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The work of BAE Systems affects the lives of virtually everyone in the Furness area. If you do not work there, you must know someone who does. Not only do they pour money into the area through wages but, over the years, they have helped all manner of organisations.

We at Barrow RLFC are indebted to BAE Systems as our main sponsors for all the community work we do in South Cumbria over a wide

range of activities through Advantage!. They do not make a song and dance about it and when the Government said businesses should help their local communities, BAE were ahead of the pack.

We also thank the initial interest from the Sir John Fisher Foundation, helping us attract support from other organisations including Cumbria Community Foundation, Walney Extension Community Fund, Sport

England, the National Lottery Community Fund, Boost Charitable Trust, Frieda Scott Foundation Trust, Furness Building Society and many other organisations and local businesses.

Advantage! is a sustained but still developing programme, touching the lives of over 950 people each week, maintaining its initial focus and impacting on the wellbeing of the community in the heart of Barrow.

It All Began Over A Cup Of Coffee



Advantage! started in January 2019, in a coffee shop, when three people shared a vision on how to use rugby league, sports and fitness to improve the lives of people in their home town of Barrow-in-Furness: a community with areas that suffer from high levels of deprivation.

The three people were: Steve



Steve Neale & Siona Hartley

Neale, then the new chairman of Barrow Raiders RLFC; Denis Fay, then a recently retired Headteacher and National Leader of Education; and Siona Hartley, a vastly experienced PE teacher, ex-Leeds United Ladies footballer and nationally ranked athlete.

Advantage! is so named because it seeks to restore an advantage to those who may suffer disadvantage and

is based on the rugby call from a referee, when a team is allowed to progress and the game is not stopped.

As well as a vision for the town, all three are Barrovians and shared their passion for the community and their longing for it to reach its potential.

Barrow is a fantastic town with a rich culture and fantastic people.

Steve pledged the resources of Barrow Raiders to the journey and with that initial impetus. Siona, armed with a part-time contract and three newly arrived Papua New Guinea players, set about renewing the impact that Barrow Raiders, an iconic club in the town for over 145 years, had on its community.

Barrow is a fantastic town with a rich culture and fantastic people.



PNG Internationals Stargroth Amean & Watts Puara Jnr with Denis Fay

Our PNG internationals, Stargroth Amean, Willie Minoga and Watts Puara Jnr, under Siona's leadership, made an almost immediate impact on their adopted town.

Within weeks, Advantage!, which started with no funds and no rugby balls, was delivering cultural workshops and free coaching in over 20 local primary and secondary schools, as well as running school holiday multi-sports camps.

In the last three years, Advantage! has undergone a rapid expansion and now has added to its schools' work with other community initiatives, including Rambling Raiders, Silver Raiders and Raid Runners, to name a few.

Throughout the Covid pandemic, Advantage! managed to continue and although the three PNG players left us, their legacy continues.



Barrow Raiders Advantage! - Love Barrow Awards "Project of the Year 2020" winners

Callum Bustin, who joined the team in 2020 as a Raiders player and community coach, was only with us for one season. In that time, he made a huge impact in his community role, not least with our Raider Braves initiative. He is missed but will always be part of the history of Advantage!

There is now a team of eight staff, led by Siona, and overseen by the Advantage! Barrow Raiders Community Foundation, which became a registered charity in May 2021.

Siona is now supported by Charlotte Gibson, Advantage! Barrow Raiders Community Foundation assistant manager. Charlotte is a young, but already very experienced manager, having worked on Cruise Ships in leadership roles over the last five years.

Charlotte is a very able netballer and all round sports person, and a fantastic role model to the younger age groups, especially girls.

Charlotte's drive and experience brings an added dimension to the team, supporting Siona and allowing Advantage! to respond to the increasing demands on our services as a result of our success.



The Advantage! team

Another recent addition to the leadership team is Lisa Neale, who is Operations Manager across Advantage! and Barrow Raiders RLFC. Lisa worked in the care sector for over 25 years and ensures all procedures and structures are in place in the fast growing organisation.

Charlotte Gibson, Ruth Parker, Isaac Prosser and ex-Olympian Caroline Boyle plus Raiders players Tee Ritson, Ellis Gillam and Anton Iaria all used rugby league, sport and well-being to lead us out of the pandemic.

The passion and experience in rugby league of Tee, Ellis and Anton has been making a significant difference within the community.

Tee Ritson started with Advantage! in 2021 and developed into a fantastic rugby league coach but he also has particular strengths and knowledge around personal fitness, so much so that he led the way when we delivered fitness sessions to over eight groups, via Zoom, during

continues on page 6

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Clockwise from above: Anton Iaria, Tee Ritson and Ellis Gillam

the pandemic, receiving praise and plaudits during that time.

Tee volunteered his time and energy to coach rugby within the community but his playing talents have now taken him to Super League club St Helens.

He has been passionate about creating a legacy in Barrow and the Furness area with his contribution to the team and to the community programme and he will be missed.

Ellis and Anton are relatively new to our coaching staff, with Ellis developing the sports leadership programme and coaching within our community clubs and secondary schools, to help increase participation numbers.

Ellis is passionate about rugby league, especially inclusivity, and he works hard to develop not only boys' rugby but girls and disability rugby.

He is always willing to do more, if it means he can develop and coach rugby, and in summer 2022 he led and delivered a three-day intensive rugby camp to boys and girls, as well as our commitment

to the Cumbria County Council Holiday and Food Programme summer camp.

Anton, who is qualified in personal fitness, has made a significant impact in the short time he has been with us. He has a calm and reassuring demeanour, which is particularly important when working with people suffering with long term health conditions or struggling with anxiety.

His work with people referred to us by the Health and Well Being Coaches (HAWCs) is particularly noteworthy, as well as Anton leading on delivery of coaching expertise for the 16-19 girls' strength and conditioning sessions, funded by the Rugby League.

Anton developed our Advantage! programme by offering early morning fitness sessions during the weekends of the summer holidays 2022.

Advantage! is all about providing opportunities to people which may otherwise not be accessible or affordable, and these initiatives,

continues overleaf

SOCIAL VALUES WITH **ADVANTAGE!**

and many more, are offered for free or minimal cost.

