

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

by Marie Davies



BEN GULLIVER

2012-15. Second row. 59 appearances.

Ben grew up in Coventry surrounded by rugby. His father, Tony played for Coventry R.F.C. and holds the club record for the most appearances, 386, of any forward.

Ben writes:

'I went to my first rugby game when I was ten days old - I obviously remember every minute of it! Basically, I grew up at Coundon Road.

I went to Mount Nod Primary School and then on to The Woodlands, which unusually was an all-boys Comprehensive School with a good rugby heritage. Former players include Neil Back, Danny Grewcock and T.J. Harris, a Bedford former player. Sadly, the school is now closed. My coach there was the Coventry back row Steve Carter and I played No.8.

Initially, my Dad was the biggest influence on my rugby journey. I was always in and around the changing room, then became a ball boy. I followed Cov. at home and away games, watching with my grandparents Pat and Fred. At home games the groundsman John Gardiner would leave the floodlight on in the corner of the pitch and I would play out there until late. Later on, my favourite Cov.

TEAM PHOTO. BEN, FRONT ROW, 4TH FROM LEFT



PLAYERS PLAYER OF THE YEAR 2013.

player was Derek Eve. I played for Coventry Schools and Warwickshire, but was not quite good enough for England Schools. I did wear the rose once for England Students.

I was more interested in being a Motocross rider after school but wasn't quick enough, so went on to play for Barkers Butts and then went to Luton University and joined Saracens Academy. I then had a trial for Bedford. I had a 'stinker of a game' and Bedford signed big Andy so I signed for Cov. on £440 a month plus a car and accommodation. I was pleased to have signed for my family club with Peter Rossborough as coach. Also, I got to play with my childhood hero Zinzan Brooke.

I went on to play at Plymouth, Pirates, Leicester and Worcester. When I was leaving Worcester my agent told me Mikey was keen on me



BEN IN ACTION



GEORGIE CELEBRATING

joining the Blues and this suited my transition into the real world. My first season was when we got to the Premiership Final and the B&I semi-final both v Newcastle in 2013. I was thrilled to be awarded the Players' Player of the Season at the Club Dinner. We played a great brand of rugby with great support. I loved winning away from home. Those days stand out - winning at Rotherham, Donny, Pirates and Leeds.

We made many friends at Goldington Road and are still really close to Stef and Tori Jones who returned to Wales, Luke Baldwin, Vassy, Jake Sharp, Ollie and Hannah Dodge, Darryl Veenendaal and many others. Former player Rich Candlin was my line manager when I worked as Head of Rugby at Samuel Whitbread School and I have kept in touch with Gareth Alred via the Championship Clubs Podcast.



JOHN AND BEN

to the End of Season Dinner and the social the next day. He slotted in so well and had a great time, but it was the last time we spent together as shortly afterwards he sadly died, very suddenly, at the age of 35.

I have many happy memories, both on and off the field. The close game v Newcastle away at the end of my first season plus the extra curricular activity which followed! There is also a memory very close to my heart. My friend John Cannon, a Canadian International who played in the same Coventry team as me was visiting from Canada and came

Pre-season tours were great. The visit to France was brilliant with the stand-out memories being Vassy taking on the whole Pau team, Team Manager Rob Crowle trying to navigate the Paris transport and the Club Doctor, stepping up and getting us home.

Of course, my wife Georgie has been a great influence in my personal and rugby life. She has had a great rugby career, playing at scrum-half for over a decade, at the top level of women's club rugby at Saracens. She played in the team that won the Women's Premier and Cup Double in 2014-15, and gained 37 England International caps while also working for the N.H.S. as a theatre nurse. We are now living in Plymouth where we met thirteen years ago and it was always our plan to go back and settle there. We now have twins Freddie and Lotte, who are five months old, so life is busy but great. I now work as a Sales Executive for Land Rover and Georgie and I coach Ivybridge Ladies.

I'm calling this Chapter 2. Chapter 1 was fantastic and I am thankful for the great experiences I had in my rugby career. Chapter 2 is all about focusing on family life and the twins' happiness.

Bedford will always be a club that's bittersweet for me. I had an amazing first season and a half and then my body gave up - just look at my medical records. My body couldn't cope with the demands of Championship Rugby, but I'm grateful to have played for such a great club, met some super people and it will always be a place I love.'

LOTTE AND
FREDDIE