

Witney & District Swimming Club AGM 2011: Chair's Report of 2010/11

After the challenges and difficulties that were the focus of my previous annual report, I am delighted to be writing about the progress and achievements the Club has made over the past year, and to have the opportunity to thank the people who have made this possible. 2010-11 was our first year under the stewardship of our joint head coaches Chantal Clavaud, as Senior Coach, and Elaine Anstee, as Junior Coach. We entered into this arrangement with lots of unknowns but plenty of enthusiasm and determination to make it work for the benefit of swimmers and the club. I am sure all swimmers, coaches and parents will join me in both praising and thanking Chantal and Elaine for the impressive manner in which they set out about retaining the best and introducing new ideas and practices into training and enhanced developmental support for swimmers. As with all major changes, not everything goes to plan all of the time and sometimes things go awry or are overlooked but overall we have come through stronger and extremely well placed to support our swimmers both now and into the future; we thank you all for your patience and continued support. We must also congratulate Elaine on achieving her Level 3 Coaching Certificate; Chantal is completing her level 3 course this year.

We now have a structured training and review system within Junior Squad that enables swimmers to progress through water babies, novices and the various junior squad coaching lanes, and into the senior squads, according to not only age but ability, aptitude and developmental maturity. We feel sure that all swimmers will benefit from this individual monitoring and guidance. Chantal introduced 1-1 feedback sessions for senior swimmers and parents at the end of the year to help with individual training plans and ambitions for the coming year and this is something we may consider introducing for Junior Swimmers next summer. For the first time, swimmers were able to train regularly in a 50m pool over the summer; something we wish to continue and expand for next year. I am sure senior squad parents and swimmers have appreciated the move from Brize Norton Airbase to Carterton's new pool for mid-week evening training sessions. Although some of our swimmers benefitted from the additional training and development camps provided by ISIS, a club set up to provide county-wide training and competition, I have to let you know that ISIS was unsustainable for a number of reasons and hence our determination to provide swimmers with a variety of developmental opportunities within our own club; the first of these being the 50m training sessions.

We now have a very strong coaching support team who have regular meetings with Elaine and Chantal to review practices and discuss individual progress and needs. We have said goodbye, alongside a huge thank you, to Jo Blackford and Sheila Cooper who have both helped with Red Squad and Jo with morning training sessions for a number of years. We have welcomed a number of new coaches, most of whom are parents, and we are grateful to Michelle Morris (with congratulations on achieving her level 1 coaching certificate) and Gavin Doughty who will be working with Juniors, Blan Walker who moves from Juniors to Red Squad (with congratulations on achieving her Level 2 coaching certificate) and Karl Egleton (Level 2 coach), who takes Orange squad on Sunday evenings. We are also grateful and pleased that our existing coaches are continuing with us: Malcolm Evans, Catherine Kendall, Di Moore, Simon Emm, Sue Cable, Sue Fifield, Sally-Anne Clavaud, Sally Barrett and Sue Trask. If anyone else would like to join the team, we would be delighted to hear from you. I would also like to thank our senior swimmers who regularly help with junior coaching Ellen Moore, Robert Anstee and Dan Possee.

But as 'seasoned' parents will know and understand, it takes as many if not more people behind the scenes to run our club. A number of long-standing committee members and volunteers are taking a well-deserved rest from club activities and I would like to record our warmest thanks to: Alan Bark, who has been an outstanding Treasurer; Sharon Bark who has been our workforce/volunteer coordinator for home events

and ensured that come what may we have had sufficient officials to run home events, club championships and time trials (Sharon is not escaping completely though and remains as Child Welfare Officer!); Stuart McLean, who handed over the reins of Open Meet Coordinator and who has been instrumental in setting up our new database that enables the coaches to monitor swimmer progress more effectively and efficiently; Bob Whiteley for his efficient and effective stewardship of our Swim 21 return; Tracey Moss for running the 100 Club. Thank you all.

As a consequence, many new volunteers have come forward and we thank Amanda Anderson for taking on the role of volunteer coordination for home events (Chris and Caroline Watkins are kindly continuing with coordinating away galas); Robert Leese for taking on the role of Treasurer and Shelly Nutt for organising Open Meets. We still need a volunteer to run the 100 Club and to coordinate Swim 21 (I have agreed to undertake the Swim 21 role temporarily - so please let me know if you can help!). Many thanks to Nicola Patrick for her sterling work on the website and amusing email updates – somehow she always manages to find a way to make even the most routine of messages bring a smile to my face! And to Blan Walker and Amanda Pitson for the Diddy Championships and all those parents who support home events as officials, providing drinks, announcements or front-of-house activities – so many are needed and we are grateful to you all for your time and enthusiasm.

We are also, fortunate to retain a number of long-serving officials and committee members and I should like to take this opportunity to once again thank Sue Cable for her work as membership secretary, and alongside Denise Gorman, for organising our highly successful annual Open Meet; Sally-Anne Clavaud as secretary and for running swim-shop (we hope everyone likes the new Witney tops for swimmers and coaches); and Cath Kendall as fixtures secretary. Di Moore and Bob Whiteley also ensure we link into the Master's and Water polo sections of the club, respectively. It is pleasing that a number of parents have joined the Master's over the past year.

Thanks as always to our senior swimmers who have acted as lifeguards during the year (Naomi Moore, Anneliese Whiteley, Nathan Harkin, Dan Harkin, Tom McLean, Dan Possee, Jack Kendall, Adam Colling, Oliver Sharpin and also to James Watkins (elder brother of David and Harry). Congratulations to Yolanda Speare who has just completed her NPLQ course and who will be helping us out in the coming year.

For the first time in a few years, we say *au revoir* to a relatively large number of senior swimmers who are off to University, we hope to see you back training in the holidays!! Congratulations, best wishes and every success to Ann Tivy (Oxford), Tom McLean (Southampton – joining James Bark!), Dan Possee (Bristol), Anneliese Whiteley (Cardiff), Naomi Moore (Nottingham Trent) and Dan Harkin (Hull). With a clutch of A* and A grades between them, they are all remarkable role models for our younger swimmers – and almost all have also given much back to the club in their last two years as life guards, coaches and as captains. Especial thanks to Tom and Naomi for their excellent work as Club Captains.

Now that the Club has strong a coaching foundation in place, backed up by a dedicated and enthusiastic team of parent volunteers, we can turn our attention in the coming year to additional development activities to replace those that ISIS was intending to provide and re-energise our fund raising to support those activities. We were successful with our bid for a British Gas grant so already have some funds available to support one or two events for all swimmers. We will also plan to hold our first fun gala in memory of the everlasting foundations and ethos instilled in the Club by John and Anthea Sadler.

It is inevitable that I may have missed thanking people so can I end by thanking all parents and volunteers for your continued support and by wishing all our swimmers a very successful year ahead.