

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

by Marie Davies



HENRY STAFF

Centre. 63 appearances. 2011-2013 & 2014-16.

Henry was born in Bedford and was educated at Bedford Modern School. He showed a great talent for rugby and in 2009 was made Captain of the England U18 team for Rugby Europe. He was part of the Saracens Academy before joining Bedford for two years. He then joined Rosslyn Park for 11 months before returning to Bedford in 2014.

Henry attended the End of Season Gala Dinner in May to celebrate the 10 year Anniversary of the very successful 2012-13 squad with his teammates.

Henry writes:

'I was born in Bedford Hospital in 1991. My love for rugby was sparked by John Cresswell who was my coach when I joined the Amptill mini section. John devoted so much of his time coaching us while we were growing up. I played rugby with my brother Sam who was a loose head prop. We had a couple of games together at the Saracens Academy until he got a bad ACL injury.



When I went to Bedford Modern School my rugby coaches were Pat Jeram and Rob Hardwick. Stand-out games were the tough fixtures against Bedford School, some good Daily Mail Cup matches and the Rosslyn Park 7s tournaments. I also played a lot of football as a striker and at school I played Water Polo, which was far more physical than you'd expect. I also 'tried my hand' at athletics and represented the school as a 200 metres sprinter.

In my final year of school I stepped up to men's rugby and played in the centre alongside Matt Allen at Luton, forcing him to retire as he finally played with someone half his age - he was 32 and I was 16! After a brief spell at Northampton Saints Academy while still at school, I joined Saracens Academy in my final year at B.M.S. I was at Saracens for two years before going on loan to Blackheath, under Mike Friday (now USA's 7s coach) and then Barking where the coach was a former Bedford player Alex Codling (now Newcastle) and Kevin Sorrell (now Saracens). I had a couple of games for Saracens before joining Bedford on loan.

While at Bedford I was also studying Banking, Finance and Management at Loughborough University and commuting by train to Bedford four days a week for training and games. I loved my time at Bedford. The home games with the slope and the crowd behind you were terrific. The long trips for away games at Jersey and Cornish Pirates were memorable! A special game that stands out for me was the pre-season game v Saracens in my first season at Bedford. Scoring a try in front of 'a sell-out' crowd was awesome. I was unfortunate with a couple of bad injuries, breaking my jaw before my first season kicked off and later breaking my bicep off the bone.

My degree required me to work in London so I took a year away from Bedford. I worked in Canary Wharf as an FX trader and during that year away



2014-15 HENRY, FRONT ROW, 3RD LEFT.



played at Rosslyn Park with my former coach from Barking, Alex Codling. It was difficult trying to balance a stressful and time-demanding job alongside playing in National 1. I was lucky enough to be able to rejoin Bedford after my placement year finished and I resumed my studies at Loughborough.

I played with some very good players and great teammates at Goldington Road. I have some great memories both on and off the field. Jake Sharp always found space to play into, Ricky Reeves would always have my back in any scuffle. Jon Fisher was a great talent and his mad haircut will never be forgotten! Justin Blanchet was also very talented and I still meet up with him in Mayfair for lunch sometimes, as he works quite near me.

It's great to see how some of my Bedford teammates have progressed such as Josh Bassett and Ali Price. They came as a pair of very funny blokes, but were also super talented and they really made it happen for themselves.

We all got to know each other really well on the team bonding trips - Vassy in Pau was certainly memorable. There were also great pre-season tours with early morning sea swims - real character building.

After Bedford, I took some time away from the game to think about what I wanted to do and ended up working as a Lettings Manager before making my way into London to work for Cheyne Capital. After I started working there I played again for Blackheath

- many years after I first played for them on loan. This time it was under James Shanahan. What I didn't know at the time my last game was in Hull just before Covid struck. Work commitments and lifestyle made it difficult to play again once restrictions allowed and I was resigned to the fact my playing days were over.

I now enjoy watching and supporting and do love coming to support at Goldington Road when I can.

I now live in Canary Wharf with my partner Michelle and our dog Pogo - a black Pomeranian. We like the city lifestyle and also enjoy taking breaks away in the countryside.

It was great to celebrate the 2012-13 10 year Anniversary with my Bedford teammates at the End of Season Dinner.

HENRY WITH POGO

