BARNSTAPLE RUGBY CLUB

1877 - 2027

150TH ANNIVERSARY



Saturday
10th Oct 2026
2.30pm

MITCH TURNER

CELEBRATING 150 YEARS
OF RUGBY EXCELLENCE

Barnstaple Chiefs **VS** **Cinderford**

NATIONAL 2 WEST

Match Sponsors

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National League Rugby

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“this is not soccer”

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WELCOME TO

POTTINGTON ROAD

The Heart of Devon



Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to Pottington Road for what promises to be a cracker of a match day!

The air is thick with anticipation as our Chiefs prepare to do battle with today's visitors. On behalf of everyone at Barnstaple Rugby Club, it is my absolute pleasure to extend a warm and raucous Barum welcome to the Forest of Dean's very own Cinderford. A special greeting to their players, coaches, committee members, and the traveling supporters who have made the journey down to join us.

We sincerely hope our friends from Gloucestershire enjoy the famous Barnstaple hospitality today—though perhaps not too much once they cross the white line! We are expecting a bruising, physical encounter, and once the final whistle blows, we look forward to sharing a few drinks and swapping stories in the clubhouse.

Today’s match is proudly sponsored by our good friends at Bray Leino. For many, many years, Bray Leino has been a pillar of support for Barnstaple Rugby Club, and they truly are the best. They are a great company with fabulous people, and it is the backing of businesses like theirs that allows Barnstaple Rugby to reach the heights it has. Representatives from Bray Leino will be presenting the Man of the Match award after the game—make sure you stick around for that.

We also owe a huge thank you to The Bridge - Espresso & Wine Bar, our Matchball Sponsors this season. You can find them at 7 Bridge Chambers, The Strand, Barnstaple, offering specialty espresso, cakes, and the perfect spot for a daytime catch-up, before transitioning into wine, cocktails, spirits, and draught drinks in the evening. With indoor seating, a terrace overlooking The Strand and the River Taw, plus live music and tastings, The Bridge is the place to be at any time of day.

Have yourselves a great time by visiting them soon.

Bray Leino is pleased as punch to be sponsoring BRFC again.

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Whatever It Takes

The Strand Social – Supporting Our Local Community

At The Strand Social, we believe great pubs are about more than just a pint. They're about bringing people together and giving something back to the communities they serve.

That's why 10p from every pint sold goes into our Community Fund, with money distributed to local charities and community projects approximately every six months.

Our latest donation of £2,500 is going to Barnstaple Rugby Club, recognising the fantastic work they do across the town and at grassroots level.

From encouraging young people into sport and giving them a positive focus, to building teams, developing confidence and creating a sense of belonging, grassroots clubs play a huge role in bringing communities together.

We're proud to support the club and help them continue the brilliant work they do for Barnstaple and the next generation.

Good pubs. Great communities. A proper British tradition. There will be a presentation of the cheque at Half time by Steve of the Strand Social.

Huge shoutout and thank you to Kingsley Plastics Ltd and their Managing Director, Mark Manley!



We're incredibly grateful for the donation of a brand new fibreglass storage shed to replace our old one, which had finally fallen apart after many years of use. Not only did they provide the shed, but they also took care of the delivery, installation, and removal of the old one — above and beyond!

A massive thank you also goes out to:

Gary Masoon (Operations Director), as well as Stefan French and Craig Herbert. pictured here with Trevor Shaddick and Keith Baker from the Tuesday Volunteers who helped out with much of the grunt work.



We're so grateful to everyone involved — your generosity, hard work, and support really do make a difference!

Before we get into the action on the pitch, let's take a quick look at what is on the horizon here at Barnstaple Rugby Club as we head further into the darker nights of this special anniversary year.

Next weekend, October 17th, when Barnstaple Athletic take on Newton Abbot, we unveil Barnstaple RFC's first-ever Bottomless Brunch. The first of many, we hope! It starts at 12 pm and finishes at 2 pm, perfectly timed to get you ready for kick-off. More details are on the poster, and to sign up, click the following link: Barnstaple RFC Bottomless Brunch.