We now have five non players, all very experienced within teaching and coaching. Ruth is a highly experienced coach and former higher level teaching assistant, who has made great strides in our delivery of health and wellbeing initiatives for the older population, such as chair based exercise and walking rugby.

Ruth is also passionate about the community game, especially growing participation numbers for boys and girls within Barrow and District, and as such, volunteers her time to manage the Barrow Ladies reserve team squad.

Caroline is an ex-Olympian, having competed in two Olympic games as a road cyclist and mountain biker. She is passionate about giving back to her community and improving the health and wellbeing of people through her work with the running and walking groups and the chair based exercise, with a view to developing cycling initiatives in the future.

Isaac is new to the world of coaching but has thrown himself whole-heartedly into the role

and recently qualified in rugby league, football, Dodgeball and Boxercise.

He has a calm and reassuring approach, and he has particularly enjoyed working with our Able Raiders adults with learning disabilities, attending festivals with the Able Raiders Super League team.

Most importantly, Advantage! would not exist without the support of Steve Neale and Barrow Raiders RLFC!



Henry & Peter, two of our wonderful Able Raiders, receiving their much treasured 'Supporters of the Year' Award from Steve Neale



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We highly commend Advantage! Barrow Raiders Community Foundation for the fantastic work they achieve in the local community and wish them every success in the Future.

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Operations in demanding environments such as subsea cables and 24/7 processing plants rely on Bender to monitor, alarm, and forewarn of electrical failure in vital systems to protect services, people and production from costly disruption and downtime.

2022 marks the 25th year since Bender UK was formed. The business has grown year-on-year, and now employs over 90 personnel dedicated to the support of its expanding customer base.



EV charge station with Bender charge controllers inside

The company's strong foundations grew from its German parent company Bender GmbH founded by Walther Hans Bender, an innovator and pioneer of the world's first patented insulation monitor. Seventy-six years later the goal to realise potential in new markets and deliver technology innovation is still firmly embedded in the culture and values of the family owned group of companies.



Final testing of rail equipment
Protecting the health of electrical infrastructure is at the core of Bender UK's activity in the UK and Ireland. The company works with consultants, OEMs and end-users to deliver solutions

that guarantee resilience and improve safety through the monitoring of power, energy usage and residual currents detecting degradation and faults in complex electrical systems.

Bender UK creates customised packages using technology produced by the Bender Group and other strategic partners. That technology spans the supply of four key global business units - Healthcare, E-mobility, Service Solutions and Industry.

A PROVEN SUPPLIER

In Cumbria, Bender has supported defence submarine programmes for many years and is engaged with the design and production of future ships and vessels. Bender technology is also used within buildings and infrastructure to monitor and manage energy use, maximising efficiencies.

Bender UK has Network Rail approval to deliver advanced rail signal power monitoring that pinpoints and locates earth faults trackside. It provides early warning of developing electrical failure to ensure a safer, more reliable rail network that supports safety priorities to keep engineers off the track.

E-mobility is Bender's fastest growing market globally. Bender technology is at the heart of the UK's charge stations, partnering with major manufacturers to deliver safe, intelligent electric vehicle charge control. Bender components are



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Bender UK team-building day

also designed into systems which safeguard the wider charging station infrastructure.

In healthcare Bender UK is the market leader in the delivery of turnkey theatre solutions incorporating Medical IT power, battery backup systems, energy monitoring, operating room and theatre control and alarm technology for critical Group 1 and 2 hospital medical locations. Partnering with OEMs they helped design some of the fastest and largest critical health facilities ever delivered in the UK.

Engineers deliver design, consultancy, installation, commissioning, and technical support to customers onshore and offshore. They are supported by a large research and development team based at the Bender headquarters in Germany.

Many of Bender's clients benefit from round-the-clock maintenance, call out and repair services. The company protects hundreds of industrial and healthcare clients with annual preventative maintenance contracts, 24/7 support and remote monitoring services that enable analysis, repairs, or upgrades to prevent system shutdown. A skilled BS7671 compliant and factory trained field-based engineering pool is strategically located within 2-4 hours' drive of its vast customer base.

MARKING THE MILESTONE

To mark Bender UK's 25th year of success and growth, the Ulverston HQ has been visited by members of the Bender GmbH board, and a special team-building event brought together the whole workforce from across the UK and Ireland.

Bender UK Managing Director Gareth Brunton is proud of the continued growth of the company he joined almost 20 years ago. He said: "Our turnover has on average doubled every five years and is now approaching £30 million. We now employ more than 90 people and prioritise developing our workforce alongside creating additional opportunities for engineering graduates, and apprenticeships in marketing, engineering, project management, finance, and business administration."

Sandy Murray, Head of Finance at Bender UK, adds: "Our consistent growth alongside the strength of the Bender group worldwide underpins confidence in the business and in its bright future. Better management of power usage and electrical systems is now a major priority for both the public and private sectors and Bender UK is perfectly positioned to help our customers and the country meet those challenges."



CSO Heinz Nowicki, Managing Director Gareth Brunton and Wolfgang Gross of EMEA Sales. Bender UK Operating Room



Installation of bench to mark Bender UK's 25th Anniversary

Lisa Hudson, Head of Marketing, said: "To celebrate our 25th Anniversary we have commissioned local architectural blacksmith Chris Brammall to design and produce unique benches which we have donated to five hospitals across the UK. The final bench is now installed at the Ulverston head office."

Design the future of energy

Looking to the Future

Chairman Steve Neale's overview on the past, the present and his hopes for the future



Steve Neale with the Championship Club of the Year Award, RFL Awards 2022

I joined the Barrow RLFC board in 2018 with the club having got off to a good start in the Championship but facing yet another cycle of financial difficulties.

It was a struggle to see out the season. Having been appointed chairman only 3 months into my spell on the board, I was very much a novice in understanding how a

professional rugby league club works.

It was apparent that we needed to produce a development plan and all the board members bought into that. By that time the board numbers had swelled, and several hard-working individuals had joined.

