

Member Profile – Duncan Nelles

Former Player, Reivers Captain for 4 Seasons 2001-02 to 2004-05

(1st XV Caps 103, Reivers Player of The Season 2003-04)

Member Profile – Angus Nelles

Former Player

(1st XV Caps 238, 1st XV Player of The Season 1995-96)



Duncan taking the ball on, with Gus behind, against Gateshead at home in 1998.

DUNC'S EDUCATION;

St Helens Longhorsley First School, Chantry Middle School, KEVI Morpeth, Kirkley Hall Agricultural College

GUS'S EDUCATION;

St Helens Longhorsley First School, Chantry Middle School, KEVI Morpeth, Kirkley Hall Agricultural College

DUNC'S EMPLOYMENT;

Farmer man and boy, furniture removals for a while in Australia. Also worked in an abattoir for a while in Oz.

DUNC'S FAVOURITE PART OF JOB;

Every day is different in farming and I have always liked working with the livestock the most. I have got quite a few working dogs, when they are going well it is a great job to do. I am a little bit of a closet tree hugger for a farmer so like doing the environmental side of things as well.

GUS'S EMPLOYMENT;

Agriculture.

GUS'S FAVOURITE PART OF JOB;

The responsibility that goes with producing food.

DUNC'S FAVOURITE BAND/S;

The first band I really got into was Motley Crue, Guns and Roses and Motorhead would be up there. Seeing Jimmy Paige playing in a pub band in Hampshire was a bit surreal.

DUNC'S BEST MUSICAL EVENT/S ATTENDED;

For about 10 years from been about 17 going to gigs was like a second career. Faith No More at the Riverside was up there, the Red Hot Chilli Peppers and the Quireboys there were great too. Guns and Roses at the City Hall was brilliant, they had just started and could only sell the bottom tier. I always liked the smaller venues, though I am in the Paradise City video in the crowd somewhere at Donnington.

GUS'S FAVOURITE BAND/S;

Guns and Roses, ACDC, Kiss and Jethro Tull

But favourite two songs are –Werewolves Of London by Warran Zevon and As Good As I Once Was by Toby Keith

GUS'S BEST MUSICAL EVENT/S ATTENDED;

Split Enz – Auckland 1993

DUNC'S FAVOURITE FILM/S;

No Country for Old Men, Where Eagles Dare, The Usual Suspects, The Outlaw Josey Wales

GUS'S FAVOURITE FILM/S;

Dumb and Dumber, Dumb and Dumber To, Step Brothers and Grimsby

DUNC'S RUGBY JOURNEY;

I always played football through school and college. It was the 1991 World Cup got me interested. Still two of my favourite players are from that era, Phillipe Sella, and Tim Horan. Both very gifted, skilful players but tough as teak with it. At the time I thought I really needed a reason to get off the farm as my only pass time was the pub...

I did know a couple of lads playing for Morpeth, so Gus and I thought we would give it a go. Over the next few years, I got to be a bit of an anorak about rugby, trying to take on board as much as possible from coaches and players. I do not know if it is a good or bad thing, but I hated losing more than I loved winning. I have been very lucky to play mostly in sides that were quite competitive. I must mention Ian Blakey who had a huge influence on the Reivers as Manager during a successful spell for the side, but if I started listing all the people who have helped or influenced me, I probably would not stop but the friends that I made in rugby are still my friends now and Morpeth RFC is still one of my favourite places on the planet!

GUS'S RUGBY JOURNEY;

I did not play much rugby till I was 21, I played a few games at school and a game at colts none were very good - football was my sport.

First time I thought I might like it was a game for Kirkley Hall against Morpeth Farmers in 1991, I played full back and had no idea what I was doing but liked running into people!

My brother Dunc suggested we give rugby a go in 1992, so I played a few games up to Christmas and then went travelling. I didn't start any real rugby until 1993, playing in Bob Youngs team. This team was intended to be a mix of young up and coming players with a selection of older guys to bring us on, it was a great team to play in and Bob Young had a massive part to play in me loving my rugby for the next 20 years - he was the first person to play me at number 7.