BARNSTAPLE RFC 150 CLUB

Then it is the third lottery draw since the launch of the Barnstaple RFC 150 Lotto in just three days on October 14th, supported by our great friends at the Sheep Show. We have already had two lucky winners who find themselves £150 richer. Will you be the third? There is nothing like the present; sign up now at. Barnstaple RFC 150 Lotto

That's right: just £10 a ticket per month and

BOTTOMLESS

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17TH OCTOBER

12:00 - 14:00

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1877 - 2027

150TH ANNIVERSARY

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Supported by

THE SHEEP SHOW

you could be our lucky winner of £150 CASH every single month, drawn on the 14th of each month like clockwork. But here's the really exciting part…

Every single penny raised goes straight back into OUR club – funding the projects that matter most to us. And we're kicking things off with a BIG one – the long-overdue, much-needed refurbishment of our club kitchen! Further details can be found on our website at Barnstaple RFC

This isn't just a lottery – it's a team effort. A chance for every member, every family, every friend, and every supporter to chip in, have fun, and literally build a better club together.

Fireworks night at Barnstaple Rugby Club

And finally, to start November off, we have the Barnstaple and District Roundtable's spectacular fireworks display

North Devon's biggest fireworks night is back at Barnstaple Rugby Club. Grab something hot from the food traders and a drink from the bar. Get the music going with Tamsin Ball, then count down with

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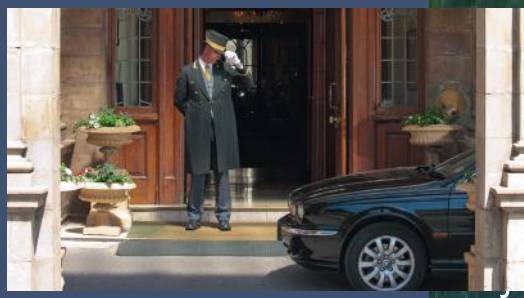

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thousands of others as the sky over the Taw lights up. The crowd, the countdown, the bangs you feel in your chest: you only get that from inside the ground.

For full details and the link to book your early bird tickets click here:

Fireworks Display

And to cap it all, we have Movember and a whole host of events as the players and staff once again look to raise funds. A month-long campaign held every November during which men grow moustaches to raise awareness and funds for men's health issues, including prostate cancer, testicular cancer, and mental health.

The following events for Movember will include

31 OCT | SHAVE DOWN
After the senior games
Shave down ready for Movember

6 NOV | MO QUIZ
Doors 18:30 | Quiz 19:00

Teams of up to 6
entry £5pp. Social & fundraising afterwards

14 NOV | MO SISTERS DAY
12:00 – 14:00 Ladies Day… with a tash!
More info coming soon

THROUGHOUT NOVEMBER
Junior section Movember chats Weekly Mo & tash updates, Fundraising challenges & prizes.

SPONSOR OUR MOVEMBER TOPS!

The Chiefs & Tics will be wearing special Movember warm-up tops throughout November, and we have space for TWO sponsors to join us on them.

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LOVELL HOMES

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When someone is diagnosed with a life-limiting illness, life for that person and for those around them is never the same again.

North Devon Hospice provides free care and support to patients and families faced with the impact of a life-limiting illness. We believe in being there for all the family.

The care provided throughout North Devon is because of the amazing generosity of our community. Together, we work towards raising over £4.9 million from scratch each year to provide this essential care to thousands of people. At North Devon Hospice, we are focusing on developing our services so that patient care and support can be provided closer to home, meaning your support has never been more important.

The hospice is here for you, and because of you. As such we are thrilled to be the chosen charity of Barnstaple RFC for this season. Both Barum and North Devon Hospice are close to the hearts of many in our community, and as such it is very fitting that we are working in partnership.

