

KIWIS AT
KINGSHOLM

The move to professional rugby led to many players in the southern hemisphere making the journey north to further their careers in England. A fair number of them travelled from New Zealand, and quite a few of those turned up at Kingsholm.

HENRY PAUL (2001-05)

Henry Paul was a rugby league legend. He won 23 caps for New Zealand before coming to England and having a second successful career with Wigan and then Bradford. It caused quite a stir when it was revealed that he would change codes and play for Gloucester, in a deal partly funded by the RFU, who wanted to fast track him into the England set-up, as he qualified through his grandfather. He quickly settled at Kingsholm and playing at fly-half formed a solid partnership with Andy Gomersall at No.9. There was success in his first season (2001-02) at Kingsholm, as Gloucester beat Bristol, at Twickenham, in the final of the Zurich Championship. In the same year Henry won his first of six England caps. More success followed in the next campaign as Gloucester beat Northampton to win the Powergen Cup, and also topped the Premiership but lost heavily in the final to Wasps. In the 2003-04 season, Paul, who had taken over kicking duties after the departure of Ludovic Mercier, scored 352 points in 29 games. Gloucester reached the quarter-final of the Heineken Cup, and in the seven games played, Henry scored exactly 100 points. In his final complete season, and by now playing at centre, he scored another 242 points

IAN JONES (1999-2001)

Overseas players nearing the end of their careers are sometimes perceived to be topping up their pensions when playing in the Premiership. Ian Jones could never be accused of that. In the two seasons he was at Kingsholm from 1999-2001, he gave his all, and was very popular with fans. He was one of the biggest signings in Gloucester's history having made 79 test appearances, and scored nine tries for the All Blacks. He also played in three World cups 1991, 1995 and 1999.

Ian scored a try in his first Gloucester appearance against Biarritz, in a Challenge cup game. He was soon



Ian Jones

a firm Shed favourite, due to his total commitment to the club's cause. He was master of the line-out, and when he got the chance, he would produce barnstorming runs. He formed a formidable partnership in the second row with Rob Fidler. Ian was made captain for the 2000-01 season, but a poor start result-wise led to a personal loss of form, and Ian handed over the leadership to the previous season's captain Kingsley Jones. This was the Cherry and Whites' first season in the Heineken Cup, and they made it to the semi-final. Jones played in six of the eight games involved, including the narrow defeat to Leicester in the semi-final. It came as a big surprise that Ian announced his retirement at the end of the season. He subsequently changed his mind and played one more campaign with Wasps.

SIMON MANNIX (1998-2001)

Simon also figured in that Heineken game against Leicester, scoring all Gloucester's points with five penalties. He was a prodigious kicker scoring 703 points in 69 appearances.

Simon arrived at Gloucester in 1998, as a 27-year-old. He had won a single cap for New Zealand in 1994 against France. He played for Sale from 1996 to 1998.

In his first season he scored 150 points, but fell out with the club in his second, and signed a contract to come to Kingsholm. Simon found his first season tough. Mark Mapletoft was holding the fly-half position and Mannix made his earliest appearances partnering Australian Richard Tombs in the centre. He was much better at fly-half, and against Northampton in the last game of the season he scored a try, four conversions and five penalties, in a 43-31 win.

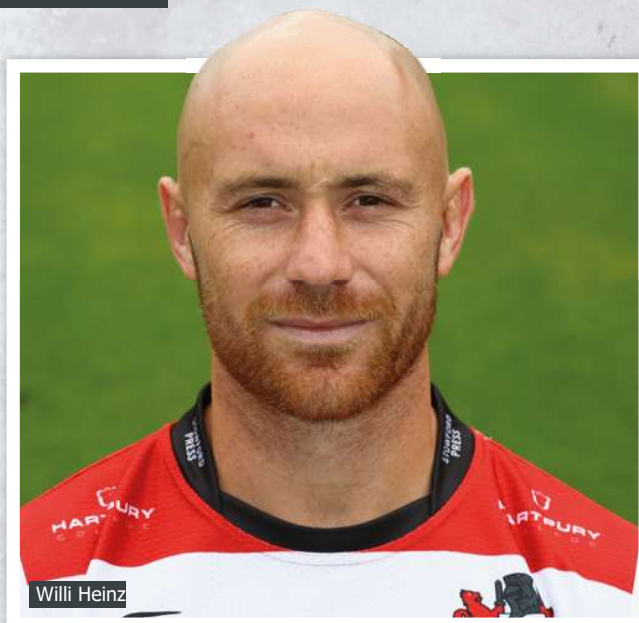
By the start of the following season Mapletoft had left, and Simon was first choice No.10. His form improved to such an extent that in his 25 appearances he scored 315 points. He kicked nine penalties (all of Gloucester's points) in a Premiership game against Harlequins, a club record which still stands. In the Heineken Cup Mannix played in six games, scoring 104 points.

GREG SOMERVILLE (2008-10) & JOHN AFOA (2014-18)

Somerville spent two seasons at Kingsholm from 2008-10, and was an extremely efficient tight-head prop, who won 66 New Zealand caps. A few years later, John Afoa took over in the same position. Afoa won 36 All Black caps, before spending several seasons playing for Ulster, before moving to Gloucester in 2014. In 2015, he was in the team which won the European Challenge Cup, beating Edinburgh in the final. In four seasons he made 104 appearances. He was a tight-head prop who made the scrum secure, and handled extremely well in the loose.

JEREMY THRUSH (2015-18)

Jeremy Thrush was an abrasive second row forward, who never willingly gave an inch. He was totally committed to his work on the field, and disliked being replaced after 70 minutes or so! In 2016-17, Gloucester had a good run in the European Challenge Cup, and Jeremy was in the team which produced an outstanding win in France against La Rochelle, in the semi-final. He was also part of the team which lost to a very good Stade Francais in the final. The following



season the Cherry and Whites again made it to the final, and Jeremy again tasted defeat, this time very narrowly to Cardiff Blues.

WILLI HEINZ (2015-21)

In 2015, scrum half Willi Heinz was signed as a direct replacement for Dan Robson, when the latter left for Wasps. Willi, however, had to compete with Scottish international, Greg Laidlaw, and the emerging Callum Braley for the No.9 shirt. In February 2016, Gloucester played Bath at the "Rec", when conditions were awful, but Heinz and fly-half James Hook kept Bath pinned back with tactical kicks. This worked well, and Gloucester won 15-11. In April 2017, Gloucester travelled to La Rochelle in the semi-final of the European Challenge Cup. Heinz was captain for the game. The French team was unbeaten at home that season, but a superb Gloucester, thriving under Willi's leadership, triumphed 16-14. It was understandable that Willi was made club captain for the 2017-18 season. He would retain that post for three campaigns, though latterly constant injuries seriously limited his appearances.

Although a native of New Zealand, Willi had an English grandmother who made it possible for him to qualify for England. He won his first cap in August 2019, when made vice-captain in a World Cup warm-up game against Wales. In the World Cup he made five appearances, but was injured in the semi-final against New Zealand, and so missed the final. He would win four more caps in the 2020 Six Nations.

Other Kiwis who have played for Gloucester are: **Robert Todd (2001-04)** and 86 appearances; **Nathan Mauger (2004-06)**; **Willi Walker (2006-09)** and 364 points from 64 appearances; **Carlos Spencer (2009-10)**; **Jimmy Cowan (2012-14)**; **Josh Hohneck (2016-20)** and 101 appearances; **Tom Marshall (2016-20)**; and of course, very much still with us, **Jason Woodward** who joined Gloucester in 2017.