

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Marie Davies

DAVID JACKSON

Number 8. 1971-79. 222 appearances. 53 tries

The very unusual, probably unique family connection - father-in-law and two sons-in-law who have played for Bedford.

Sons-in-law

New Zealander, James Ross

Prop. 67 appearances. 2001-04

Tongan, Soane Tonga'uiha

Prop. 49 appearances. 2004-06

Dave writes:

'I was born in Shadwell, near Wetherby, but my dad bought a corner shop in Kirkstall, when I was six, so I grew up within walking distance of Leeds Rugby League and Headingley Rugby Union Club.

My dad went to Archbishop Holgates Grammar School in York (a 7 mile cycle each way) but left school at 14 to work. He played football for York City, was scouted by Tottenham, and then the war came and that was the end of his sporting career and his job at the time - hence the corner shop.

I went to Leeds Modern Grammar School and aged 11, Games lesson 1, the teacher lined us up and to me he said: "No. 8", and I played there for the next 20 years. I was quite good at football, better at basketball and equally good at rugby. However, in Lower Sixth I went to the county trials and never got past Game 1. Next year, I went to Trial 1 with the same expectations, but ended up in the Yorkshire squad and team - then progressed to play for England Schools alongside Tony Neary and Keith Fielding. It was surreal. I also trained with Leeds Rugby League and when I played for the Yorkshire senior side aged 18, they offered me professional terms. By then, I was at Loughborough, had met Sue, and a life in the industrial north wasn't part of the deal.

There was no rugby influence from my family. My dad came to one game in my entire career (England



JAMES ROSS



SOANE TONGA'UIHA

Schools vs France at Leicester, under lights) because he wouldn't shut the shop. However, one influence was school coach Mr Thomas - a Welsh, English teacher who was someone who cared. He came to all my trials, and when I didn't make the county trial in Year 1 he persuaded a selector to come and watch school games so that I would have an advocate on the selection board. The other influence was a P.E. teacher, who played full-back for Headingley and Yorkshire. He took me down to the club and looked after me, and when I played in the first team, aged 17 or 18, took me aside and told me I couldn't call him 'sir' on the pitch any more.

Playing for England Schools was a huge distraction and just before sitting my 'A' levels I realised I wasn't going to hit my university grades - so I applied, late, to Loughborough and was given a two 'Es' offer (which even I could manage). I had no desire then to teach. I wanted to play rugby for the Loughborough 1st XV for four years (which I did). Teaching practice, though, turned out to be a revelation: I loved it.



TEAM PHOTO 1971-72. DAVE, MIDDLE ROW 3RD FROM RIGHT

I had two of the best student coaches ever - the legendary John Robins, whose ideal pack was seven Number 8s and a hooker. He went on to coach the British Lions. He was followed by Jim Greenwood, a great human psychologist as well as coach. Our team had a string of legends: Fran Cotton, Steve Smith, Lionel Weston, Clive Rees, Dick Cowman, Keith Fielding, Johnny Gray... Chadwick, even! I also played for UAU and English Universities, but then everyone did!

It was tough leaving Loughborough. I wanted to teach English (not PE); I wanted to play for Bedford, Leicester or Northampton. Ideally, I wanted to play alongside the then England captain, Budge Rogers, so I accepted a job as an English teacher at Alleyne's School in Stevenage. One visit to Stevenage and Sue (we married at Loughborough) refused either to live there or take our dog there. So when I played in the pre-season trials in 1970 we were staying in a guest house. Budge refused to accept it: "You must come and stay with me and Nanette - I'm going on a Far-East tour and she'll be glad of the company." It was an act of kindness we have never forgotten and typified the embracing culture of the club.

Following Alleyne's I moved to Cheney School, Oxford (commuting to the club on the Clive Hooker route) and from there back to Bedford to John Bunyan School as Head of English and then Head of Sixth Form - which I loved. Almost every graduating student was a first generation graduate. From there I went as Deputy Head to Sharnbrook, but after three years was internally appointed to the headship which I did for fourteen years - just the best job ever! From there to being a founding Director at the National College for School Leadership and for the last fourteen years a public sector innovation coach at the Innovation Unit in London.

My first memory was pre-season trials. Despite having led a charmed life previously, I had no expectation of making the first team straight away. However, Dennis Hart, who I always thought was a better No 8 than me, came to pre-season unfit. My main memories are, oddly, not of particular games, tries or achievements, but of the astonishing camaraderie and loyalty within the club - from Pat Briggs coach, to Mervyn Bridgeman, team manager, to Jack Nightingale, kit-man. I was lucky to play alongside flankers much tougher than me, who tackled, fell on the ball and grovelled to win possession like Budge, Tod Slaughter, Foster Edwards and Andy Hollins - whilst I swanned about. Recurring memory: turning up on a Friday evening to travel to remotest Wales only to find that some of the internationals had dropped out and Dodger, Gareth, Clive and Chads had been drafted in!

We have three daughters, Lucy, Polly and Sophie, eight grandchildren and two son-in-laws who played for Bedford, James Ross and Soane Tonga'uiha. When I ceased playing I was determined to take a complete break from rugby. It wasn't difficult because of work commitments, but it probably was obtuse and short-sighted. However, I got a new lease of life through the rugby careers of my sons-in-law.

We live in Northampton and I'm still working three days a week. I watch Northampton Saints - usually with a grandson.'



DAVE AND SUE JACKSON