DUNC - IF YOU WEREN'T CENTRE/WINGER WHAT POSITION WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE PLAYED;

I've a feeling I might have enjoyed hooker in a sick sort of way. I played scrum half on a few occasions and I think that would have been great to have had a regular go at. Morpeth have been blessed with a load of great scrum halves in my time, they always feel like the heartbeat of a team.

GUS - IF YOU WEREN'T AN OPENSIDE WHAT POSITION WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE PLAYED;

Scrum half (always wanted to be just like Jacko!).

DUNC'S MOST DIFFICULT OPPONENT/S ENCOUNTERED;

I do not know his name but there was a Halifax winger that made a chump of me from minute one when we played down there - small with a big box of tricks, I just could not get a hold of him.

John Fletcher was a hell of a player for Tynedale as well.

Blaydon are my bogie team, and it hurts.

GUS'S MOST DIFFICULT OPPONENT/S ENCOUNTERED

Always Tynedale, loved playing them - they were always fast and well drilled with James Ponton and Simon Clayton-Hibbott to the fore.

E.g., when we won the Cup in 98 Hibby was hurt badly in the game but would not come off - most other players would have come off!

DUNC'S BEST PLAYER TO HAVE PLAYED WITH;

A bit naff but probably my brother Gus. He played openside in an outstanding pack in the mid 90's to early 2000's, a real blend of craft and proper hard boys.

As backs Chris Lishman and Paul Mooney were on a different level, to me certainly.

GUS'S BEST PLAYER TO HAVE PLAYED WITH;

Nobby Clark.



Gus pictured here, at Morpeth 1998, with Nobby Clark and obviously not liking Nobbys advice of “listen I’ve grown up with Hutt and if you avoid nights out with him you will be doing yourself a favour...”.

Some familiar faces in the background including Alan Old.

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

The Reivers side that I was captain of was such a privilege to play in. Full of players that would slot in and out of the first team as required, so much experience. The Country Cousins, Steve Rank, Gary Stephenson, and Jacko made being a Captain easy. Some good young lads came through in that team as well – e.g., Tony Moody, Liam Allen, Peter Cole, Rory Morrison, some of them still wheeling themselves out so I am not that old. I did not start playing rugby until I was 22 so I really had to soak up the advice quickly, Bob Young ran a development side with Brian Keenleyside when I started, Bob was great and kept the fun in what was a good side, winning most of our games with a great style of rugby. Brian? Just a legend.

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

Hutt and Ben Dale - can’t and won’t choose, both equally as special!

DUNC’S BEST MORPETH RUGBY MATCH/MATCHES;

A lot, winning finals with the Reivers will always be up there.

Scoring a hat-trick on my way to my 1st XV tie was special – in my 21st game, of the season, we beat Durham City 61-5 in a non-league game at home - I came close to 25 games a few times and just fell short - it was more of a relief, I think.

The sustained effort to avoid relegation in the 2004-05 season, with the 1st XV, was a real achievement.

The one time I captained the 1st team at Alnwick, March 2005, to a win in the county cup was a memorable one as well.



Duncan receiving the County Senior Shield in 2004, at Novos, after overcoming Alnwick 11-5.

GUS'S BEST MORPETH RUGBY MATCH/MATCHES;

Tynedale 98 – Cup Final – an epic! Jonny Dungait was awesome and a memorable coaching team.

DUNC'S BEST RUGBY MOMENTS;

Winning promotion, with the 1st XV, for the first time in 1997 was great but a bit of a relief as well as we had nearly cocked it up a couple of times.

Winning the Cup with the Reivers in 2003 beating Berwick at Ashington - the lads on that photo just made up a great Reivers team who all played and supported the 1st XV for several seasons.

GUS'S BEST RUGBY MOMENTS;

Chris Lish's Stag Do 95 Amsterdam 7's – the Sunday "dead-rubber" game - Staff playing a game of 7's without moving from an area squared, the only try scored was a quick tap penalty taken by the ref who put Keith Dungait over in the corner.

