

Hartley Brockbank Elliott



Born 17th February 1908 Bishopswearmouth, Sunderland. Died 20th July 2000 in Hospital, Sunderland

He attended Tonstall School before becoming a boarder at Sedbergh School and then attended Kings College Newcastle which was at that time part of Durham University.

During his professional career he was associated with work involved at educational establishments in Durham City before becoming the Bursar at Bow School. During this time, he also had a close association with Durham University and the organisation of their teams and this association was to continue for many years.

As a player he played outside half for Sunderland RFC in a successful period during that Clubs history in the mid and late twenties.

In 1945 he joined the County Committee and went on to become President of DCRFU in 1962 – 63. During his tenure of office, he was also to serve on the coaching, schools, colts and selection committees with a particular interest in schoolboy rugby. The first of the annual coaching courses which he organised for schoolboys, coaches and referees were seen in 1950 and these were to gain a national reputation. Amongst those attending were Carwyn James, Mike Weston and John Dee. The former would go onto coach the British Lions in 1971 and the latter two would play for the Lions. Elliott worked closely with Bean in developing the courses for referees. The Rugby Correspondent from the Manchester Guardian attended one of the Durham Field Instructional Courses at Ashbrooke in the mid 1950s and wrote about in glowing terms admiring the courses simplicity 'to show a referee how to referee by showing him.' The process involved referee instructors, referees and players' undertaking a range of drill and practices in a variety of scenarios which were game related. This type of training was to be closely associated with the Durham Referees Society for another 30 years.

He was also to create one of those touring sides which began to appear across the country at this point in time – based on Sunderland RFC, The Dolphins (1947), which would play against clubs both within and outside the County to mark special occasions.

Like his friend and mentor Alan Bean he entered the field of refereeing. He was to serve for 8 years on the County Championship Panel and his first steps towards international status began in 1953 when he officiated the Devon and Cornwall match with The All Blacks at Camborne. Later in that season he ran the line in the England v New Zealand game at Twickenham. His first international appointment was France 15 v Scotland 0 on 8/1/1955 at the Colombes Stadium in Paris. Later that year on 4/4/1955 he refereed France 24 v Italy 0 in Grenoble for which the French awarded

caps. His final international match was Ireland 14 v Scotland 10 on 25/2/1956 at Lansdowne Road Dublin.

Robin Auld, a younger friend of Hartley's has ensured that his achievements as a referee and in the wider realms of rugby have been preserved in an archive which resides in the wider information relating to Sunderland RFC. Auld was to capture the essence of Hartley Elliott in an extraordinary obituary where he noted that the fierce 'amateur' was extremely 'professional' in everything he did.