We had a vision to make steady progress towards Super League

with a focus on increasing all revenue streams. It was clear that playing 13 home league games wasn't going to be enough to deliver our improvement plan so we became inventive in terms of usage of the facilities.

We invested heavily in the community programme under the leadership and vision of Denis Fay and Siona Hartley and used the Foundation as a means of introducing many new people to the club.

There was a real focus on growing crowds and we aimed to change the demographic of our spectator base, offering free entry to every child in South Cumbria.



The crowd needed to change from predominately middle-aged men to reflect the whole community and especially our supporters, players and sponsors of tomorrow.

In 2019 we stabilised the club but suffered with a horrendous injury list and were relegated to League One.

However, we had started to create some real club spirit and camaraderie with supporters not losing faith and likewise we managed to persuade the majority of the players and the coaching staff to stick with us. We had faith in them and it was reciprocated.

We had started to broaden our community offerings but also, we had started to make more use of our facilities for events with some musical days and a boxing tournament on the pitch.

2020 was like no other, both good and bad. We had made an unbeaten start to our league campaign but then the pandemic struck. For weeks the uncertainty of when we would return meant the club was in

limbo before eventually the whole season was cancelled.

We could have felt sorry for ourselves but I'm proud to say that we thought outside of the box and were inventive as we diversified.

We opened a take-away service using the catering facilities in the ground and quickly realised that the open spaces of our ground provided perfect ventilation when

We have an open mind and will explore any opportunities

the hospitality industry was allowed to reopen.

We had a successful summer which allowed us to put in more permanent hospitality areas for the 2021 season and thankfully when the rugby matches eventually returned, we could invest in a squad that was strong enough to gain promotion back to the Championship.

Off the field we had invested heavily as our community team continued to expand and we became very popular with the

continues overleaf



Barrow Raiders celebrating as League One Champions in 2021

Jacobs

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The Barrow-in-Furness Jacobs office has supported BAE Systems in Barrow for more than 15 years, holding a strong, positive and trusted client relationship. Jacobs is supporting a major upgrade of the facilities at the BAE Systems site where the UK builds its nuclear submarines.

The Barrow office continues to provide valuable STEM and careers initiatives within the local community. This includes attendance at careers fairs, The Furness STEM Show, UlverSTEM and the development of a new structured Work Experience Programme. The feedback from the Work Experience students was very positive and the programme gave the students a real insight into the work we do at the Barrow Office. We hope to inspire the local STEM students to take on careers in engineering, and to look to Jacobs as an employer of choice.



The Barrow team showcase our Jacobs safety culture and our commitment to positive health and wellbeing. Donations from the Barrow office have been made to two extremely important charities through the Jacobs Collectively programme – Barrow Foodbank and Furness Carers. This demonstrates how our team and local charities can work together to provide societal benefits to our local community and make a real difference.

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local public supporting our events and big screen sport offerings.

In 2022 we wanted to not only survive but thrive in the Championship. We invested in a squad that had a play-off target and we confounded critics to achieve that.



The challenge now is our aim to consolidate our position in and around the Championship play-off positions but also to continue to grow the club through increased crowds, community engagement and an events programme.

2022 was doubly satisfying in that we achieved the honour of being named Championship Club of the Year.

We had diversified massively and had introduced Barrow Raiders Ladies in the 2021 season, earning promotion to Super League and having such popularity that we were able to form a reserves team for 2022.

The Ladies have been a tremendous boost for the club as female sport continues to grow exponentially. Under the guidance of Head Coach Amanda Wilkinson, I have



Barrow Raiders Ladies Super League Team 2022

every faith that we will continue to grow.

Another massive string to our bow was the introduction of our Learning Disability team in



Advantage! Able Raiders LD Super League Team 2022 in action



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Head Coach Paul Crarey with members of his J.E.T.S. (Junior Educational Training Sessions)

2022; Able Raiders. If ever you want confirmation that you have achieved good things then you only have to see them, and their smiles, in action.

Add in the tremendous work our Head Coach Paul Crarey does developing the youngsters of tomorrow through things like the JETS programme that provides a direct pathway to our Furness Raiders under-19s team and then to the first team and we have a club to be proud of.

To deliver all those achievements doesn't come cheap and the pressure of growth is constant. We have a very hard-working board but perhaps lack some wealth so it is paramount that our support continues to grow at the same rate as the club.

Looking to the future we do have Super League

aspirations but we need a further influx of investment into our facilities, be that at Craven Park or elsewhere.

Although we reached the Championship play-offs it was likely that we would be denied promotion without a 7-figure immediate investment into our facilities just to make the basic entry criteria.

The board wants to leave the town of Barrow a legacy, not just pleasant memories of on-field performances. We will continue to work with the aim of steady progression towards putting Barrow firmly on the rugby league map.

The Stadium is Our Main Challenge

Craven Park had its first game in 1931 and unfortunately there has been very little improvement in close to a century of existence. It is a very traditional ground that can provide a great atmosphere but we seemed to have missed the boat in terms of new stadiums being built in other towns and cities.

It puts us in something of a quandary. Many club chairmen say never give up your ownership or it will be the demise of the club but at the same time if we hope to progress we have to be realistic that no-one is simply going to hand



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out the 10 to 20 million pounds that is required.

We have an open mind about our future location and would explore all opportunities to ensure that we leave a legacy for future generations without losing some autonomy.

This is probably the main



Starlets of tomorrow enjoying a festival of rugby league



Elite Dance & Fitness entertaining our crowd and cheering on the Raiders

challenge that lies ahead of the club but our predecessors managed it all those years ago so this is a challenge that isn't insurmountable.

Our Match Days are Unique

The number one KPI for the directors of Barrow Raiders is to grow crowds. It has been the intention to price admission cheaply with the aim of getting our supporters into the ground early and stay late.

Match days at Barrow Raiders is like no other in rugby league with a party atmosphere before and, especially, after the matches.

We always aim to have a full day's entertainment. We may have double headers with our ladies' teams or invite some of our community clubs' youngsters to partake in curtain-raisers or festivals.