Hutt impaling himself on a Vosene bottle, after training, in the team bath...

Playing a game for Northumberland against the gentlemen of Aspen on a tour in America- just a weird lack of air!

Playing for Snitter was always special – however the game on our field in front of the Anglers Arms in 1998 was memorable - a bath in the river, Dean Ryan playing, and beers after in our local.

And any time I am out with Hutt!! We seem to gravitate towards each other the more drink we have...

DUNC'S BEST TRIPS;

Always loved the return bus trip from Yorkshire – if we had won!

Paddlers Stag Do in 1996 - a pub crawl on bikes across a massive lump of Northumbrian wilderness, still a mystery how everyone survived - from Pledgers cooking to start with! Nobby Clark and I shared our Stag Do in Edinburgh, in 1997, it was great fun and the fact that I got home relatively unscathed was a bonus and it was also memorable for bumping in to young actor Sean Maguire, in an Irish Bar in The Grassmarket, where Hutt and Staff were having a good chat to him in the w/c's – it just looked threatening and wrong on so many levels...but everyone was fine and they were just having a good craic in the toilets – as you do!

The Snitter Barbarians trips to Border Park, hosting the return fixture on one of our cow pastures was brilliant as well.

Love the Drunken Haz Been trips.

GUS'S BEST TRIPS;

Amsterdam 95.

The NobNel Stag Do in Edinburgh 97.

County tour to America 97 and rooming with Dave Guthrie...

Benidorm 98.

John Goodfellow's Stag Do in Edinburgh 99 for many reasons...

All the Drunken Haz Been trips.

Hutt, Andy Walton (former County Physio) and I went to the Wales v Australia game at Cardiff in the 2015 World Cup – we had a great weekend just spoilt by Hutt and Andy not paying attention in the airport on the way home, so we missed the return flight and had to hire a car to make it home...it was a great bonding journey...

DUNC'S 2 x MORPETH CLUB QUIZ QUESTIONS;

Q. Who won the first Sam Duckworth Reivers Player of The Season Cup 1995-96?

A. Gary Stephenson.

Q. Who has currently won the Reivers Player of The Season most?

A. John Walton – 3 times – 2001-02, 2002-03, 2008-09.

GUS'S 3 x MORPETH CLUB QUIZ QUESTIONS;

Q. Who won the Young Player of The Season 2000-01?

A. Paul Mooney.

Q. Who was the first Northumbrian to Captain a male England rugby team?

A. Paul Mooney – England Clubs Under 18s in 2001.

Q. Who is currently the only player to win the Young Player of The Season twice?

A. Will Munro – 1993-94 & 1994-95.

Club notes for Duncan Nelles and his 1st XV debut season 1994-95

Duncan and his brother Gus are the sons of the late Henry who played for the Club at the end of the 1950's until 1966. Henry was a second XV scrum half who played 3 games for the 1st XV and went on tour with the Club to the Isle of Man in Easter 1966 – where we played on Good Friday, Easter Saturday, and Easter Monday. On the Sunday there was the Isle of Man Sevens competition and Morpeth entered 2 sides – a young team and an old team who met in the semi-final – happily, the young team won but narrowly lost in the final. Henry was a very good all-round sportsman and excelled at cricket where he caught everything with his huge hands! Henry sadly never played any rugby after 1966 due to increasing commitments on the family farm.

Duncan began playing for Bob Young's Under 21 XV – Stags - that also included some older hands such as Brian Keenleyside.

Duncan's first appearance for the 1st XV was as a substitute for the injured Stu Kersten in a game at Blaydon in Feb. 1995. He made his first start for the 1st XV a month later at Drifffield at full back – we lost 11-23 – the Morpeth XV was –

D Nelles, W McTurk, J Metcalfe, I Davies, S Kersten, T Parlett, N Phillips, R Morrison, J Goodfellow, D Clark, D Hutton, R Young, J Price, A Nelles, B Dale.

