Chairman’s Report 2016

I am amazed how time passes by. Ten years ago, when first looking for swimming lessons for Jude we stumbled across the swimming club by accident. On the recommendation of a fellow parent we attended a Saturday morning session with trepidation.

My first impressions of the club were mixed. I remember the heat of the pool, the old wooden seats (what was left of them) and the dirty fish pond that is now queuing area for the “Ice” and OJ’s.

However my most endearing memory of that time was the sea of volunteers on poolside. All dressed in their white tops – giving up their Saturday and Sunday mornings to help teach and train the young swimmers. At that time I was a volunteer in another sporting club and I fully understood the dedication and organisation that goes on behind the scenes to make it look so effortless.

Now, with all the years that have passed by I am proud to say that this club still functions with the same enthusiasm, excitement and commitment from its volunteers. Without which this club would not exist. It is not easy – processes change and we as a club have to adapt and evolve. Swim21, new welfare legislation, adopting more technology for galas, entering galas and registering members – the list goes on and on. All this balanced against managing increasing pool hire cost from a provider who is enduring their own budget cuts, continues to challenge the club.

Volunteers come and go, but we maintain our standards. In the past 6 months we have said goodbye to 3 long standing committee members. Ian and Chris Muscroft have served this club with great devotion and their efforts in help guide this club in difficult times cannot be underestimated. Also, Sue Mogford, who successful raised funds for the club over a number of years. I thank them all for their loyalty and appreciate their reasons for stepping aside.

However, this creates opportunities for the next generation of volunteers and we are fortunate that we do have people who want to be involved. Maybe that is based on all our first impressions of the club, our first time walking over the bridge. Whatever the reason, the desire to provide a helping hand in strengthening and supporting the club is commendable. As parents we value others making a commitment to our children on cold wet damp mornings.

I have only been in this post for a couple of months and we have had to deal with the issue of increasing pool hire head on. Costs have increased by £6,000 this year which has had an effect on our cash reserves. Unfortunately this has led to an increase in fees and a review of costs. Whilst we have stopped the decline, the next couple of years will require careful financial management. Every expense will need to be justified until we create an acceptable level of reserves.

However, it has not all been challenging during my short time as Chairman. We now have our Head Coach, Guy Fawkes, as a full time resident at training sessions. We no longer have to share him with the Potash Mine and I am sure our swimmers will reap the rewards of his additional commitment over the coming months and years.

Success has also touched the club in and out of the water. Our swimmers continue to qualify and perform well in national and regional events, we continue to increase our reputation for hosting successful swimming events, and will host our largest gala yet in 3 weeks’ time.

We also see a major change on poolside in the next 2 weeks when the new track start blocks are installed. Our thanks and congratulations go to Don Briggs who has managed the entire process from funding to installation. The blocks will also be available to the public and other swimming clubs using the facility which reflects our commitment to Tees Active. It will also be a great training aid to our swimmers especially when combined with the backstroke starts which have also been purchased for the clubs sole use.

In closing I would like to thank all the Committee for their time and dedication over the past year. I personally would like to thank Lynn Shepherd and Chris Muscroft for the support they have shown me over the past few months in settling in to this position. I certainly have some big shoes to fill, but I promise I will continue to try and fill them and do my best for Billingham Amateur Swimming Club.

Mark Blackmore

Chairman

September 2016