

Marlborough Penguins ASC - Chairman's Report - November 2017

The past year has seen progress and success on a number of fronts for Marlborough Penguins. There will always be frustrations and setbacks but when I pause to reflect on where the club is at the moment, I am convinced that both in the pool and in the running of the club, we have moved forward. In the rest of this report I will reflect on some of the successes and frustrations but it is important, at the outset, to thank all those people who in some way or another, however big or small their contribution has been, have supported the Club through the last year. We depend on the efforts of a relatively small group of people and we appreciate them and their support.

In the pool

Club Championships July 2017 - The slightly later date of the Club Champs in early July resulted in more swimmers competing than the year before and another highly competitive series of events took place. We will continue to review the success of this event and look to improve areas that we feel can be improved. This is a Club highlight of the year and a huge thank you goes to all those involved in the organisation and running of the Championships over the two days.

County Championships 2017 - This year we had 41 swimmers qualified in events for the 2017 County Championships. The swimmers attending the Championships produced the club's most successful results since 2011. We had representatives in 236 events with 37 finals reached. They came away with 61 medals (20 in 2016); 20 gold, 15 silver and 26 bronze medals, plus a relay Gold.

Max Twining went on to represent Wiltshire at the Inter-Counties in Sheffield.

Regional Championships - 8 swimmers qualified in 22 events: Max Twining, Peter Harper, Hannah Brown, Joe Price, Harry Findlay, Ellie Goldsmith, Zara Newman and Nat Watson.

National Qualifiers - For the second time in two years we were delighted to have two swimmers achieve national qualifying times; Max and Peter qualified in four events with Max gaining an excellent 4th place in the 50m Breastroke final.

Winter - The 2016/17 Winter League finished with Penguins in 5th place overall, an excellent team performance all round.

The Summer League in 2017 finished with Penguins in 3rd place in Division 2 following their promotion from Division 3 last year. An excellent performance and with changes to the format of the competition, it will be interesting to see what next season brings.

Open Meets continue to be the proving ground for our talented swimmers with many of them regularly improving their pbs and going on to gain county, regional and even national qualifying times. We are very grateful to Rich and Lara for being involved in the organisation of entries and attendance for these events. One of our targets for the coming year is to see more of our Development Squad swimmers involved in these events, as well as attending Diddy galas and Development galas.

Masters Swimming - Masters swimming has maintained its presence with some useful performances at County Competitions and further afield.

In this year's Counties, the Ladies finished a very good 6th place in their points table whilst the Men managed 9th and we were 6th overall, compared to 8th last year. Later this month three Penguins will be at the Masters Inter-Counties competition to be held at Millfield School, representing Wiltshire at Millfield. Lynne, Jenny Batten (in her first year of returning to swimming) and Peter are looking forward to a busy day!

Peter competed in the South West short Course Championships in September and Sarah Forbes in the National Short Course Championships at the end of October.

More of our swimmers are looking to Open Water swims for a challenge and Paul excelled himself again by completing the River Dart 10km in less than 2 hours in September and he was joined by Carolyn, competing in the swim for the first time!

In April of this year, Peter competed in the World Masters Games in Auckland, New Zealand, managing three bronze medals and one silver medal from the six events entered, to the surprise of all who know him.

Once again, the stage is set for a gripping 'Push and Glide' competition in a couple of weeks' time, with a question mark hanging over the form of perennial favourite Mike, who has suffered a miserable season of injuries. The vultures are gathering to claim his crown.

Other events -

The Club ran the Style Competition this year, with a change to its format in order to make it more accessible to some of our young and inexperienced swimmers. A great fun event was enjoyed by many swimmers who had not participated in a competition before and this event will continue to evolve.

Again, the Club organised a successful Primary School swimming Gala for local schools in February.

Marlborough Penguins Open Meet - The second Penguins Open Meet took place October. It appears to have been a success for swimmers and the organising team but a review of the event will look to identify areas for development alongside the positives. Congratulations must go to all those involved in the organisation of this major event in our current calendar.

The training programmes provided by Head Coach, Richard, have clearly contributed to the progress we have been making in the pool over the last few years and we look forward to that continuing. Richard's success has been recognised in the County with him being appointed Head Coach of the County team that headed to Sheffield, where the team gained a very creditable 11th place. Rich is also becoming involved in County Development as Deputy Head Coach, delivering Development Planning and Performance sessions across the county.

Out of the pool

We have enjoyed the benefits of an expanded Committee this year and it has been great to welcome new people and the different ideas and points of view they have brought. There is always plenty to do and being able to share the load makes it more likely that the Club will move forward.

Swim 21 (Now known as Swim Mark) - accreditation was renewed for 2017. There are some changes to the format and nature of accreditation, supposedly simplifying the process but it still requires a great deal of effort and administration to maintain this important accreditation. Thanks to all those on the Committee who contributed to the process, particularly Karen who finished off the documentation prior to submission.

Swim and membership fees - we continue to look at the costs we incur as a club and how we can ensure our income enables us to meet those costs. Many thanks to Lynne for maintaining a tight grip on our finances and for keeping us on the straight and narrow. In the future we will continue to need to look carefully at how we differentiate the costs to swimmers to ensure value for money for all our swimmers. It is important to note, however that we are still one of the best value swimming clubs in the area, if not the region.

One of the great successes away from the pool this year was the excellent Summer Social held at the Rugby Club on a lovely sunny day. Well done to those who suggested that the event be held and to those involved in the organisation. It was a real pleasure to spend time with club members, parents and supporters away from the pressures of a training session or gala. A repeat event will be very welcome!

The Presentation Evening in September, following the Club Championships in July, was another major success. The event was superbly organised, as usual, and certainly the lighter September evening made for a packed Town Hall. As ever, it was great to see the young (and not so young) swimmers coming up to collect their trophies and medals.

We have also continued to look at our information management, investigating how we can join up and streamline the various types of information we need and improve how we can use it. We are not quite there yet, having looked at one or two systems, but it is such an important step for the Club to take that we need to be sure that what we opt for provides us with the tools to make all the administrative tasks we are saddled with today, as straightforward to manage as possible.

Following the running down of old supplies, consultation with members and the good work of Carl, we look forward to a smarter and more identifiable group of swimmers in the New Year. The new Club merchandise becomes available and I for one will be desperate to try out the new Club onesy!

Work force/Volunteers - Although we have continued to see progress in the training of officials and we have enjoyed the help of many parents and volunteers, we are still desperately in need of poolside help and, in particular, people willing to teach and coach. If we are to cover our existing sessions safely and successfully, let alone seek to develop, we need to find more volunteers. We have lost valuable people during the year and they need to be replaced and the workforce expanded, especially with the Club operating at 98% capacity!

We will also need to be mindful over the next twelve months that members of the current Committee have indicated that they will not be able to continue in the future and their roles will need to be filled.

Other developments -

Development Coach - despite all our best efforts over the last couple of years we have not been able to attract the right person to fill this important role. In response to the disappointment of this we will need to look at how we can provide our Development Squad swimmers with the support they need in order to maintain the notable progress we have made in recent years.

Finally, I would like to thank the Committee who covered for my absence as I went walkabout for three months at the beginning of the year. Particularly to Beany, who stepped up as Chairman, and to Karen and Lynne, who shouldered more responsibility during the time I was away.

As ever, I apologise if I have missed anything out of this report.

Peter Seward
Chairman