

Member Profile – David Pringle

Club Captain for 3 Seasons 1973-74 to 1975-76, Club President 1988-90.

Club County Rep, County Player, County Selector, County President 2014-15.

(1st XV Caps – 332, County Caps – approx. 30, Carded as a non-travelling reserve for England, 1973, versus All Blacks, Wales, and Ireland)

Education

Tritlington C of E Primary School – Friends School.

Brookfield Wigton, where I was introduced to rugby and finally settled as a scrum half and represented Cumbria at Under 15 level playing against Northumberland, among others. Left school after O Levels in 1959.

Employment

Returned to work for parents on home farm; Peigh Hills. They also rented Bellion Farm at Netherwitton which became our residence after marriage in 1970. Became independent by splitting from family partnership and moved to South Healey Farm, Netherwitton. Retired to Longhorsley, due to ill health in 2002.

Favourite Music

Always enjoy Country and Western, The Carpenters and nothing too highbrow.

Favourite Films

Saw many good action films on “leave out” of boarding school.

The Guns of Naverone sticks in my mind.

If I were not a flanker

I suppose I have answered that by switching. Started as a scrum half and finished there.

Most difficult opponents

Two come to mind immediately – Andy Ripley (Rosslyn Park) and Dave Hoyland (Morley) – I have vivid memories of being swatted like a fly whilst trying to stop him scoring in the Northern Sevens. Phil Horrocks-Taylor and Mike Weston’s side steps were also troublesome.

Favourite Players (in the same team)

There were many as I was privileged to play in several invitation games which included – Phil Bennett, J.J. Williams, Bobby Windsor, and Tommy David (All Wales) and many other Internationals.

Roger Uttley was perhaps the most complete forward!

Here I must include all the successful squad from those heady days of 1975.

Best Morpeth RFC Matches

The RFU Pilkington Cup matches against London Irish, Bath, and Rosslyn Park. Several sevens competitions, though I have no recollection of the competition held at Close House due to being knocked out cold in the semi-final - thanks to a budding “Keen” international.

DP's 4 x Morpeth RFC Quiz Questions

Q. Who were we playing when I realised we had to improve our scrummaging?

A. Westoe.

Q. What was the Club's first scrummaging machine made from?

A. Old wooden goal posts and cross bars.

Q. Who made the first scrummaging machine for the Club?

A. Me!

Q. Whose idea was it to convert me to a backrow?

A. Bob Scott.

Club notes for David Pringle and his 1st XV debut season 1959-60:

David learnt his rugby in Cumberland where he represented the Cumberland Under 15s side at scrum half against Northumberland. After leaving school and returning to his parent's farm, he joined Morpeth Old Edwardians and played his first 1st XV game at scrum half in September 1959. He played 6 games that season for the 1st XV. The following season the Club found another very young scrum half in Ronnie Fowler. Ronnie played for the Club at scrum half for the next 4 seasons and David had couple of seasons on the second XV often playing at fly half as well as at scrum half.

At the beginning of the 1962/3 season Bob Scott our Northumberland County second row suggested that David try his hand at playing in the back row and at the end of that season in March 1963 David played his first game for the Clubs 1st XV in the back row. He was to play there regularly until the end of the 1976/77 season and for 13 seasons he always played 20 games or more. David played a few games in the 1977/78 season again at scrum half and after that stopped playing - though his final game was as a sub in the 1980/81 season – he finished having played 332 games – only 2 other Morpeth forwards have currently played more – his brother Ian and Duncan Hutton.

David was Captain of the Club for 3 seasons 1973/4 to 1975/6 when we had a particularly good side. In his first season as Captain, we only lost 6 games out of 35 – the first game and the last 2 – we had a spell of losing only one game in 21 and ended up with a Club record of 677 points. The following season was what has been called the "knock out season" when we defeated London Irish and Bath before losing in the RFU National Cup semi-final to Rosslyn Park. That season we only lost 7 games out of 33 and were unbeaten run of 18 games at one stage. In his final season as Captain, we lost 11 out of 34. In those 3 seasons we reached the County Senior Cup final in 1974 and had a very successful seven-a-side team – the 1973/4 season we were in finals at Northern, Penrith, Wigton and the Northumberland, in 1974/5 we were in the final again at Wigton while in the 1975/6 season we were again finalists at Northern, Penrith and eventually we won the Northumberland sevens.

David played in 3 Northumberland Senior Cup finals - in 1966, 1974 and 1976 and played in 3 Northumberland seven a side winning teams in 1964, 1965 and 1967.

David played his first Senior Northumberland game in March 1965 against the British Police – a Police side that included Brian Keenleyside. He played his next Senior County game against Edinburgh and District in September 1967 and the following month made his Championship debut at Carlisle against Cumberland and Westmorland – the Northumberland President was Morpeth's Ralph Appleby and Bill Hewitt and John Wilson also played. David played his next Championship game in the 1969/70 season and for the next 5 seasons he was a regular County player. He captained the County XV against Edinburgh on a couple of occasions and in the 1972/3 season he was carded as a non-travelling reserve for the England v All Blacks match as well as the 2 home Internationals at Twickenham. With his County Championship matches together with his games against Edinburgh and District and the British Police - David would have played more than 30 games for the Northumberland County Senior side.

Working on the farm David was obviously very strong and he was a fierce tackler and never stopped running on the field - he believed his job was always to be near the ball and he usually was. The Club over the years have had some very good open sides – old John Elliott in the early 1960's and Gus Nelless in the late 1990's – but David was something special. David played for the Club 1st XV for many years – he played for the Northumberland County side for several years – he Captained the Club and Captained the County and he has been President of Morpeth and President of the Northumberland Rugby Union – no one else has currently done this.

The 1959/60 season – the Club ran 4 side for the first time

John Hall was President and Dr McKellar Vice President. Ted Laidlaw was Hon Sec. and Hon Fixture Sec, Ralph Appleby was Hon. Treasurer, and our County Rep, Stan Driver was Assistant Hon Sec., Keith Cazaly was Hon. Assistant Sec, and in charge of the Bar and Entertainment Committee, Bob Douglas oversaw Grounds.

John L Robson was in his second season as Club Captain. The 1st XV won 20 of their 34 games and defeated the strong Bobby Robinson XV for the first time. The fixture list included games against Morpeth Grammar School and the Duke School while many of the side no longer exist – Vickers Armstrong, Newcastle City Police, Old Bedans, North Durham, Darlington GSOB. We played RAF Boulmer, Hawick Harlequins and travelled to Dalkeith on our way to the Calcutta International at Murrayfield.

A 4th XV was run for the first time – it included a lot of schoolboys together with some of the players who helped to form the Club in 1947 - old hands such as WOF Patterson, John Whaley, Alan Gordon, and Joe Routledge.

The Club Under 18 XV once again won the Northumberland Under 18 Cup final – the side included 2 schoolboy Internationals – Keith Lister and David T Learmonth – both went on to play Senior County Championship rugby.

At the end of the season the Northumberland County Sevens were played at Hexham. The Morpeth Grammar School side were due to play an exhibition match against Grangefield Grammar School from Durham between the semi-finals to give the finalists some rest. Unfortunately, the Morpeth 1st XV seven failed to turn up – probably on purpose – and the School seven took their place. The School seven got to the semi-final and narrowly lost to the eventual winners – Gosforth and lost the game against Grangefield!