We invite schools and community clubs as our



guests and the players are very approachable, staying with the youngsters for selfies and autographs long after the matches conclude.

Our crowds have almost doubled in average over the last three years and with that the atmosphere in the ground has become electric and addictive.

Our match day sponsors are

always well looked after, either with boardroom dining or in one of our hospitality boxes and they can genuinely expect an exciting, affordable day out and a great opportunity for their business both to gain exposure and for them to put back into the community.



Hospitality Sponsors enjoying their match day

Sponsorships So Vital

With our match day crowds and our social media presence especially growing, sponsoring the club is the perfect way to promote your business and to support your club.

Sponsorship packages are available for the playing kits for our men's, ladies and disability teams, for our merchandise items, match day packages, individual player sponsorship, perimeter advertising, social media sponsorship and much, much more.



We have numerous sponsors and we can't thank them enough for their support. The number of sponsors we have are the envy of many other clubs and we like to think

continues overleaf



Matt Johnson Prestige our stadium and main club sponsor 2022/23 with Jake Carter at the Matt Johnson Prestige showrooms

they are all part of the Barrow Raiders family.

Kit Sales So Helpful

For the 2023 season we have changed our kit and merchandise supplier to O'Neills who are well established providers of rugby league sportswear.

We have a website shop where there will be products



to acquire online, and this is complemented with sales on match days in the stadium and at our club shop in Scott Street.

Merchandise continues to be an important revenue stream for the growth of the club.

Ladies A Great Success

We managed to persuade Barrow Island Ladies team to become aligned with the professional club in time for the start of the 2021 campaign. It was the perfect time as the squad's own ambitions had grown and the alignment meant there was a greater chance for the team to be considered for promotion.

The move was a roaring success and coach Simon Woodend and his team guided the girls to a Championship runners up slot which came with it an invitation to join the newly formed Super League 2.

Amanda Wilkinson took the reigns for 2022 to look after the Super League side but such was the appetite for ladies rugby league we were able to form a Reserves side.

In addition to this, funding was received for core skills

and strength and conditioning training for our under 19s and we had massively growing numbers at our Raider Girl community sessions.

2022 was again very successful with a runners-up spot achieved in the league campaign together with a semi-final play-off appearance. The Reserves improved throughout the season with many of the girls having their first taste of rugby league.

2023 promises to be a challenge with Super League planned to be cut to 8 teams from the current 12. This means that a top 2 finish in Super League 2 is paramount.

We are hoping, with investment, that the ladies team will eventually catch up with the men in terms of achieving semi-professionalism, and we hope to match the improved status of other sports, making our female players household names.

For now we must ensure that we put as much resources as possible to maintain our Super League status.

Events Help Growth

As part of the Barrow Raiders diversification plans the organising and promoting of off-field events has been vital for the growth of the club.

Football on the big screen, pop festivals, themed events like Paddyfest and Oktoberfest have all quickly established themselves in our events calendar.



We are providing something a little different for the residents of South Cumbria and we hope



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The founders of the Barrow Auxiliary Branch proud sponsors of Paul Crarey's JETS programme

that our events programme continues to grow. It is another business within a business with smaller parties and functions catered for on a weekly basis to keep the income ticking over.

Advantage! So Busy

From a vision on a scrap of paper presented by Siona Hartley, our Community Foundation, Advantage!, continues to grow and grow.

We offer a whole host of activities all with the aim of improving the health and wellbeing of the people of South Cumbria.

The team is now nine strong

and we deliver to toddlers up to those in their nineties and everything inbetween.

We coach in numerous schools, run sporting camps, walking rugby, disability rugby and sports, chair-based exercises and so much more.

We are proud of what our community team has delivered but, as ever, the challenge of growth and momentum are real and we must hope our funding providers stick with us and we attract more to maintain our profile.

Auxiliary Branch

Our Auxiliary Branch was set-

up in the 1970s to manage the Barrow Rugby lottery and has continued to provide fantastic support to the club ever since.

Despite the challenges of the introduction of the National Lottery, it still provides much needed income to the club and also to many amateur sporting clubs in the area.

A couple of branches have been created including the Super Lotto that provides funding for our Furness Raiders Under 19s team and the branch also manage a Ground Development Fund that has been vital for numerous projects throughout the years.

Catering



In 2020 during the pandemic we opened our own take-away, Lincolns, as we endeavoured to use our facilities more. We have since moved into partnership with BBQ House and Southwards Farm Shop to try to broaden the menu and hopefully again provide another valuable income stream for the club.

It is a challenge with the takeaway world very competitive but once again a business within the business is providing reward.



Ellis Gillam with the youngsters at his rugby workshop





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2022 Ranks with the Best!

Paddy McAteer recalls some great times over the years as a Barrow supporter

Looking back on season 2022 - what an achievement for Barrow RL Club! One of the best I have witnessed in going to Craven Park in the last 65 years. I started going to the ground when I was ten years old with my late Dad and namesake Paddy.

I remember a Thursday night game then, and Barrow, I am sure, were playing Saint Helens, kicking off around 5.30 as the shipyard finished work at 5.18. My dad would lift me over the turnstiles (don't tell Steve Neale)! From that day, I was an avid fan of Barrow RL Club. Over the past 60 years I have had the opportunity to see some great teams and players...and some poor ones.

As a young lad, and my family being strict Catholics, I had to go to Church on Good Friday afternoons and miss a home game, until I dared to tell my Dad one year, as a teenager "I am going to Craven Park." He never challenged my decision.

I was too young to go to the 1955 final, neither did my Dad who worshipped Willie Horne. On top of that I was the second youngest of ten children (eight lads) all rugby fanatics bar one.

So you can understand why Dad never went, It would have been too dear, and we would have been on bread and jam for several days.

I did, however, go to the 1967 final against Featherstone - my first Wembley visit.

In those days clubs and pubs ran Wembley



Willie Horne held aloft with the trophy after Barrow won the Challenge Cup in 1955

weekends, saving all year round. I went with Vickerstown Institute, going on the Thursday on the mail train which was also called the sleeper.

Early Friday morning call and a bus would be at Euston courtesy of Truman's Brewery who had their beers in the Institute.