From all the hospice team - here's to a fantastic season

T: 01271 344248 E: info@northdevonhospice.org.uk
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www.northdevonhospice.org.uk

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THE FIGHTBACK STARTS NOW: CHIEFS READY TO DRAW A LINE IN THE POTTINGTON ROAD



The table does not lie. But it does not tell the whole story either.

Four defeats. Four long, bruising, soul-searching weeks since that sun-drenched, champagne-fuelled opening day victory at Exeter University. The Chiefs have slipped. Third from bottom. A position no one at this club wants to occupy. A position that burns.

But look closer. Read the fine print. Those four losses? They came against four of the top five teams in this league. Redruth—the league leaders, the pace-setters, the ones everyone else is chasing—were among them. This has not been a collapse. This has been a gauntlet. A brutal, unforgiving stretch of fixtures that would test any squad's mettle.

Now the script flips. Now the Chiefs return to home soil. Now the fightback begins.

See more of the ball

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CINDERFORD COME HUNTING

Standing in the way? Cinderford. Seventh in the table. Three wins from their last three outings. Fifty plus points scored in each of those victories. This is not a team arriving to make up the numbers. This is a team with teeth. A team with momentum. A team that will smell blood in the water and fancy their chances of grabbing another precious away-day scalp.

They will arrive confident. hungry, believing this is their moment. The Chiefs must ensure it is not.

A SEASON AT A CROSSROADS

This is the pivot point. The hinge on which the rest of the campaign swings. Win today, and belief floods back. Confidence returns. The flair, the grit, the determination that defined that opening-day performance—it all comes rushing back like a tide.

Lose, and the winter gets longer. The nights get darker. The questions get louder.

But this is Barnstaple. This is Pottington Road. This is where visiting teams come to

find out what West Country rugby really feels like. The crowd will be loud. The tackles will be thunderous. The Chiefs will be ready.

THE CHIEFS' CALL TO ARMS

Now it comes down to eighty minutes of raw, unfiltered rugby. Eighty minutes to rediscover the swagger. Eighty minutes to remind the league exactly who Barnstaple Rugby Club is.

Cinderford will come. They will bring their fifty-point form. They will bring their belief. They will bring their ambition.

But they are walking into a cauldron. They are walking into a team that has been waiting. A team that has been hurting. A team that is ready to draw a line in the turf and say: enough.

THE MOMENT IS NOW

The Chiefs are ready to roar.

Are you ready to roar with them?

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BARNSTAPLE CHIEFS

1877 - 2027

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16 George Snell
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17 Max Moore
SPR services

18 Jonathan Kelly
Fyrex

19 Mitch Turner
Fyrex

20 Ben Saunders
Tarka Clinic

Barnstaple Chiefs v Cinderford
National 2 West
Pottington Road 10th October 2026 : kick off 2.30pm

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CINDERFORD

1. Matt Cotton
2. Jacob Perkins
3. Alex Bosworth
4. Tyler Jerrum (C)
5. Callum Thompson
6. Reeve Brighty
7. Will Korb
8. Reilly Scriven

9. Josh Horrobin
10. Joe Winfield
11. Brendan Llewelyn
12. Tom Samak
13. Kyle Harris
14. Sean Gardner
15 Callum McCabe

BENCH

16 George Chandler
17 James Elliot
18 Ben Carpenter
19 Jake Polledri
20 Halen King

Match Officials

REF: Peter Connor

AR 1: Mark Scoular

AR 2: Frederick Spong

1877 - 2027

150TH ANNIVERSARY

BARNSTAPLE RUGBY CLUB

150 YEARS OF RUGBY IN BARNSTAPLE

UPCOMING EVENTS

17th Oct Bottomless Brunch

1st Nov Roundtable Fireworks

5th Dec Tables of 10 Christmas Lunch

19th Dec Members Christmas lunch

26th Dec Boxing Day Chrity Event

6th Mar Ladies Day

29th May Gala Dinner


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HEARTBREAK IN KINGSBRIDGE: ATHLETIC FALL TO FINAL-MINUTE STING BUT FIND THEIR FIRE



The bruises from Cullompton had barely faded. The pride, though? That was still smarting.

