Paul Hutchinson - we played together in the centre in a very good Reivers side and he was a brilliant centre partner, strong and direct.

BEST MORPETH RUGBY MATCH/MATCHES;

The one I played in that sticks in my mind was a 1st team game at Hartlepool Rovers when they were the best side in Durham and had 6 Durham County players in their back division. The ground was rock hard, and Bill Hewitt and I came off with no skin left on our knees, but we completely dominated them and came off worthy winners!

More recently, watching the 1st team over that last few years has been a journey but the win at Alnwick a couple of seasons ago must go down as probably the most memorable because it even made their most vociferous supporters clam up!

JOHN'S 2 x MORPETH CLUB QUIZ QUESTIONS;

Q. Which Morpeth player played at Twickenham for Northumberland in a Counties Final in a back row which also contained Roger Uttley and Peter Dixon?

A. Peter Gordon in 1979 – losing out to Middlesex 6-19.

Q. Who won the Young Player of the Season 1976-77?

A. Ed Amos.

Club notes for John Elliott and his 1st XV debut season 1975-76:

John played for the Club during the 1970's and the 1980's playing most of his games for the Reivers in the centre. He did however play for the 1st XV in 24 games – playing 16 of them in the centre in the 1975/76 season. It was the year after the Knockout season and Alan McMillan had moved to North Wales to play for Ruthin. John played in the centre with several other players – Martin Calder, Walter Casey, Brian Keenleyside, Bill Tarbitt and David Scott.

His first game was on November 1st, 1975. The 1st XV had been due to travel to South Wales to play 3 games over that weekend but at the last minute the tour was cancelled and Fixture Sec. Ted Laidlaw got a late match against West Hartlepool Technical Day School Old Boys Rugby Football Club (the longest named Club in the RFU). John's first game we won by 15-9 with winger Ken Fraser scoring 3 tries. The Morpeth XV was;

C Green, K Fraser, J Elliott, M Calder, J Wakenshaw, W Hewitt, D McMillan, M Stoney, P Robertson, J Dirom, B Garnett, H Kennedy, D Learmonth, D Pringle, R Robinson – it was the only game P Robertson the hooker (a late replacement for John Leithead) played for the Club.

John mentions his game against the very strong Hartlepool Rovers side. He played in the centre with Brian Keenleyside and we won 12-3 with Brian and Ken Fraser scoring tries and a young Colin Green kicking 2 conversions. It was a memorable game and the Rovers fly half attempted to kick the ball into touch near his own try line but sliced his kick back over his own try line and Ken fell on the ball to score his try. The ground was always hard at Rovers -

it never had any grass on it as they not only played on the pitch, but it was the only place they could train on in mid-week.

Bill Hewitt's memory of playing with John was in a morning game against Selkirk on the morning of the Calcutta match at Murrayfield. Selkirk were a strong side that included the future Scottish and Lions Fly half John Rutherford. John was in the centre with colt Martin Calder. For the first half hour we were given the run around, but the 2 young centres kept tackling and we eventually got into the game and won at the end by 29-10 - both John and Martin learnt a lot that day

The 1975/76 season

Norman Wiseman was President, Stan Driver was Treasurer, Ted Laidlaw was both Fixture Sec. and Club Sec as well as our County Rep. Ollie Foreman was Club Chairman, Bernard Dick in charge of House, Bill Charlton Club Coach, Ken Fraser was Team Sec., John Leithead was Bar Chairman and David Turnbull in charge of Selection with Ray Lee in charge of the Colts. We had a large Ladies Section and Brian Lawrence was Chairman of a thriving Squash Section.

The New Clubhouse was officially opened in January – but at the last minute the game against the Yorkshire Luddites was cancelled.

The 1st XV captained by David Pringle played 33 games and won 21 – Mike Stoney played every game – Brian Garnett, John Leithead, Chris Ferguson, Bill Hewitt and Ken Fraser played 25 games or more and colt Martin Calder played 24 with schoolboy Colin Green playing 15 games and scoring 71 points.

We were a good seven a side team and got to the Final of the Northern Sevens losing to Huddersfield, we won the Penrith Sevens on a Sunday having played Clarkston on the Saturday and stayed overnight to travel to Penrith on our way home, and at the end of the season we won the Northumberland County Sevens which were played at Mitford Road.

The Reivers were captained by John Snowdon and got to their County Final against a strong Northern Wanderers - they drew 9 all after extra time at the County Ground only to lose the replay at Ashington later.

The Stags captained by "old John Elliott" won their County Cup beating Northern Panthers by 7-6 with "Wittonstone Will" kicking the winning penalty – 20 years after he had played in our first ever Senior Cup final in 1958.

Ian Pringle, David Pringle and Brian Keenlyside played for the County as did Alan McMillan. Alan was also on the bench for the North East of England against Australia.

Richard Thornton, Richard Mair and John Robson (no relation to the Wittonstone or Whalton Robsons) played for the County Under 21 XV.

Martin Calder played for England Colts against Wales and schoolboy Colin Green played for the North of England Schoolboys against Japan.