They took us to the brewery and a massive breakfast awaited 50 hungry men. A tour of the brewery followed, a sample of beers, and then a fine lunch. Just a pity Barrow lost the game.

As I said, I witnessed some good seasons and players.

In the 50s the likes of Horne and Toohey, Jackson and Goodwin etc. Several internationals in the three '50s Cup Final teams.

The team went on the decline as the players grew older and several locals were brought in. Lads like Mick Ducie and "Dabber" Haney and Tommy Dawes who had a great career and was at the helm when Barrow defeated Widnes in the 1983-84 Lancashire Cup final.

In 1960 and having a poor season, Barrow pulled off a shock 12-9 win over the Australian tourists. But gates fell to around 1,600.

Then a massive signing in Bill Burgess, a speed merchant who became a GB Star and later played for Salford at Wembey. The 1967 final I mentioned earlier was against Featherstone which we lost 17-12 with a team that included former Union stars Tom Brophy and Terry Kirchin.

In season 1969-70 Barrow shocked the rugby world in both codes, swooping for Welsh wonder boy Keith Jarrett for a fee around £14,000. Sadly illness cut short his career.

In the 70s we had great locals and internationals Phil Hogan, Eddie Szymala, David Cairns and John Cunningham.

On to 2009 and Grand Final Championship winners over Halifax.

Skip a few years to the present and Paul Crarey and his coaching staff with shrewd recruitments saw Barrow record 12 away wins and incredibly finish fourth in the Championship.

Long may it continue!



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Cresta 'Proud of the Journey'

Coach Paul Crarey looks back on an excellent season

What a great season it was for us. We got a really good balance with players and we were lucky with injuries which is vital for a club like us. Being isolated in Cumbria means it is difficult to bring quality players in and it is good we have a great relationship with Salford coach Paul Rowley who helped us out when we needed it.

We started the season well. We came out of the blocks flying and no one expected us to do well moving up a division. But we had ability from the inside. Yes, we picked up a few injuries but still had a great year.

My highlight was the win at Batley with 12 locals - kids that have matured. The likes of Ryan Johnson, Jake Carter and Charlie Emslie have gone from boys to men in the past season.

We started with them in the Academy hard road and they have come out the other end now. Across the board we had the balance right and all our signings bought into everything we did.

"My highlight was the win at Batley with 12 locals - kids that have matured."

It was a good culture and we had great backing from a great growing crowd. The most disappointing thing was the play-off defeat by Batley which was probably a game too far for us but coming out



"It was a shock when I got Coach of the Year!"

4th in very tough league was absolutely great.

It was a shock when I got Coach of the Year. I didn't think I had a chance. I couldn't believe it when they announced my name but I must admit that by then I had had a couple of drinks with chairman Steve.

I always say players make coaches, not coaches make players. It is whether they buy into the system and whether they want to work hard. The award is as much for them as for me.

The award was for the whole club - the staff, the medical team, physios, conditioners, stats man John Flynn and my assistant Stevie Rae has been absolutely loyal.

Not forgetting Andy Gaffney, who does at the signings work behind the scenes. I only have to mention a player and he is up and down the motorway talking with them and doing his best to get them to sign.

He gets the flak when it goes wrong but nobody pats him on the back when it goes well.

Barrow being name Championship Club of the Year is absolutely brilliant. It just shows the work we are doing both on the field and off it through Advantage!

I am proud of the journey we have been on. Whether we can do it again I don't know because we have lost players but we will be doing all we can to get new heroes.

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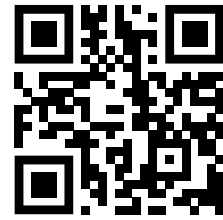
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Ladies Go from Strength to Strength

Becca Thompson brings us up to date with Barrow Raiders Ladies awesome progress



The 2022 Super League side ahead of their first game in the Challenge Cup against St.Helens

In 2016, a small group of Ladies in Barrow decided that the rugby scene wasn't providing enough for women and girls in the area.

After talks with Barrow Island, it was agreed that the Ladies would create a team who would train and play at Barrow Island, creating opportunities for more women to get involved with rugby league. This was the start of Barrow Ladies.

The first step was for the ladies to appoint a coach, luckily Barrow Island has produced a lot of great talent over the years, one being John Johnson who offered to volunteer to coach the ladies whilst also coaching another Barrow Island team alongside. John taught the ladies every rule there was to know about rugby, took them through their first tackling sessions and even encouraged them to enter the winter league in 2016, their first competitive outing as a team.

Their first game took them to Salford which looked like a corn field, the grass was so high the ladies were unsure how they would even see each other. Luckily, these were just the surrounding fields and the pitch had been cut ready to host Barrow Ladies first ever rugby game. It felt tough and tackles hurt more than they should have, a Barrow great David Cairns had even reached the ladies game as his daughter Leanne took to the pitch, unfortunately breaking her cheekbone in the first 10 minutes after receiving an elbow from a teammate.

It was a hard-fought game against an experienced Salford women's team, but Barrow Ladies came away with the win! A great result for the ladies and the town, showing yet again Cumbria's knack of producing great rugby talent.

As the winter league went on, Barrow faced many challenges, losing players to injury and

playing teams such as Wakefield and Leigh. It was always going to be tough, but the start always is and if the ladies kept their passion for the game, they knew it would always grow into something much bigger.

After two seasons in charge, John Johnson handed over the reigns to another Barrow Island stalwart, coach Simon Woodend who brought in a team of experienced coaches in Alex Broadhead, Paul Sykes and the strength and conditioning coach Steve Hartle. This boosted the ladies into a more professional set-up as they were training more regularly and being pushed to their fitness limits, as well as their in-play knowledge. Under Si's lead, the ladies made it to the 2019 grand final in Manchester against Warrington Wolves. A hard game as Warrington were led by ex-Warrington great Benny Westwood, and unfortunately for Barrow, they didn't come away with the win but brought back plenty of pride to their hometown showing they had what it took to be at the top.

