

Member Autobiography...Junior Vice-President - Duncan Hutton
Club Captain for 2 Seasons 1999-2001, Club County Representative from 2019
(1st XV Caps – 400. 1st Team Player of The Season 1999-00, 2002-03)

EDUCATION;

Rothbury First School, Dr Tomlinsons Church of England Special Agreement Middle School, KEVI Morpeth, Ashington Tech, New College Durham, The City and Guilds

EMPLOYMENT;

Northumberland County Council – County Treasurer’s Department
HMP Northumberland

FAVOURITE BAND/S;

I like all music which displays a bit of talent. I can’t really be bothered with the way that the bands are “created” by music producers nowadays. I don’t really get the modern beat stuff, there’s far too many new music genres nowadays, and while some jazz can be so chilled, contemporary jazz can just be too much self-absorbed!

I used to be a proper rocker when I was younger - Iron Maiden, Black Sabbath, Rainbow, AC/DC – now I’ve settled into folk/punk with the Pogues and the Men they Couldn’t Hang being my favourites.

BEST MUSICAL EVENT/S ATTENDED;

I’ve been to plenty of massive events, stadia, and festivals, but I really like the pokey little intimate venues. The Mayfair was great, but my favourite was always the Riverside. We had a carload would come into town at least once a week to see a band. A couple of pints in the Barley Mow and supper at Gosforth Chop Suey House on the way home.

Quireboys at the Mayfair - I drove there on the old A1 and drove home on the “new” Stannington Bypass, later to be referred to as the murder mile.

As for favourites, I’ve seen the Pogues everywhere from the Mayfair to headlining a festival, always a fantastic gig. The transition of Shane MacGowan from a boy to the point where he simply couldn’t speak. Spider Stacey, the whistle player would do all the chat, but Shane still beat out the songs and ballads absolutely word perfect. The Stones at St James’ Park in 1990 on the Urban Jungle tour were great, Alice Cooper puts on a good show and The Georgia Satellites at the Mayfair c1990 was a favourite. I saw everyone I wanted to see except Thin Lizzy, a blend of solid rock and real musical talent - Phil Lynott had his rock star death just too quickly for me.

The first time I saw the Men they Couldn’t hang was amazing – Flower Bed (Andrew Richardson non-rugby player pal from Rothbury) and I down from Rothbury to the Riverside, some good, loud, Irish fighting music blasting and then the crowd started tearing their shirts off and punching each other! We didn’t know quite what to do but, by the second gig, we were right in amongst it. It’s funny now to see the balding and greying chaps trying to get a mosh pool started at the Tyne Bank Brewery when they play!

FAVOURITE FILM/S;

I tend not to go to the cinema; I generally fall asleep - 3D glasses send me straight off and I'm not into the current stream of superhero films. Suzi, Finlay, and I just stared at each other coming out of "The Joker." That wasn't what we expected!

You can't go far wrong with Tom Hanks or Denzel Washington. I often put Saving Private Ryan on, just for the first ten minutes to see the beach landing scene, then find myself bubbling at the fields of war graves two hours later.

I still like Highlander, an old film now, but it is filled with some superb quotes about the underdog beating adversity. It's sequel, however, was possibly the single biggest bag of sh**e to emerge from West California!

IF YOU WEREN'T A BACK 5 FORWARD WHAT POSITION WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE PLAYED;

I enjoyed the blind side, tackling and taking ball on suited me just fine. I enjoyed playing number 8, there were limited back row moves in those days. The good number 8s earn their salt when the scrummage is going backwards. I've played at scrum half a few times but it's a completely different mindset, I was always in the wrong place it didn't go well. And I was always a wannabe stand-off. A highpoint was a drop goal in an over v under 30s game until Jacko told me just how much time he had to give me.

MOST DIFFICULT OPPONENT/S ENCOUNTERED;

Tricky opponents? All of 'em but some are easier to figure out than others. Alan Tomes of Gateshead Fell, Hawick, Scotland, and Lions was gnarly and awkward. I had some good run-ins with Steve Bainbridge of Newcastle Gosforth, Blaydon, England, and Lions, when his temperament was questionable, and my goal was to wind him up so that he would react. Alan Brown played for several of the clubs around Teesside - he was an abrasive sort of a chap who gave the impression he would be prepared to do anything to win. I don't remember ever being mugged off quite as much as by Colin Stephens, an ex-Wales stand-off who played at Morpeth for Huddersfield in approx. 2000. He just danced around players and me and the rest of Morpeth's back row never got near him.

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

Favourite player? Loads of them, Cliché, but it is a fifteen-man game and I know there are a lot of jobs on the field that I could never do.

Ian Pledger was my first 1st XV Captain, unbelievably competitive in everything he does and a massive promoter of positive mental attitude.

The late Paul Aynsley was just old school hard - strong and aggressive on the pitch and a gentleman off it. Tragically he died much too young.

Beetle Bailey was such a mild-mannered chap but an absolute machine on the open side - I remember my shock and disbelief as he was getting older and he missed the occasional tackle.

