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GEORGE ELRICK

BOTH in the geographical and career sense "Mrs. Elrick's wee son George" has travelled a long way since he left home in Aberdeen as a teenager and took the 525-mile train-ride to London. His ambition was a future in show-biz. For a start he went into the Ambrose Orchestra as a percussion player, then "transferred" to Henry Hall's BBC Band as a singer and came up with world-hit vocal numbers: "Thick, Thick Fog in London" and "The Music Goes Round and Round."

George's own signature tune became "When You're Smiling". He's still smiling—in the entertainment profession and on match-days at Stamford Bridge. Says George: "Coming to London as a lad was one of the biggest things that happened to me. The other was meeting my wife, Alice. We've been 'in partnership' ever since. She's a Chelsea girl and her family were all Chelsea fans. I had to join them . . . or I wouldn't have got the girl!"

"Part of the fascination for me was the Scots here. Billy Birrell, the manager, for one, and players like Tommy Walker and John Harris—he's a great personal friend of ours. After the war, when I was touring with my own band, the chairman Joe Mears (father of the present chairman, Brian) would invite me to matches if I was in Town. Then when I came off stage, Alice and I became season-ticket holders and have been ever since."

For 21 years from 1946, George Elrick compered "Housewives' Choice" on BBC radio to ten million housewives (or was it twenty?). Today he is an artistes' manager who still does compering, after-dinner speaking and occasional disc-jockeying. He

has been a Water Rat for many years, is a past King Rat and past Preceptor. This year he is president of the Radio Industries' Club.

When they can, George and Alice leave their luxury flat in London for a long week-end away—George plays a lot of golf—but if Chelsea are at home they drive back to the Bridge. For 15 years George flew to America on a three-months' business trip. Each time, the last thing he did before he went was to arrange for the London papers to be sent—to keep him in touch with Chelsea.

His second football love is his hometown team, Aberdeen. "They're playing some great stuff up there and have some terrific young players," he says, with eyes twinkling at Aberdeen's current record of 17 points out of 18 at the top of the Scottish League.

George played a behind-the-scenes part in Chelsea making one of their finest-ever signings. "I was playing the Newcastle Empire just after the war and went along to St. James's Park to see their reserves one day. They had a great centre-forward, a fair-haired fellow with such class and heading ability I couldn't make out what he was doing in Newcastle's reserves. I told Billy Birrell about him . . . and six weeks later Chelsea signed Roy Bentley." He's always hoped he had something to do with it.

George Elrick's "secret ambition" is to do a TV football commentary—"I'd love a shot at chatting through a Match of the Day or a Big Match." His hope for Chelsea this season is that they will "make up for Wednesday's European knock-out—what a disappointment!—by winning the League Cup or the F.A. Cup," he says. Smiling, of course.