The following week he was once again selected to play against Berwick in the County Cup but was unfortunately injured during the game. Duncan played a couple of games for the 1st XV the following season and then in 1996/7 he became a regular 1st XV player. He gained his 1st XV tie in the 1998/99 season. Duncan played his final 1st XV game in the 2004/5 season having played altogether 103 games.

Duncan captained the Reivers for 4 seasons between 2001/2 -2004/5 in what was a particularly successful period. In his first season as Captain, they only lost 6 out of their 29 games. In the 2002/3 season they did the “double” – winning the Northumberland Senior Shield beating Berwick 17-9 at Ashington and winning the Northumberland County Second XV League. The following season they retained the Northumberland Senior Shield beating Alnwick by 11-5 at Novos and finished second in the League behind Westoe. In his 4 years as captain the Reivers only lost a handful of games.

While he was Captain of the Reivers Duncan occasionally played for the 1st XV – on one occasion captaining the Club. On Wed, March 30th in 2005 Duncan captained the Club in a Senior Cup match under the lights at Alnwick - we won 17-3. The Morpeth XV that evening was –

D Wall, M Jinks, J Cunningham, D Nelles, A Rogers, N Harper, C Reynolds, S Ramsay, C Pringle, D Dickinson, J Forsythe, D Hutton, Adam Hall, J Younger, J Walton.

Duncan finished up with a 100% record as Captain of the 1st XV.

The 1994-95 season – we were running 5 sides

Richard Hall was Club President, Ken Fraser Hon Sec., Bill Hewitt Fixture Sec., John Wright Treasurer, Dave Metcalfe 1st XV Team Manager, Ian Pringle Chairman of Selectors, David Pringle Chairman of Rugby, Michael Parrish in charge of Bar, David Turnbull County Rep., Sam Duckworth in charge of Sponsorship, Peter Forsythe in charge of Mini Rugby, Les Cassie in charge of the Colts – the Club coaches were Colin Green, Duncan Madsen, and Bill Hewitt.

The Reivers were captained by Ian Gray with Dave Chattaway vice-captain, the 3rd XV were captained by Phil Gregory, the Under 21 XV – the Stags by Bob Young, the Colts captain was Will Munro.

The 1st XV were captained by Richie Young in his first season of 4 as Club Captain. The Club were in North East Division 1 and won 6 of their 12 games – Blaydon were promoted, and Selby relegated – once again it was a Yorkshire dominated league with only Morpeth and Gateshead Fell from the local area. North East Division 1 was level 6.

Bath won National 1, Saracens National 2, Exeter National 3, and Rotherham National 4. Tynedale, Stockton and Durham City were in North Division 1 and Alnwick, Middlesbrough, Hartlepool Rovers, Northern were in North Division 2.

Below us – Ashington won North East 2, Percy Park won Durham and Northumberland 1 while Billingham were near the bottom of Durham and Northumberland 2 with Seghill and Seaton Carew.

The 1st XV won only 15 of their 37 games – Richie Young played 35, Stu Kersten gained his tie with 34, Duncan Hutton played 33 and Andy Clark 31. Neil Phillips was top try scorer with only 14 and Tony Parlett top points scorer with only 84 points.

John Goodfellow played his first County Championship game against Cumbria while Duncan Clark played all County Championship games including the Final at Twickenham. Duncan Hutton played for the County B side and he and Ben Dale were in the Senior County Squad. Luke Ellis played for the County Under 21s and Will Munro, Andy Hayton and Nick Mather played for the County Colts. Will Munro also played for the Scottish Exiles and was our Young Player of the Season, Will McTurk was the club Top Try Scorer while the George Brown Trophy for work both on and off the field was presented to - George Brown.

[Club notes for Angus Nelles and his 1st XV debut season 1993-94](#)

Gus started playing rugby later than most. He began playing in Bob Youngs Under 21 XV – Stags (made up of mainly Under 21s, a few Under 25s and a couple of old heads), in 1993-94 season – this team were playing clubs third XV's. He quickly made a huge impression on everyone and at the end of that season made his 1st XV in March 1994.

