

APPRECIATION

Archie Scott, cricketer. Born: 26 January 1918. Died: 1 November 2019, aged 101.

Scotland's oldest cricketer – and the UK's oldest candidate to pass the advanced driving test – died on 1 November, aged 101 and nine months.

Archie Scott was a gunner in the Second World War and worked for almost half a century in the whisky industry (legally and illegally, distilling his own illicit Scotch at the age of 92). He bagged a last Munro at the age of 85. Never far from his thoughts were his deepest loves of family, fishing, rugby and cricket.

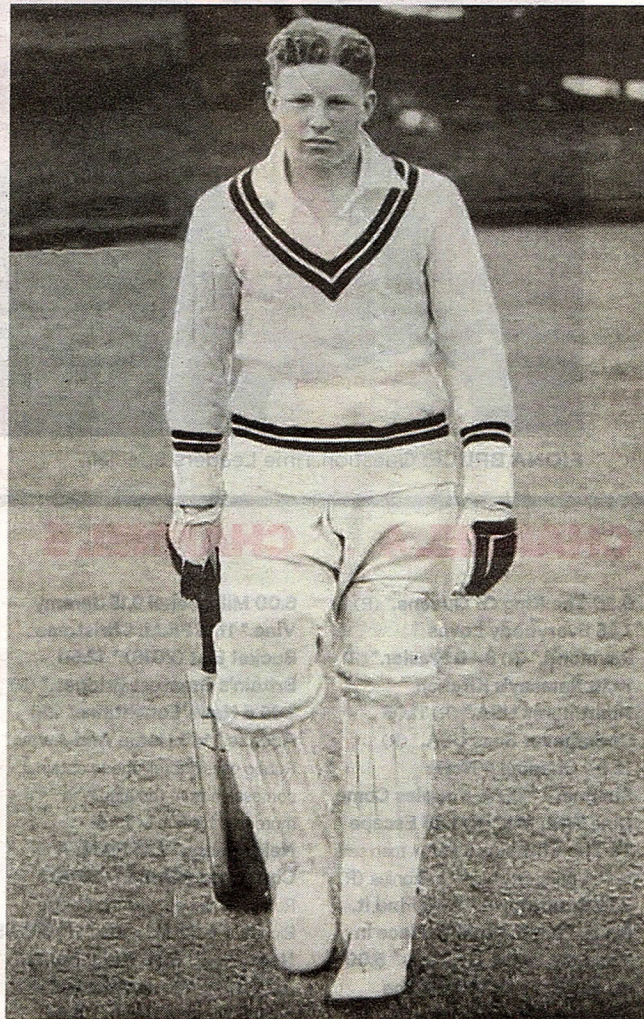
Despite his first name being Andrew, he was always known as Archie. Born in Liberton, Edinburgh in 1918, both he and his older brother Jock were introduced to the rugby ball at an early age. Their father was the legendary JMB Scott who earned 21 caps for Scotland between 1907 and 1913 – at a time when it was possible to gain only five each season – and went on to become an international referee, famously requiring a police escort from a match in Paris after an unpopular decision.

On their mother's side was Uncle Fred, FH Turner, who frequently played alongside JMB, won 15 caps and captained Scotland five times, including the last Calcutta Cup match before the First World War.

After an early education at Edinburgh Academy, Archie went to Sedburgh School in the wild beauty of Yorkshire. These times ranked amongst the happiest of his life – at least, those spent outside the classroom – filled with cricket and rugby.

He excelled with the bat as top scorer of the year and was an exceptional fielder. Fast and nippy on the rugby pitch, he played scrum-half or centre with equal ease and was selected for Scottish Schoolboys. Determined to captain the 1st XV at Sedburgh he stayed on an extra term, only to find the previous season's captain had changed his mind and decided to stay on too.

After school he worked as a trainee distillery manager for Scottish Malt Distillers (now Diageo) but the war intervened. (SMD generously continued to pay his £8 per month salary throughout



his war service as a gunner.) He joined the Royal Artillery and after one abortive foray into France which resulted in a last-minute evacuation from St Malo, he crossed the Channel again on D-Day+17.

He took part in 11 named battles and narrowly escaped the shrapnel of a shell which killed two companions in the turret of a Sherman tank. He also once looked down to find his heel on the hinge of a mine.

His fiercest and bloodiest encounters with the Germans took place beyond the Rhine in the Reichswald.

His war ended in Bremen, playing rugby for the British Army of the Rhine. Back in Scotland he continued his training as assistant manager at Aberfeldy, which afforded him time to play rugby

for Edinburgh Wanderers and cricket for The Grange. One evening in 1946 he was rung up by a man he knew to be secretary of the Scottish Wayfarers Club which was preparing a cricket tour of Ireland. He'd been selected, was he free to play? Unwilling to ask his employer for so much time off, he declined.

At lunch the next day he picked up the Evening News which had a 'Stop Press' report on the Scottish XI chosen to play Ireland in Cork – and there was his name.

Unaware that the previous evening's caller was secretary of both the Wayfarers and the Scottish Cricket Union, he now knew he'd turned down his first chance at a Scottish cap! He hastily phoned to explain his mistake, only to be told his place had been accepted by another player.

However, the secretary said he'd ask the other if he'd be willing to stand down – and, magnanimously, he agreed. So Archie got his cap, driving three fours through extra cover and making the third highest score, the match being drawn.

In 1952, he married Anne Donald, a nurse he met while recovering from an ulcer

operation. She was the twin sister of the renowned golfer Jean Donald, who was a multiple Scottish Champion and Curtis Cup player, amongst other accolades.

There were concerns that the event might be reported as "Son of well-known rugby internationalist weds sister of famous golfer"! By this time Archie was manager of Banff distillery.

Over 43 years of working for SMD, he became a director and his responsibilities latterly focused on safety and training.

A highly principled man, his concern for the welfare of the company's workers was not always popular at head office. He fought a hard campaign to improve the 500-odd houses the workers rented, few of which had bathrooms or inside lavatories.

On one occasion, when repeated reports about his concerns over unprotected machinery and conveyor belts at a Highland distillery continued to be ignored, he called in the factory inspector, who immediately closed down production for a week until the remedies had been implemented. His superiors were furious, but such was the man he was.

In later life he continued his love of driving cars, fishing and hill walking – the latter he pursued ardently and long, scaling Ben More on Mull when 85.

Three months short of his 93rd birthday he became concerned that insurers might say he was too old to drive, so he sat his advanced driving test. He passed easily and became the oldest person in the UK to achieve this demanding certificate.

He remained an excellent driver, and an optimist, buying a new car (a little Citroën) shortly after his 100th birthday.

His 68-year marriage ended in June this year when Anne died, aged 98. He is survived by his daughter, Jane, and son, Alastair.

I can see him yet, on a walk, unaware I'm looking, taking up his stick which he occasionally carried but seldom used other than as now, executing his trademark square cut and dispatching an imaginary ball to a distant boundary – one of the few boundaries that he recognised.

ALASTAIR SCOTT



CHARACTER

Archie bagged a last Munro at 85, distilled his own illicit Scotch at the age of 92, and bought a new car when he was 100