Barnstaple Athletic rolled into Kingsbridge carrying the weight of last weekend's pounding—but this was not a team arriving to lick its wounds. This was a team hunting redemption. A team chasing improvement. A team ready to reignite a rivalry that has simmered for seasons.

And Kingsbridge? They knew exactly what was coming. These two have traded blows for years. Tight affairs. Nail-biters. Matches decided by inches, by moments, by the cruelest twists of fate. This one would be no different.

THE GHOST OF LAST SEASON

Rewind twelve months. Same fixture. Same venue. Kingsbridge thought they had it wrapped up. Athletic refused to die. A final-minute try snatched two bonus points from the jaws of defeat. Twenty-seven to twenty-four. A loss, yes.

But a statement.

This time? The script nearly repeated itself. Nearly.

THE BATTLE UNFOLDS

Fin body drew first blood. A try. Clinical. Composed. James Fyers added the conversion, and the Tics led 0-7. The traveling faithful roared.

Kingsbridge answered. Athletic responded. The lead changed hands like a pendulum swinging in a storm. Jack Barrow crashed over with ten minutes remaining in the half. Hope flickered. Then the home side struck back before the break. Fourteen to twelve. Kingsbridge ahead. Narrowly.

The second half erupted.

Kingsbridge struck first. Twenty-one to twelve. The gap widened. The mood darkened. But this Athletic side does not fold. It fights. Toby Mathews barrelled over the line, and Fyers—that trusty boot—added the extras. Twenty-one to nineteen. Two points. Just two.

Five minutes left. A penalty. Fyers stepped up. Ice in his veins. Twenty-one to twenty-two. Athletic led. Hearts pounded. Throats tightened. The finish line shimmered on the horizon.

Then it came. The sting. Kingsbridge, with one minute remaining, conjured a try from nowhere. Converted. Twenty-eight to twenty-two. The whistle blew. Heartbreak.

THE MOJO RETURNS

Yes, the result stings. Yes, the drive home was long. But peel back the layers, and something far more important emerges from this defeat.

Athletic have found their fire again.

The bruising at Cullompton could have shattered them. Instead, it galvanised them. This performance—gritty, resilient, aggressive—proved that last weekend was a blip, not a collapse. Luke Berry will have seen plenty to smile about. The fightback. The character. The refusal to surrender.

And then there is the next generation. The Colts have graduated. They have arrived. James Fyers—that young man has a boot on him. Three kicks from four. Ice-cold under pressure. Jack Barrow—scoring, scrapping, announcing himself. These are the names that will carry this club forward.

THE ROAD AHEAD

This weekend, Athletic rest. Recover. Recharge. The bodies heal. The minds reset. The plans

sharpen.

Then? Newton Abbot. At home. Pottington Road. Another chapter in this thrilling season. Another chance to witness the future of Barnstaple Rugby unfolding in real time.

You want to see the next generation? You want to feel the pulse of this club? Get down to Pottington Road next weekend. Watch Fyers. Watch Barrow. Watch this Athletic side accelerate into the season.

The rematch with Kingsbridge cannot come soon enough. But first, Newton Abbot.

This story is only just beginning.

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SCAN ME

BUCCANEERS BLITZ: SECOND-HALF STORM TO SINK SARACENS



The sun blazed. The crowd buzzed. And Pottington Road? It witnessed something special last Saturday.

Barnstaple Buccaneers, stung by that agonising near-miss at South Molton, welcomed Exeter Saracens 2nd XV for a 2:30 kick-off in their Devon Merit Table clash. Two teams. One glorious afternoon. Eighty minutes of rugby that had everything—brutality, beauty, and a finale that left jaws on the floor.

The Bucc's arrived hungry. The Saracens arrived dangerous. Their previous outing? A sixty-point demolition of Exeter Engineers. Something, somewhere, had to give.

THE STORM BREWS

For twenty minutes, it was all Saracens. wave after wave of relentless attack crashed against the Buccaneers' line. The visitors swarmed. They suffocated. They denied the

Bucc's any meaningful possession, any breathing room, any foothold in the game. Two tries came. The deficit grew.

