

Apollo Swimming Club Chairman's Report 2020 (Colin Vickery)

Last year was a very good year for the Apollo club all around. During the course of the year we appointed 11 new members. Lucy Ham joined us on the Committee as a Newsletter Editor at the beginning of the year and Abi Hirons joined us as a Pool Helper (with a view to training as a Lifeguard) towards the end of the year. Also towards the end of the year, we found that we had a full minibus on Tuesday evenings so it is nice to know that local disabled people are making good use of it following all of our many years of hard fundraising. Needless to say that since the winter has set in the numbers have dropped off again but it shows that the potential is there. Currently the Apollo club has 110 registered members which seems to be about where our membership sits. According to the clubs records, we had exactly 110 members several years ago then it dipped to 97 for a couple of years and now it's back at 110 again.

I'm pleased to say that we took part in 4 interclub galas last year whereas there had only been 2 in the previous year. We came 3rd at Wimborne at the beginning of the year. We were at Street on the 11th May, came 2nd at Plymouth on 27th July taking 5 golds, 17 silver and 7 bronze medals and then of course at the end of September we hosted our own gala at Sherborne. There were two very well attended skittles evenings, the Woodlarks camp in May and of course the Table Top sale at the end of November. All of this on top of our normal regular swimming and sailing sessions. Paul has confirmed to me that he is happy to support Apollo sailing on Sutton Bingham again for at least this forthcoming summer.

I was a little disappointed last year in that there were not enough people put themselves forward to support the usual Christmas gala that we normally hold ahead of our party. For a great many years we've held a 'light hearted' Christmas gala for those of our members wishing to take part followed by a Christmas Party with a presentation etc afterwards at the party in the evening. The Christmas gala has always been useful because, as it's not taken too seriously, is ideal for any new members or anyone who maybe a little low on confidence to take part without becoming too overwhelmed by it all. I had a look back through the records and interestingly there were 20 swimmers who took part in our Christmas gala in 2013 but last year there were not even enough to put it on. I very much hope that missing this gala last year was a one off. We still have all of the trophies and all it takes is for enough members to put their names forward to make it happen. So Carers please take note, anybody can enter no matter how old or young and irrespective of their swimming ability and it would be great if you encouraged them to do so.

Last year was the Apollo Clubs 50th anniversary year and we all celebrated with a fantastic party to mark the occasion on 12th October. It was attended by well over 100 people and it was very nice to see some Members from the Clubs very early days turn up to reminisce. Although there was still much preparation for some our Committee to do, it was particularly nice that we had caterers in for the evening which allowed the Committee to celebrate a little more with the members rather than having to work all weekend on it as would have otherwise been the case.

I have been the Clubs Chairman for 12 years or so now and after careful consideration I have decided to step down tonight. During that time, there have been some unbelievably happy times that the Committee have organised and we have all shared together. To mention just a few: there was both the 40th and the 50th Anniversary Parties, and do you all remember the Christmas Meal that we had over at Yeovilton in 2010? It had been snowed off in the December but undeterred went ahead in the middle of January and what about the Simon Weston Evening can you believe that was over 2 years ago now?

One of the first things that I wanted to do when I became Chairman was to set up a club website for encouraging new members and volunteers and I can remember Mike Searl coming down from Bristol on a Saturday morning for a chat at Goldenstones and he's been running the website for us ever since. We owe him great thanks. We have recruited many new people through our website over the years. I always try to put in a great deal of effort in following up enquiries resulting from the website but only a small percentage of people who follow a website visit up with a phone call actually end up joining the club. The website has far more potential and expanding it maybe something that the new Committee wish to look at going forward.

I would just like to emphasise, at this point, that my reasons for stepping down from Chairman are simply because I have been doing it for a very long time, my personal circumstances are changing very soon because I am retiring from my day job and I believe that somebody else should be given a chance. I think that a fresh 'face of the club' is now required and I believe that others on the Committee should always feel that there comes a time when they can step up and will not be prevented from having a go because somebody like me is growing old in the position and stubbornly refusing to budge.

One of the other things that I've also always tried to do, although maybe not so obvious to many, is I've tried to help other local organisations for example a couple of years ago we let the Chernobyl Children's Lifeline Charity borrow our minibus so that they could ferry children from Belarus around the area

whilst they were over here staying for a fortnight and I always try to offer opportunities for youngsters wanting to volunteer to work with us as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. The SPARK Volunteer bureau actually publicise this for us with young people through Yeovil College. I believe it's a 2 way thing and it works very well. They get their work experience and we get a Lifeguard for a couple of years. In a moment we will be coming to the point on the agenda where we will be electing the Trustees for the following year and you will see that there are quite a few changes proposed. Jonathan Dixon has stood down as Transport Representative during the past year and on behalf of the club I would like to thank him from the bottom of my heart. During the time he was Transport Manager he made a brilliant job of it and I hope that he will be driving for the club for many years to come. What we've normally found in the past is that the Committee tends to go on for years virtually unchanged and then once in a while there is a big shake up. This is one of those years when you will be pleased to know there is some new young blood coming in to it.

I would like to thank all of our Drivers and Lifeguards in particular Ali Parnell. Not only has Ali taken over the training of our Lifeguards since Brian Higgins left Sherborne Leisure Centre but in the past couple of weeks she has also taken over the Club Welfare Officer Role. Goldenstones, Sherborne Leisure Centre and Sutton Bingham Sailing Club continue to provide fantastic support to the club and we are very grateful to them.

I would like to thank the present Committee for their very hard work and loyal support over the years and in particular during the period at the beginning of last year when I was unavailable for several weeks looking after my father. Sue, Sheila, Etive, Graeme, Jackie D, Gill, Paul, Jonathan, Jean, Sarah, Jackie M and Lucy you were brilliant, thank you. Thank you also to Sue Bullivant our President for the past 3 or 4 years. Even after we took delivery of the new minibus she continued to do, what I think she would say in her own words, 'be there and fighting for the Apollo club'.

Post Meeting Note: The Chairman read out a resignation letter from Sue later during the AGM in which she explained that she was leaving the club 'due to family commitments'. Sue has been involved with the Apollo Club on and off, in different capacities, for most of its 50 year history and we wish her well.

I think it is important to remember at this point that although the Committee do a fantastic job, the club also relies heavily on the efforts of the families and carers of its members. There would be no point in us putting on all of the clubs events if you did not get our members to our sessions and also help with the organisation and fundraising so I thank you all.

Thank you and I wish you all, the new Committee and the club all the very, very best for the future. It's been an absolute honour being Chairman.