Not many expected them to be competing at the top, but they shocked a lot of people

The next season they were destined to get back on the pitch and rule the championship, but unfortunately covid hit and the game was brought to a halt. This gave long-time rivals

Leigh the chance to recruit well in the off season and build up their team.

The 2021 championship battle was a great one, with Barrow being top one week and Leigh taking over the next. It came down to the last game when Barrow played away at Leigh after Barrow only managed to secure a draw at home in the reverse fixture. On the day, Leigh came out with real fighting spirit and managed to topple Barrow, winning the league and leaving the ladies heavy hearted.

The play-offs were still to come and after drawing Widnes at home, the ladies prepared well, knowing it would be a tough game after losing to them away.

The semi-final brought lots of excitement for Barrow bringing in new players to compliment the old and fans pouring in the gates to support the girls, it was one of the biggest crowds yet! Barrow ran away with the game and defeated Widnes to book themselves into the Grand Final at Thatto Heath against Leigh. The final battle.

The game was streamed live on Our League, another new exciting challenge for Barrow Ladies, featuring on TV in front



The 2021 finalists at Thatto Heath

of a huge crowd of at least 1000+ people in a rugby town. The pressure seemed to get to the team however, as they fell short and lost to Leigh 6-10. Bringing their returning season to an end with the hope to be joining Super League the year after. After securing second in the table and runners-up in the grand final.

Barrow's dreams came true in 2022 as they were promoted to Women's Super League and appointed a new head coach in Amanda Wilkinson after Simon Woodend decided to step down after the 2021 season. Amanda was a great addition

to the team, having led Wigan Women to victory in the first year of Women's Super League and always coaching men's rugby at UCLAN with some impressive results. Barrow were very lucky to snap her up and, with that, she began her first season in Super League 2 with Barrow.

The season was something of a revelation for Barrow. Not many expected them to be competing at the top, but they shocked a lot of people. With Amanda's impressive new signings and coaching skills, the Ladies went on to compete at the top of the league, just missing out on the Grand Final after reaching the semi-finals and losing out to Featherstone despite finishing an impressive second in the table, behind league leaders Warrington Wolves which of course felt like a repeat of 2019 once again. A huge achievement for the Ladies who impressed the whole of Barrow with their grit and determination.

Now the pre-season for 2023 begins. The ladies have been in the gym working hard ready to begin the new season. With more new signings and players returning from injury... Can Barrow be stopped?



The 2022 reserves side after a muddy training session!

Craven Park Named After Shipyard Boss

One hundred and fifty years old. That is some achievement by what is commonly known as Barrow Shipyard.

But Barrow RLFC are not far behind.

The club, known as Barrow Football Club when it was launched in 1875, switched from rugby union to rugby league in 1897.

While the shipbuilding business has had a host of names - from Barrow Ship Building Company when it was founded in 1871, to its present BAE Systems - it has always been based on the same Barrow Island site but now boasts offshoots all over the world.

In contrast Barrow RLFC have been nomads to a certain degree. Long before the town was developed, Barrow had a pitch on a field loaned from a local farmer.

That was on the Parade Ground which eventually became the town's Fire Station before their move - less than 100 yards from the current home.

Then the club moved to Barrow Island to play at Cavendish Park. Visiting teams in that era included Australia and New Zealand while in 1889 the Barrow and District team beat the Maoris eight years before the club joined the Northern Union.

The club had a good following and a cup-tie against Hunslet in 1908 had an estimated attendance of 12,000.

The First World War saw Cavendish Park requisitioned for the War Effort which forced Barrow to Little Park at Roose and while the club played there for

many seasons there was always the feeling that the ground was just too far away from the town centre to be popular.

Despite this a game in March 1923 attracted 12,214 spectators who paid a total of £581 11s 6d on a "ninepenny" admission.

Eventually a group of influential and keen fans set about looking for a more central home.

Over the years the club has had some outstanding performers

Leading the way was Alderman John Whinnerah, the club president and the Mayor of Barrow at the time. He had a great ally in Commander C W Craven, OBE, RN, a sport loving individual who started the fundraising with a personal donation of £500

Ald Whinnerah was said to have worked wonders in the way he "superintended the building of the new ground, raising funds and showing a wonderful working spirit."

No wonder he was reported to have said that he was "caught in a weak moment" when he agreed to the club's directors' request to find an alternative, more

central site for the ground.

The challenge was a big one - and the task ahead even bigger when the old Jute Works site on Hindpool Road was acquired.

Quite unbelievably the land then contained five reservoirs and was one-third under water, 13ft deep- in places. There was also a huge building almost 100 yards long, a mission hall, a railway track, masses of concrete, rubble, rubbish and weeds.

But the transformation into the new home of Barrow RL came about because of the "long hours of assiduous labour put in by enthusiastic employed and unemployed who gallantly surmounted all the many difficulties" according to Ald Whinnerah.

Quite miraculously the task was achieved inside 24 months.

On October 5, 1929 the first load of the 40,000 tons of filling-in material was tipped into one



of the reservoirs and by August 12, 1930 it was possible for the first sod, of the 92,000 cut, to be laid having been grown and transported from Little Park, Roose.

The outcome of all the hard work was a ground claimed to be able to accommodate 27,000 people with a grandstand 66 yards long with 14 tiers of seats; shelters over the Clive Street, Calcutta Street and Hindpool Road sides of the ground; and 1,200 railway sleepers installed for terracing.

Of course there was a need for timber, corrugated iron and paint in enormous quantities.

The cost of purchasing the site, equipping the ground and completing the transformation was estimated at £7,500 (close to £1.5m in today's figures) with the pitch 110 yards from goalpost to goalpost

and 73 yards from touchline to touchline. It was said that Everton, then a leading light in the soccer world, re-turfed their ground for £2,000 following the methods used at Craven Park.

So the big day came on Saturday, August 29, 1931 with Swinton, the reigning champions, as the first visitors.

The ground tied in the club with the shipyard when it was named Craven Park after Cmdr Craven, a leading figure in the Shipyard at the time and said to be "one of the greatest supporters of all kinds of sport the town has even known."

Over the years the club has had some outstanding performers - way back to Harry Gifford who won England recognition in 1908 and followed by players like Bill Burgess snr and Charlie Carr.