I still tell Jonny Dungait that he won us the league with a tackle at Wheatley Hills destroying a two on one walk in try. He played on the less glamorous wing but read the game expertly and came off his wing so well to change games with his destructive tackling. In the 1998 County Cup Final JD just kept tackling the massive Tongan Epi Taione completely out of the game.

I also had a spell playing with Toby Flood - he was just special from the moment you saw him - I found it unbelievable the way he could continue running and recover from a tackle unless he was absolutely drilled into the ground.

The player who I found to be most helpful as a young pup breaking into the 1st XV was Alan Old - he could see that I was mad keen and took me under his wing. Lots of guidance and knowledge during the game, he could see where to play the game and how to beat sides. A superb mentor for a youth hitting senior rugby, Oldy, having had a reasonably successful playing career...and he was eventually awarded a Snitter cap in the twilight of his career.

I must also mention the backrow that I enjoyed playing in most due to its balance – I played 6, Gus Nelless played 7 and Ben Dale at 8 – below is a photo of us in March 2016 at Stephen Ranks 50th at Rothbury.



BEST MORPETH RUGBY MATCH/MATCHES;

The Club's first Senior County Cup win in 1998 was a massive event in the history of Morpeth RFC - we were written off by the press and by so many people across the County. Never quite considered as real competitors at that level against a near County XV of Tynedale. We as a team, however, were confident. We had been drilled and organised over the previous seasons by Duncan Madsen, Hindy, Greeny and the ever-present Billy and we had a style of play which we could apply effectively. We had a good set of players with a good team spirit and we had belief in ourselves when, apparently, nobody else did. There was a bristle in the changing room that day. We went out and unquestionably bested Tynedale and they knew they had been, and it was very interesting to see how they all reacted to that. We had been promoted the previous season and this was the start of a good run in the Senior County Cup which to date we have now won 5 times. It was a special day for everyone involved.

Other games that stick in the mind are away to Bradford and Bingley 1998 – the pushover try game! I think that Bs considered themselves a flowing rugby side spreading the ball and running in tries to the delight of a solid fan base. It didn't work out like that. Morpeth scored four pushover tries which had all started outside the 22. The odd penalty and reset but we just ground their forwards down, starved their backs of ball and demoralised the spectators who were crying "boring, boring" from the terraces. And then Will Munro capped the game off when he dropped a goal from near the touchline. Mind, I have had particularly bad days at Bradford too!

Pontefract away 1996, as our playing style was developing at that time. Nobby, Richie and I punching up close in ball after close in ball, all hard yards. The game was a tight, torrid affair, as were so many games in Yorkshire, for the first hour but we'd ground them down and put on a few points in the last quarter. I remember one try which had come from one of these typically punchy forward drives and, after the score, we looked back up the pitch to see a scene of devastation of the beaten and battered Pontefract players sprawled in our wake. That game was capped off when one of those walking wounded Pontefract lads was being helped away up the touchline. We put in what seemed a massive clearing kick down the line which took out this poor, injured player with a sniper's accuracy. It's a terrible thing to gloat (the Welsh problem) but that act just summed up Pontefract's afternoon.

The best achievement I have been involved in was Morpeth's efforts to avoid relegation in 2004-05 season. We were dead and buried in the league into the New Year, points adrift and without hope. I remember a pint after training staring at the league table and our remaining fixtures. I was being realistic as I considered our last seven games, opposition and venue and felt that we could win six of those games. We would probably lose at league leaders Westoe but we were capable of winning the other six if we approached this period with a winners attitude, not defeatist. I gave a Henry V style rant to the boys at training, not to give up and play to win, and everyone stepped up to the mark. We won six of the last seven league games, between 19th of February and the 23rd of April, and staved off relegation.

HUTT'S REFEREEING TIME;

A few of us from the Club took the RFU Foundation Course in refereeing in 2006 when, late Club Member, Dave Routledge encouraged us to take the NRU funded course. I received the test results back on the day of Dave's funeral; he had docked me half a mark from a perfect score through sheer pedantry, so I would have had a few choice words for him but, this was the world of referees! When I stopped playing, there was a sudden and massive void, so I took the decision and started refereeing from March 2007. The criteria for my first match was "do you have a whistle?" I refereed Northern 3s v Consett 3s in a game without a single offside! That is the point that you realise just how much a ref must have an eye on. I like to think that I reffed in the spirit of the game, matches enjoyed by players but, maybe, not so much by the purist assessors.

I reached Level 7 with my first league match being Ashington v Ryton, a torrid affair. I was chatting to Bill Hewitt on the phone on my way to the match when he said, "don't worry, the players will decide the result." Ashington won the match with a penalty try deep into injury time! I was a go to ref for tours and social matches. I thoroughly enjoyed going out to the Northumberland and Durham Clubs where I had played, to meet up with old friends and rivals. I was a regular in the clubhouse after the game with the players discussing "our" match.

I refereed a Horden 3rds game where the Black brothers were playing - our games against Horden were always hard fought and rugby traditions were always upheld back in the Clubhouse after our battles - that's what rugby is all about!