But the Bucc's refused to buckle.

Keyan McInerney stepped up. A penalty. Cool as you like. Three points on the board. A lifeline. A spark in the gathering gloom.

As the half crawled towards its final ten minutes, something shifted. The Bucc's began to string phases together. Possession turned into pressure. Pressure turned into points. Another McInerney penalty split the posts. Six to ten. The gap narrowed to four.

The storm had been weathered. The tide was turning.

THE SECOND HALF ERUPTS

Whatever was said in that changing room, it worked.

Patrick Henry—a man on a mission—grabbed the game by the scruff of the neck. He accelerated past defenders like they were standing still, then powered through

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the final two tacklers as if they were mere inconveniences. Try. The Buccaneers were alive.

Then came twenty minutes of glorious, unfiltered rugby. Both sides threw everything at each other. Barnstaple grew in confidence. The ball sang through hands. The crowd roared.

And then, with ten minutes left, the Bucc's detonated.

THE FINAL BLITZ

James Hare. Remember the name.

The freshly graduated Colt—barely out of youth rugby—latched onto a pass from Harry Clark, who had bulldozed his way from the twenty-two. Hare didn't hesitate. He raced. Half the length of the pitch. Saracens defenders grasping at shadows, clutching at air, watching helplessly as the young man streaked away to score.

The second try was pure chaos. Phase after phase. Saracens tackling their hearts out. Bodies flying. Then—an offload from a falling hooker. The ball spiralled into the air. Billy Grant leapt. Juggled. Secured. And

crashed through two defenders to touch down. Brilliant. Breathtaking. Barnstaple.

And then, with just a minute remaining, Hare struck again. This time, he stripped the ball from a Saracen attacker and set off on another blistering half-pitch sprint. No one could catch him. No one even got close. Try. Bonus point secured.

From a back rower. A back rower!

THE FINAL WHISTLE 35-15

A victory built on grit, fitness, and no small amount of flair. The Buccaneers had absorbed the early blows, weathered the storm, and then unleashed hell in the final quarter. Exeter Saracens—a dangerous, talented outfit—had no answer.

This was rugby at its finest. Physical. Fast. Unpredictable. And the crowd at Pottington Road? They knew they had witnessed something memorable.

They travel to Teignmouth for another Devon Merit Table today. The Bucc's are building. The Colts are graduating. The future is bright.

Miss this team at your peril.

BARNSTAPLE BUCCANEERS

1877 - 2027



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5 Ross Ebbage

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Devon Merit Table
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SO CLOSE, SO CRUEL: COLTS LEFT HEARTBROKEN BUT NOT BROKEN AS TOPSHAM LOOMS

Twenty-nine apiece.

Read that again. Twenty-nine points each. Two teams. One winner. And somehow, impossibly, agonisingly, it wasn't Barnstaple.

Barnstaple Colts, marched into their first competitive fixture of the season, a National Cup clash against Bideford, and delivered a performance that deserved so much more than the cruel arithmetic of knockout rugby. They matched their opponents blow for blow. Try for try. Hit for hit. Two squads of equal strength, equal fortitude, equal desire, colliding in a contest that had everything.

But someone had to go through. And Bideford, by the slenderest of margins, more tries scored, claimed that honour.

Heartbreak. Raw. Unfiltered. The kind that sits in the chest and refuses to leave.

THE HURT

Losing hurts. Losing like that? It cuts deeper. The bus ride home would have been quiet. The

BARNSTAPLE RUGBY 2026/27

1877 - 2027
150TH ANNIVERSARY

OCT 17TH - 2.30PM
COUNTIES 1 WESTERN WEST
BARNSTAPLE ATHLETIC VS NEWTON ABBOT

OCT 31ST - 2PM
NATIONAL 2 WEST
BARNSTAPLE CHIEFS VS CLINTON

NOV 7TH 2PM
DEVON MERIT TABLE
BARNSTAPLE BUCCS VS BRIXHAM ALBION

NOV 7TH - 2PM
DEVON COLTS LEAGUE
BARNSTAPLE COLTS VS OKEHAMPTON COLTS

NOV 14TH - 2PM
NATIONAL 2 WEST
BARNSTAPLE CHIEFS VS LOUGHBOROUGH



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changing room, quieter still. Young men who had given everything, who had left every ounce of energy on that pitch, were left with nothing but the bitter taste of what might have been. A try here. A tackle there. The margins are brutal in this game.