Then came the great Willie Horne, Jimmy Lewthwaite, Frank Castle, Denis Goodwin, Phil Jackson, and later followed by players like Bill Burgess jnr and David Cairns, John Cunningham, Eddie Szymala, Chris Camilleri, Dave Clarke . . . and a host of others.

Each generation of fans will have their own favourites.

The club has had some great days. The most memorable was the 21-12 Challenge Cup triumph over Workington at Wembley in 1955 while the club also lifted the Lancashire Cup by beating Oldham 12-2 in 1954/55 and then in 1983/84 with a 12-8 win over Widnes.

After the great exploits of coach Paul Creary's lads last season when his part-timers only missed out to full-time teams, hopes must be high for some great games to come.

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Purveyors of gas mantles, lighting and hardware, they supplied the first electric lights to Barrow Council and some of the first electric motors to Vickers.

The rapid development of electricity networks and the adoption of the new Swan electric light bulbs across the town, allowed the business to develop into a fully-fledged electrical wholesaler supplying

the town's electricians and industry with modern materials for the age of electricity.

The business continued to evolve and over a century later WT Thornton was acquired by a rapidly expanding Edmundson Electrical, who recognised the quality of the opportunities, the people and the long-term strengths of the area.

They were originally located on the newly built Ramsden Square, in what is now the Meeting Place.

Edmundson have gone on to become the leading electrical distributor in the UK, while always maintaining a very locally focused strategy, employing local people in well-resourced

and well stocked local businesses.

Our community involvement has continued with Social Impact and support for local sports clubs, professional and amateur, where requests involve floodlights, sponsorships, kits, ground maintenance and upgrading facilities, supporting their efforts to improve.

We offer work experience requests from schools, BAE, work placements, youth training schemes, school work experience, agencies and charities.

We have supported the Keswick to Barrow fund-raising walk for close to 20 years, sponsoring the fruit stations along route



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By contributing to activities and organisations that align with the business, BAE Systems want to make a positive social and economic contribution to the communities in which they live and work.

They see it is important for them to build and nurture mutually beneficial relationships between their business, their people and the local communities in which they operate. They do this by partnering with organisations on initiatives that have impact and meaning to their business and employees.

Key criteria where measurable impact can be demonstrated, are:

Armed Forces - supporting active service personnel, veterans and their families

Education & Skills - inspiring young people to consider science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects and careers; and

Local community - working to support the communities in which we operate, inspiring young people.

The company is excited to play a part in inspiring the next generation of leaders and innovators. They invest in people, technologies and infrastructure across their sites and focus

on supporting STEM activities and enabling social mobility through investment in skills and apprenticeships.

Local communities

BAE support their local communities, and encouraging their employees to get involved is important. That is why they actively seek opportunities to provide funding or in-kind support that can demonstrate a positive impact to the local communities in which they operate.

As well as donations, sponsorship and employee fundraising, they develop and support structured education programmes and enable their employees to volunteer their skills and time.

Volunteering remains an important part of their employees' career journey and can be pursued as a personal development goal.

Despite the circumstances, they have continued to increase and enhance the breadth and depth of their support, recognising the crucial role businesses like theirs can play in the long term economic, social and environmental development of the communities in which they operate.

Through their education and skills outreach programme, they aim to provide a range of

activities and resources designed to increase interest in STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Maths) and careers, as well as increasing aspiration and employability skills.

The activities are primarily delivered through their 350+ STEM Ambassadors, who are given three days per week to support, and by the Early Careers Teams, through stretch assignments.

In addition to the work with children and young people, from Key Stage 1 to 5, they also deliver employment support programmes such as Movement to Work and Kickstart, providing work experience opportunities for unemployed adults.

The activities usually run throughout the year, including

school holidays, and whilst the pandemic created a number of delivery challenges, through flexibility, innovation and determination they managed to create a range of virtual and remote alternatives.

As well as the activities they deliver directly, they also support a number of organisations in the delivery of education and skill events or projects, either through financial sponsorship or with support.

As the pandemic began to impact on the education system, BAE were able to re-invest some of the funding and resources they would have used for projects, to meet some of the immediate challenges experienced by schools and their pupils. This included the donation of 170 laptop computers for year 10 pupils in the local area, the

development of a STEM catch up fund for infant, junior and senior schools and support with Covid lateral flow testing, to assist with the safe re-introduction of staff and pupils to school.

Whilst the last few years have been a challenge for everyone positives are evident.

Development of virtual resources has enabled BAE to reach more young people, from a wider geographic area, enabling access to quality opportunities, which might not otherwise have been available.

The pandemic brought to prominence a digital divide, and whilst there is still some way to go, the distribution of devices to pupils without access will go some way towards meeting the inequalities that existed pre-pandemic.

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Barrow Raiders Community Foundation



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Community Foundation, a registered charity, is the community arm of Barrow Raiders RLFC. It is designed to support people who suffer disadvantage in some way, within the heart of Barrow.

Thanks to the initial and sustained support from BAE Systems, Cumbria Community Foundation and Sir John Fisher Foundation, plus many more partners who are now supporting us, we are able to deliver a programme of sport and wellbeing activities to over 800 people per week, from age groups nursery to ninety.

Advantage! is now a sustained but still developing programme with its initial focus and immediate dynamic impact being to improve the physical and mental wellbeing of the young people and adults, and vulnerable adults, in the heart of Barrow, through the medium of rugby league and healthy lifestyle initiatives.

A particular challenge is now to encourage our community to bounce back from Covid-19, and to work in collaboration with other groups and organisations in Barrow and the Furness area, in order to make sustainable positive impact on the lives of our citizens.



Mini Raiders

Inclusive, fun, themed multi-skills and rugby sessions developing the ABC's and fundamental movement skills in children aged 2-5 years. Parents are encouraged to join in these engaging sessions, to enjoy and learn along with their little ones.



Junior Raid Runners

Athletics sessions for under 16's looking to develop their track and field skills, no matter what their current skill and experience level.