I refereed until April 2017 but have had to give it up due to ongoing injuries. There are those who would say I could never run! I will always say that it is a great way to stay involved in the game and I would recommend any player to try refereeing. I, and all those involved in rugby, should give utmost respect to the referees. There is a small hardcore in Northumberland who devote a lot of time to improvement and development and in ensuring that all rugby events in Northumberland are well officiated by society referees.

HUTT'S 2 x MORPETH CLUB QUIZ QUESTIONS;

Q. Who were Border Parks opposition on the last game to be played on their original pitch before it was flooded to create Kielder reservoir?

A. Rothbury's first ever rugby XV – which were later called Snitter Barbarians.

Q. How many weddings have currently taken place on the 1st XV pitch?

A. One...Mr and Mrs Hutton in July 2018.

Club notes for Duncan Hutton and his 1st XV debut season 1988-89;

Born in February 1969 Duncan began his Morpeth career in the Colts under the eagle eye of Jimmy Pringle and Brian Keenleyside. His first game for the 1st XV was in 1988 on Sept. 3rd at Mitford Road against Penrith. We won the game 25-12. Paul Aynsley and Dick Dungait were late withdrawals from the side – probably due to farming – and Duncan came into the second row. The Morpeth XV that afternoon was;

A Atkinson, D Defty, P Morris, D Bray, D McCrae, A Brown, C Lishman, D Weatherburn, I Pledger, D Clark, D Hutton, I Ireland, W Farley, N Bailey, P Gordon. Duncan played 7 games that season – the rest at prop when Andy Clark, Dave Weatherburn and Paul Woodall were unavailable.

From the 1990 season until the end of the 2004 season Duncan was a regular 1st XV player and in 12 of those seasons, he played more than 20 games. His final game was on the 13th of Jan. 2007 at home to Durham City – we won 11-6 – this was Duncan's 400th game for the club's 1st XV. He joined a very small group of players who had played 400 games or more for the club's 1st XV – John Wilson, Bill Hewitt, and Ian Pringle – it is doubtful if any more will join that group.

Duncan represented the Northumberland Senior County side and gained his County cap in 2000 against Cheshire. He toured with the County in 1997 – with Gus Nelles when they went to the USA and then in 2000, he went to the Czech Republic with David Dickinson, Alan Keenleyside and Liam Casey who was then at Percy Park.

Duncan has captained the Club, is now our Representative on the County Committee and is now a Junior President of the Club.

In the early days when the club was on its travels if you said you were from Morpeth - everyone said that you must know Bob Scott, then it was the Pringles – now they say you must know "Hutt".

When he first started playing Duncan was a very strong abrasive player, hard as nails but with a tendency to be rather wild - you could never be sure what he would do. But over the years as he got older, he worked incredibly hard during training and on the field and ended up as a very mature knowledgeable player ending up as one of the best number 6 players the Club has ever known. He will be long remembered for his exploits on the field - and no one will ever forget his Captain's speech at the Annual Club Dinner in 1999 and President Bill Hewitt was sitting next to him!!!!

The 1988-89 Season

The 1988-89 season was the second season of Leagues – we played only 10 games including Rotherham, Blaydon and Novos.

David Pringle was President, Ken Fraser Hon. Sec., Bill Hewitt Fixture Sec., John Wright Hon. Treasurer, David Turnbull County Rep, Alan Woolhead in charge of Bar, Steven Forster in charge of Selection, David Brown ground, Mick Dungait in charge of Mini Rugby, old John Elliott in charge of Supporters, Harry Little in charge of Transport, Don McCleod in charge of Squash and Peter Gordon in charge of an Under 21 EWE SCHEME.

The Club Captain was Ian Pledger and Coach Bill Hewitt. The 1st XV played 39 games – Ian Pledger played 38 and another 9 players played 25 or more. We defeated a County Presidents XV 20-9 and Paul Aynsley did so well he played for the County that season and got his County cap, Chris Lishman and Bill Farley got their 1st XV ties. The Club played in 5 Sevens

Tournaments at Northern, Earlston, Headingley, Blyth and the Northumberland Sevens. We won at Blyth and the County Sevens were played at Morpeth. The Morpeth first seven won the Tournament and a Reivers seven won the Plate competition – it was a good day at Mitford Road.

The Reivers were captained by David Brown and won 23 of their 35 games – Paul Barrow was Club top try scorer with 20 tries and Colin Green top points scorer with 152 points.

The Stags were captained by Mike Hay and old John Elliott and including Ken Fraser, Gary Stephenson and played 31 games.

The 4th XV captained by Alan Patton and Bob Young played 23 games - it included John Wilson who began playing for the Club in the mid 1950's and the Ranters side including Brian Keenleyside and Dave Routledge played 15 games.

Iain Laidlaw joined Paul Aynsley on the Senior County side, Nick Robinson Paul Woodall and Ian Pledger played for the County B side, Dom Owens and Nick Robinson played for the County Under 21s while Duncan McCrae played for the Scotland Under 21s.

Finally, a Northumberland Centurions squad toured Leicestershire over the Easter weekend-coached by Bill Hewitt it included Ian Pledger and Noel Bailey.