But here is the thing about hurt. It fades. It fuels. It forges. And today, those same young Colts have the perfect opportunity to channel that pain into something far more powerful.

TOPSHAM COME CALLING

Pottington Road awaits. Two o'clock kick-off. The Merit Table campaign begins.

Standing in the way? Topsham Colts. Always a strong squad. Always dangerous. Always up for the fight. They will arrive believing they can spoil the party, and leave with the points. The Colts must ensure they do not.

THE RESPONSE

This is where character reveals itself. This is where young players become men. Not in victory, but in how they respond to defeat.

The National Cup dream may be over. But the season stretches ahead like a wide-open field. The

Merit Table is a marathon, not a sprint. Every match matters. Every point counts. Every performance builds towards something greater.

Today, the Colts have a chance to wipe away the hurt. To stand tall on home soil. To show Topsham—and everyone else—exactly what Barnstaple rugby is made of.

BE THERE

Two o'clock. Pottington Road. The future of this club takes the field.

They came within a whisker of cup glory. Now they channel that near-miss into a statement.

Get down. Get loud. Get behind them.

The hurt ends here. The fightback starts now.



BARNSTAPLE COLTS

1877 - 2027

150TH ANNIVERSARY



Harry Tancock

1 Harry Tancock

2 Tyler Ryan
The Duck Dive

3 Rex Hibberd
Springfield Nursery

4 Will Argent

5 Noah Duerden
M . D Carpentry & Building

6 Frank Shanahan
Work in Progress

7 Sam Hare (c)
Putsbrough Sands LTD

8 Austin Hennessy-White
The Thatched Inn

9 Barny Matthews

10 Harry Baker
The Worx

11 Charlie Squance
Blue Box Self Storage

12 Isaac Squire
Blue Elephant Childcare

13 Jake Stevenson
Jo Tickle Racing

14 Harry Cohen
Cafe Croyde Bay

15 Ted Chesworth (vc)
Manor House Inn

16 Riley Short

17 Ethan Hansen

18 Max Woosey
North Devon Accounts

19 Brodie Hicks
Alba & Bright

20 Albie Spice
Cafe Croyde Bay

21 Tom Shaddick
Nathan Spice Roofing and Leadwork

22 Rhys Gordon
M Ferne Electrical

Barnstaple Colts v Topsham Colts
Devon Colts Merit Table
Pottington Road 10th October 2026 : kick off 2pm

The Golden Era of Barnstaple Rugby: How a Devonshire Club Forged Its Legacy

A Period of Unprecedented Growth

As the final decade and a half of the Victorian era unfolded, Barnstaple Rugby Club experienced a remarkable acceleration in its development that would forever cement its place in the annals of West Country rugby.

The years between 1884 and the turn of the century represented nothing less than a golden age for the club, characterised by a relentless pursuit of excellence and an ever-expanding roster of achievements that distinguished Barnstaple as a rising force in Devon rugby.

The transformation was palpable both on and off the pitch. Where once the club had been a modest local concern, it now pulsed with ambition and competitive fire. Match reports of the era speak of packed sidelines, fervent local support. The club's reputation

spread far beyond the borders of North Devon, attracting attention from rugby enthusiasts across the county who recognised that something special was taking shape at the club's various grounds.