Held weekly with qualified coaches, these sessions will aim to challenge participants to bring out the best, and for those that wish to continue their passion for athletics, filter through to Barrow Striders AC - who we currently train alongside.



Raider Festivals

Building on the success of the Barrow Bounce Back-Give Sport a Chance initiative, we aim to calendar a number of festival events throughout the playing season, using match days, targeting schools and providing fun social opportunities to a wide group of age ranges in a number of different activities.

Raider Readers

Listening to and reading with the children in schools, we believe, is very important. The coaches act as role models and advocate the importance of reading.

Educating Raiders

Advantage! deliver in over 20 primary and secondary schools in the Furness area, coaching rugby league in a fun and engaging way. Advantage! also deliver multi skills, dodgeball and athletics, and offer extra-curricular provision too, with each child receiving feedback via our bespoke after school booklets. Many of the students go on to access other Advantage! programmes

Raiders Boxercise

A health and well-being initiative. The sessions combine boxercise movements and circuit training to help improve the fitness in a fun way, for all who attend - no experience necessary!

The Advantage! Programmes

Advantage! is now a sustained but still developing programme with its initial focus and immediate dynamic impact being to improve the physical and mental wellbeing of the young people and adults

continues overleaf



Raid Runners

A weekly running group for those in the community looking to gradually improve fitness, have fun, and meet new people. Led by our Advantage! coaches and Raiders stars - no running experience required! Varied routes and difficulty levels.

Raiders on the Road

To tackle social isolation, we sought very early on to take rugby to the communities, in the first instance, rather than expecting communities to come to us. This initial pilot was so successful, Raiders on the Road is back, with engagements taking place in areas of need.

Able Raiders

Able Raiders is a weekly fitness and well-being session for adults and young people with learning disabilities. These sessions are coached by Advantage! staff and our Raiders stars, delivering a range of sports including but not limited to: Rugby, football, dodgeball, boccia, curling, beach volleyball, basketball, archery, impromptu dance parties, and more! An inclusive and rewarding session for all, no rugby or sporting experience necessary. New-comers always welcome!

Raiders Grow the Game

Barrow is steeped in Rugby League tradition, and our ambition has always been to instil a love of rugby for a new audience, whether as participants or spectators. As such, we are developing, not only competitive playing opportunities, but social playing opportunities as well addressing inclusivity. Collaborating with our community clubs, and our free season ticket for children and school/club of the week project, we are certainly making strides to putting Barrow firmly back on the rugby league map.

Raider Girls

Bringing girls together to discover and enjoy rugby, develop their skills, meet new people, alongside being active and healthy. We look to progress the girls through a pathway via our Barrow Ladies Reserves team - where Advantage! qualified instructors offer weekly Strength and Conditioning sessions, alongside technical team training, looking to progress into Barrow Ladies Super League team.

Raiders Dodgeball

A club open to boys and girls looking to develop dodgeball skills, make friends, and have fun. Sessions will cover a range of dodging, catching, and throwing techniques and tactics, and chance to understand and play the game of dodgeball, with a vision to eventually develop an established team. No experience necessary - just the will to learn and have fun!

School/Club of the Week

Advantage! have great links with schools and community clubs, and as a Foundation we like to ensure we are giving the opportunity for children and parents to enjoy the electric match-day experience with Barrow Raiders home games, down at the Matt Johnson Prestige Stadium. Children are invited to the ground, supervised by coaches, parents, teachers and guardians, to be mascots and flag-bearers before the game, along with a lap of honour and tag games during half-time.



Rambling Raiders

Rambling Raiders is a walking for health group for members of the community and beyond, to come along and join Advantage! on a variety of weekly well-being walks in our local area. Our objective is to help children and adults become active and healthy through walking and tackle social isolation.

Raider Braves

An inclusive rugby league participation group for boys aged 7-16. Providing a safe and supportive environment for boys to learn the skills and rules of rugby league, have fun, and if they feel ready, they can join one of our fantastic community clubs. This club is inclusive and free to all who attend. No rugby experience necessary!



Raiders Community

We realise the importance of collaboration, working with our partners and organisations in order to target communities and individuals who are disadvantaged the most. The Matt Johnson Prestige Stadium is fast becoming a hub for community activity, but we also seek to engage with communities, via our Raiders on the Road initiative

Golden Raiders

Advantage! Golden Raiders is our group dedicated to chair-based exercise and exercise for the elderly and those with mobility issues. With a range of chair-based movements to music, including TheraBand and ball work, participants are encouraged to participate at a level challenging enough for themselves. Come and join us for a fantastic workout, with a little optional tea or coffee to finish! Sessions are held weekly, at various locations.

Raider Leaders

Although our Raider Leaders programme is already a strong feature of Advantage!, this initiative will continue to grow and develop, providing larger groups of students KS3 and above with the fantastic opportunity to coach the children of our local community, including at camps where they are entitled to a free place. We intend to push this programme to the limits in order for participants to gain as much use and experience from the programme as possible - including the chance to gain coaching qualifications.

Silver Raiders

A walking rugby group for ages 50+, but open to all those keen to have a go at rugby league in a more controlled pace. Weekly sessions coached by our Raiders stars, with a chance to play in friendlies and festivals, make friends, and be involved in a fantastic group. Games of touch rugby, ball-handling skill drills, group challenges, and plenty of try scoring! Come down and give it a go, no rugby experience necessary!

Raider Camps

Multi-skills sports camps for children of all ages, backgrounds, and sporting abilities. Fun and inclusive multi-sport camps, with games and activities promoting fundamental movement skills. Each camp typically includes a range of quizzes, crafts, and musical challenges, alongside coaching from our Raiders stars and workshops promoting balanced nutrition and education in smart eating habits. Delivered by Advantage! every half-term and major holiday.



Become an Advantage! Pal

An Advantage! Pal is someone who is a really positive member of our community who wants to make a difference by identifying with the aims and activities of Advantage! You are committed to improving the lives of people in our community and prepared to do something positive to help. You or a family member may have been involved with an Advantage! project and benefitted from it. To be a Pal you might want to make a financial donation to Advantage! to help it sustain and develop its projects

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