*The first game he played was 26th March 1994 at Pontefract we lost 5-15. The Morpeth XV was –
W Munro, J Dungait, M Speake, S Prescott, R Mather, A Brown, N Phillips, A Clark, M Robson, D Clark, R Young, I Ireland, M Lishman, G Nelles, B Dale.*

The following week he played against Rockcliff and scored 2 tries and never looked back. He became a regular 1st XV player in the 1994-95 season. The next season, 1995-96, he played 31 games, gained his 1st XV tie, and was awarded the first 1st XV Player of the Season and the next year he was playing for the Northumberland Senior County side in the Championship and in June 1997 toured with the County side in the USA – a squad that included Duncan Hutton.

Between 1994 and 2005 Gus was a regular 1st XV player in what became a formidable backrow of Gus, Duncan, and Ben Dale – he played in the first Morpeth XV that won the Northumberland Senior Cup in our 50th Anniversary year – defeating the very strong Tynedale side.

After 2005 Gus had a bit of disruption with injuries but continued to play and made himself available to the 1st XV when needed – he played his last 1st XV game in 2012 – his 238th game. Gus made a huge contribution to the playing side of the Club for more than a decade. You always knew what you would get from Gus on the field - 100% - a huge work rate – but he was an honest player who was always prepared to admit when he had made a mistake – not that he made many. He was without doubt the closest we ever had to a back-row player like David Pringle – which is a huge compliment.

1993-94 Season – we ran 5 senior sides plus the Colts

President George Brown, Hon Sec. Ken Fraser, Hon Fixture Sec. Bill Hewitt, Hon Treasurer John Wright, County Rep. David Turnbull, Chairman of Rugby David Pringle, Chairman of Selection Ian Pringle, Junior Colts Mick Dungait, Junior Rugby Barry Richardson, Mini Rugby Peter Forsythe, Bar Michael Parrish, Ground David Brown, Sponsorship Sam Duckworth, Transport Harry Little, Subscriptions Dave Metcalfe.

Will Munro was Captain of the Colts, who coached by Martin Calder won the Senior Colts County Sevens. Seven players played for the County Colts – Paul Jackson, Richard Mather, Will Munro, Nick Redpath, Keith Dungait, Andrew Hayton, and David Cassie.

The 3rd XV were captained by Phil Gregory and managed by Tom Duckworth. Under 21 XV – Stags - captained by Bob Young with Bill McClement manager. Reivers captained by Ian Gray with Sam Duckworth manager. The 1st XV were captained by Mick Lishman with Dave Metcalfe the manager.

The 1st XV began the season playing against an International XV for the Yellow Brick Road Charity. We were in North East Division One and only played 12 games - and had a poor season. Iain Laidlaw missed the whole season; Chris Lishman was injured early on and Duncan Hutton was injured in the County game against Yorkshire at Hull Ionians - both only played 5 games. Just like now it was very much a Yorkshire league - Driffield, Keighley, Thornensians, Selby, Roundhegians, Pontefract and Redcar. Old Novos were the only local side. We won only 3 League games and had to play Novos last – and to stay up we could not afford to lose, Mark Speake, who was from New Zealand, played all season and was on holiday in Norway before he returned home. Mark travelled back from Norway to play – we drew the match and stayed up and immediately after the game Mark went to Newcastle Airport and then returned home to New Zealand.

The 1st XV won 18 of their 34 games and only 3 of their 12 league games. Mick Lishman, Richie Young and Andy Clark played 30 games, while Mark Speake, Neil Phillips, John Dungait played 27.

It was the last season that Paul Fourie played.

Duncan Clark and Duncan Hutton played for the Senior County, Mickey Robson and John Goodfellow played for the County B side, Ed Bennison captained the County Under 21s that included Will Munro, Richard Mather, John Goodfellow and Nick Redpath.

Mickey Dungait played for the Scottish Exiles Under 21s and his brother Keith played for the Scottish Exiles Under 19s.

Will Munro was Young Player of The Season and Will McTurk Top Try Scorer.