

**Chris Kelly**

**Doctor of Civil Law**

**Durham Cathedral 10 January 2020**

Chris Kelly came up to Durham, to Hatfield College, in October 1973 to study Economics and Economic History, followed by a PGCE, having fallen in love with the city at first sight of the cathedral. He

year during which Durham finally broke into the exclusive Oxbridge league, playing the first ever game against Oxford in 1975, which ended in 9-9 draw only after a very last minute try by Oxford. At this time, Chris also played for the combined English Universities team. He went on to play for Harlequins whilst pursuing a career as an economics teacher as well as a rugby coach, firstly in secondary schools and then moving to work with younger boys in prep schools where he found his real niche with enthusiastic, energetic and responsive, younger children.

Despite being immensely proud to have been President of the Rugby Football Union, Chris's greatest love and contribution has been to the development of grass roots rugby, particularly among young people. Early on in his career, he gained the RFU's top coaching award and coached the London and South East Division 18 Group, also becoming National Selector for the English Rugby Football Schools' Union. He has served on multiple committees both in the southeast and nationally in support of youth rugby, such as recent roles at the RFU on the Schools and Youth Governance Committee, the Education Development Committee, and the U16 Transition and Strategic Review Groups, as well as being the RFU Representative on the Student Rugby Football Union. Chris also chaired the RFU Player Development Committee for 10 years, including a major role in the development of rugby academies, notably ensuring that all academies have Education Officers, and that young players continue to access broader education and qualifications whatever their professional potential. He has also served on the Club England Committee, the Community Rugby Standing Committee, and the Community Game Board. Chris is especially proud of the RFU's All Schools programme, which provided £1 million to support teachers and coaches to develop rugby in 750 schools where the game was not played before. Reflecting Chris's own philosophy, feedback highlights the positive impact of the programme on children's broader behaviour, and how team playing has helped to develop their confidence.

This is but one example among many of how Chris has used rugby to support the development of young people, about which he is passionate. As he says, it could have been another sport, or music or theatre. Somehow rugby grabbed him and through it he has had enormous opportunities, not just for himself directly, but to engage young

and play hard in support of the team outcome, along the way developing self-esteem, self-direction, respect for the referee and fair play, appreciation of mutual dependence. In Chris's own words, 'Rugby has provided me with a vehicle for life, which really started on the playing fields in Durham'. Talking with others from the rugby world, it is clear that he is held in the highest esteem for his service and commitment to developing the world surrounding a game that many love both to play and to watch, and especially for the impact he has had on the lives of young people.

Despite the demands of his teaching career and national rugby roles, Chris has maintained his links with Durham University over many years. For the past 8 years, he