

AGM Swim Report 2018

It is hard to believe that a year has gone by since I sat here reflecting on the achievements of 2017. It reinforces the fact that time is such a precious commodity and that we should all take every opportunity to be part of the moment and to appreciate it. For as I look back on the achievements of our swimmers in the last year, there were indeed many such moments to both recognise and value.

Our 2017 Arena League campaign ended in similar fashion to our first in the London League with a third place in the final gala resulting in us finishing third in the league and one place from promotion. However, we learnt a few months later that one of the Division One Teams had to pull out and this opened the door for us. So far in the 2018 season we have more than held our own with third place finishes in the first two rounds thus ensuring us a place in the top gala in division one next month.

Our final gala of 2017 was our own Arthur Blake Memorial relay Gala which we once again retained in an exciting night of swimming. When we went on to retain our home trophy gala in the summer it meant that we have yet to lose in either gala now for three years running.

2018 began with another successful awards night and it was great to see so many swimmers and parents in attendance. It is always a good time to recognise those swimmers who may not have won medals at the club championships but who had swum consistently well in them or had worked hard throughout the season in training. It was also the time to announce that Sian, Libby, Dan R, Mya and Bailey would be captains for 2018 and to thank both Grace and Lily for their help as captains over the previous two/three years.

The first few months of the year is always dominated by the County Championships and once again I was pleased to see the number of accepted entries increase to make us the 5th biggest competing club with 33 swimmers.

We finished 7th in the overall points which was on ranking and 50 more points than last year. In total we had:-

- 22 top 3 finishes (10 silvers and 12 bronzes including two overall silvers)
- 104 top 8 finishes
- 162 personal bests (over 75%)
- 28 club records (including 4 all-time records)
- First in the unofficial loudest support award

Once again, we saw a high number of club records tumble and it was refreshing to see some new names on the records list. It is always particularly pleasing to see relay records get beaten and in fact our senior girls of 2018 would have lapped our senior girls of 1988. Significant progress indeed!

During March and April, we look to provide more competitive opportunities to swimmers throughout the club with Novice galas and Open meets and the Chiltern League which uses "No Faster Than" times to ensure swimmers of similar ability are entered. The final round was in Witney in what was the hottest pools ever experienced but the coach journey and the obligatory McDs stop on the way home gave many swimmers a taste of what galas are really all about!

In May we had our highest ever number of qualifiers compete in the South East Regional Long Course Championships where we also entered two girl's relay teams for the first time. We didn't just make the numbers up either with 8 finals coming from Mya, Dan, Ted, Joe, Charlotte and three from Libby.

June and July are generally our end of season events with the Maxwell Meet and Wycombe meets an important part of our competition structure. It was great to see over 60 swimmers take part in the Maxwell Meet, our biggest contingency ever.

This year though it was great to have four swimmers qualify for the English Nationals in Sheffield and once again they all went on to do themselves and the club proud with Izzy and Joe both finishing as first reserve for the final, Ted 13th and Dan came an impressive 8th in the final.

During the summer we faced yet more challenges with pool timetable changes being imposed by SERCO the Stadium's pool operators. Thankfully, following a determined publicity campaign, they saw sense and our training time was not reduced.

After the summer break we once again demonstrated our strength in depth beating some top opposition to win the Dunstable Trophy Gala and our younger swimmers were deprived of their final round of the junior league because none of the other teams were prepared to host the gala.

After 10 years of trying we finally got our hands on the top club trophy at this year's BBATT meet. With 92 swimmers competing in 563 swims nearly 400 personal best times were set, and amazing 16 club records broken.

Last month we ventured into our first ever training camp with 29 swimmers heading off to Kent for a long weekend of orienteering, climbing, archery, running, circuits, teambuilding games oh and the odd bit of swimming. The camp was a great success with all the kids behaving impeccably and coming away with some personal best times that they will look back on with fond memories. Thanks goes out to Mark for organising the camp and to Vicki and Ellen for giving up their time to work alongside Mark and I in supporting the swimmers over the three days.

A few weeks ago, we had another large contingent qualify for the South East Regional Short Course Championships in Portsmouth. In fact, out of the 60 clubs that entered we had the 8th biggest number of accepted entries in the Region and the 3rd from our county! The highlight came in the men's 100m IM where Joe finished 4th and Dan snatched the bronze – what a shame this event is no longer part of the County Championships.

Finally, to our club championships with an incredible 150 swimmers participating over the two days in over 1000 swims. Last weekend we have already witnessed our swimmers do some amazing things. Some have competed for the first time, some have swum 25m for the first time, some have dived for the first time, some have won pens, others have won medals, and a few have broken records and achieved qualifying times. A special mention to Emily Sampson who took this opportunity to compete again following a significant back operation in the spring. Despite being unable to dive Emily still managed to medal and set a few county qualifying times. Proving once again that winning can take many forms.

So it is fair to say that it has been another year of significant progress for the club. None of this is possible, however, without the hard work and commitment of the many individuals who give up their time to either teach and coach poolside, officiate at competitions or make sure pools are booked, bills are paid, and processes are managed. I would, however, like to recognise and give personal thanks to our large team of senior swimmers who support the coach's poolside and who give something back to the club as well as inspire the next generation of swimmers. Many of them have also worked hard to become qualified and in Dan and Lily we have seen them go on to run sessions and so allow me some valued evenings off. Your help is very much appreciated. Andy