This was to be a vintage period for Barnstaple Rugby in particular between the years 1894 and 1903, the club produced two England internationals (Charles 'Nobby' THOMAS and Charles HARPER) and for two seasons it was unbeaten at home, and won the Devon Senior Cup in 1894. During this period, Barnstaple played and beat teams such as Swansea, Llanelli, Coventry and Saracens. The Club was declared 'Champions of the West' in the 1896/7 season. The Club's greatest local rivals were Devonport Albion, and a crowd of about 8,000 attended Devonport's ground to see Barnstaple lose by one try to nil in 1896/7.

The Birth of a Second Team

October 1886 marked another significant milestone in Barnstaple's evolution when the club fielded a second team for the first recorded time. This development

demonstrated the depth of playing resources now available to the club and reflected the growing appetite for competitive rugby within the local community. The second team's inaugural fixture, a hard-fought encounter with Torrington that ended in a scoreless draw, may not have produced the fireworks of their senior counterparts, but it represented a crucial step forward in the club's organisational maturity.

The Emergence of Exceptional Talent

By 1884, Barnstaple could boast a collection of players whose abilities were drawing widespread acclaim. Among these rising stars, none captured the imagination quite like Mr. A. F. Seldon, whose name would become etched in the club's early folklore. In a particularly memorable fixture against Tiverton, Seldon achieved a feat that had never before been recorded for Barnstaple—scoring three tries in a single match. This hat-trick, as it would later be known, represented more than mere individual glory; it symbolised the attacking ambition and clinical execution that had come to define Barnstaple's approach to the game.



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Seldon's performance that day sent ripples through Devon rugby circles and established a benchmark for attacking excellence that subsequent generations of Barnstaple players would aspire to match.

Another player to gain a first with Barnstaple was Harold Stoyle who became the first Barnstaple player to score more than 100 points in a season during the 1897/98 season. A fast paced player of extrordinary ability he was to be a firm favourite amongst the supporters and a regular for Devon.

The emergence of such talent was no accident. The club had developed a keen eye for identifying promising young players and a training regimen that honed their natural abilities.

Local newspapers of the period frequently carried accounts of Barnstaple's matches, with particular attention paid to the exploits of their most gifted performers. The club's growing stature meant that it could now attract players from a wider catchment area, further enriching the talent. pool available to selectors.

CHARLES"NOBBY" THOMAS:

BARUM'S FIRST ENGLAND INTERNATIONAL AND A TRUE PIONEER OF WEST COUNTRY RUGBY



The Making of a Rugby Legend

In the autumn of 1891, as Queen Victoria's reign entered its sixth decade and the Football Association still struggled to codify the nascent sport of rugby football, a sixteen-year-old youth by the name of Charles Thomas took to the field for Barnstaple's B team. Few among the small crowd of onlookers at the North Devon ground could have foreseen that they were witnessing the opening chapter of what would become one of the most remarkable careers in the annals of West Country rugby.

Young Thomas, who would soon acquire the affectionate moniker "Nobby" by which he would be known throughout the rugby world, possessed from the outset those qualities that would define

his playing style: a tackling technique that opponents would later describe as "deadly," a blistering pace that belied his forward's physique, and a work ethic so relentless that it became the stuff of club legend. In an era when forward play was defined by brute force and stubborn resolve, Nobby Thomas brought an athleticism and intelligence to the pack that set him apart from his contemporaries.

The Swift Ascent

The rapidity of Thomas's rise through the ranks was a testament to his extraordinary abilities. Within a single year of his debut for the B team, the young forward found himself selected for the Barnstaple first team. His maiden appearance for the senior side came against the formidable Swansea club on the 24th of September 1892, a fixture that would have tested the mettle of any young player. Yet Thomas acquitted himself with such distinction that his place in the first team was soon secured beyond any doubt.

The 1894/95 season would prove to be the annus mirabilis of Nobby Thomas's career. At just twenty years of age—remarkably young by the standards of the era—he received the ultimate accolade of selection for the England national

team. This achievement carried particular significance for both his club and his county: Thomas became only the third Devonian ever to earn an England cap, and the very first player from Barnstaple to achieve this distinction.

His international selection was for all three international fixtures of that season, a consistency of selection that spoke volumes about his impact at the highest level. In the match against Ireland, Thomas crossed for his first international try, with contemporary match reports singling him out as "one of the best forwards on the pitch." The young Barnstaple man had announced himself on the international stage in the most emphatic manner possible.

Thomas would go on to win four caps for England, his fourth and final appearance coming in 1899. Though his international career was relatively brief, his impact on the English game during those years was considerable.

A Pillar of Devon Rugby

While his international appearances were necessarily limited, Thomas's commitment to his county was unwavering. Between 1893 and 1903, he was a regular and indispensable selection for

Devon, a period that coincided with some of the county's finest hours. His leadership qualities were recognised when he was appointed captain, and under his inspired command, Devon were crowned County Champions in both 1899 and 1901—a feat that cemented his place in the pantheon of West Country rugby heroes.

Records and Achievements

When Nobby Thomas finally hung up his boots at the conclusion of the 1908/09 season, he left behind a statistical legacy that would stand the test of time. Over sixteen remarkable seasons with Barnstaple, his try-scoring exploits were nothing short of phenomenal. His final tally of 110 tries, 17 conversions, and three drop goals would, under modern scoring conventions, amount to 624 points—a testament to his consistent and prolific contribution to the club's attacking play.

Perhaps his most extraordinary individual achievement came in 1897, when Barnstaple faced Crediton in a fixture that would enter club folklore. Thomas became the first Barnstaple player ever to score five tries in a single match, as his side ran out comprehensive 48-0 victors. This feat remains a source of pride for the club and a measure of the man's extraordinary talents.

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Even today, more than a century after his final appearance, Thomas's name continues to feature prominently in the club's record books. He currently occupies fifth place in Barnstaple's all-time try-scoring charts and sits thirteenth in the overall list of the club's highest points scorers—an enduring monument to a career of remarkable consistency and brilliance.

An Enduring Legacy

Charles "Nobby" Thomas passed into the pages of Barnstaple rugby history as perhaps one of the greatest players ever to represent the club. His journey from sixteen-year-old B-team debutant to England international and county champion captain embodies the very spirit of the sport: talent allied with dedication, pace combined with power, and an unshakeable commitment to the cause.

In the annals of North Devon sport, few names shine as brightly as that of Nobby Thomas. He was not merely a player of exceptional ability but a pioneer who first carried the colours of Barnstaple onto the international stage, a captain who led his county to championship glory, and a try-scorer whose exploits continue to inspire

generations of young players who follow in his footsteps.

As the game of rugby football has evolved beyond recognition from the days when Thomas first took the field in 1891, his achievements remain a golden thread connecting the modern era to the heroic age of West Country rugby. Charles "Nobby" Thomas was, and remains, a true legend of the game—Barnstaple's first and, for many, finest rugby son.

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Stats definitions

#	TEAM	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	+/-	TB	LB	Pts
1	Redruth	5	5	0	0	227	107	120	4	0	24
2	Luctonians	5	5	0	0	167	79	88	4	0	24
3	Lymm	5	4	0	1	186	143	43	5	1	22
4	Taunton Titans	5	4	0	1	205	120	85	4	1	21
5	Hinckley	5	4	0	1	215	89	126	4	0	20
6	Clifton	5	4	0	1	172	151	21	4	0	20
7	Cinderford	5	3	0	2	200	216	-16	4	0	16
8	Old Redcliffians	5	2	0	3	161	169	-8	4	1	13
9	Hornets	5	1	0	4	166	162	4	4	4	12
10	Loughborough Students	5	1	0	4	147	205	-58	4	1	9
11	Bournville	5	1	0	4	174	280	-106	4	1	9
12	Barnstaple	5	1	0	4	105	152	-47	1	1	6
13	Devonport Services	5	0	0	5	126	261	-135	3	1	4
14	Exeter University	5	0	0	5	121	238	-117	2	0	2

BARNSTAPLE RUGBY CLUB

1877 - 2027

150TH ANNIVERSARY



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