

RINGWOOD SEALS SWIMMING CLUB AGM

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT MARCH 2012

This has been my first year as chairman of anything, let alone a swimming club and I have been learning throughout the year. I volunteered when David Plested decided to step down as Chairman. The club was facing a crisis with Ann ill and then it got worse when Mike Sussman decided he could not devote the time required to be Swim Coach.

I stepped in because I wanted to help keep the club going as I think it fulfils a very valuable niche in the swimming club market. We are a friendly, very reasonably priced club that offers children the opportunity to improve their swimming skills, swim competitively and also have fun and keep fit. As a parent of 3 swimmers I am very grateful for what the club can offer.

So looking back over the year, thank God Ann has come through, with a clean bill of health, smiling and working hard as ever for the club. She did receive the wonderful boost, which was thoroughly deserved, of not only being nominated for, but winning, the Southern region final of BBC's Unsung Hero, which is part of the BBC Sports personality of the year programme. This quite rightly recognised her fantastic devotion to the cause of teaching children swimming for more than 25 years, not only with Ringwood Seals but also via the Swimming Academy.

Meanwhile Mike Sussman decided that he did not have enough time to be both Swimming Coach and run his own Company and so he reluctantly stepped down from this position in August. I would like to take this opportunity to formally thank him for the hard work he put into the Club, not only during the sessions but outside too, e.g.: ensuring that the club had up to date documentation. Mike was responsible for updating the Handbook for the swimmers and also for putting in place a training manual for the coaches.

So how did we cope? Well as you know unfortunately we did have to cut down the training sessions slightly whilst Ann was undergoing treatment, but we

were lucky enough to find Jeanette Francis who helped in the 3rd session and the other coaches stepped up their efforts so that we managed through that crisis.

We were lucky enough to have a growing number of coaches run our training sessions, which gives us a stronger base from which to grow and provide succession in the future. Because one day Ann, Annette and Carole will decide that they have had enough and want a rest! I want to be clear that none of them have any intention of retiring yet, but nevertheless we need to be preparing for that day.

That brings me onto training. Ann organised a Level 1 training course and a number of our coaches are attending this currently. We hope that some will proceed to Level 2, which is the qualification required to be in charge of a training session, and is the qualification held by Ann, Annette and Carole.

I want to use this opportunity to thank all of our coaches – Annette and Carole of course, and to Alan Manns, Richard Lines, Nickie Bedford, Jill May and Jeanette Francis and all of our swimming helpers. Please remember that they are all unpaid volunteers who put in a lot of hours to ensure your children improve their swimming whilst hopefully enjoying themselves at the same time and keeping fit!

As you know we are a non profit making club, and our only income is from membership fees, fundraising and any sponsorship money we can attract. This year we did not increase our membership fees, in part since we had to reduce the training sessions for a period but also to recognise the difficult financial times we are all facing. We were able to do this in part because our Treasurer Lorraine successfully applied for a £1000 grant from JP Morgan. This was provided to help with training and we have used it to fund the Level 1 training course. We also received £240 from Waitrose matters scheme which will also be used for training purposes.

The club is thriving and now at 147 members, has more than at the beginning of the year. Some children have left, but more have joined, so our finances are healthy.

However that doesn't mean we can do everything we would like to. The cost of coach transportation to galas has risen dramatically and now costs around £250 to £300 per gala. At £5 per head that means we end up subsidising at around £100 per gala. That restricts the number of galas we can attend if we want to go by coach.

However said that, we did have 17 galas planned for 2012 although unfortunately the first two in January did end up being cancelled.

We also changed the format of the Home Championships, by holding them during our own training sessions, which saved us over £400 in pool fees. The feedback we received was generally quite positive, so we currently plan to do that again next year.

It was agreed at last year's AGM to instigate a policy for qualified coaches to claim mileage expenses. However unfortunately it was only appreciated after the event that should all coaches claim these expenses, the club could not actually afford to fund this. Therefore it was reluctantly decided to rescind the policy from January 1st 2012. However as a committee we will certainly be sympathetic to any coaches whose circumstances may change and who may require financial help in order to be able to continue in their roles.

Moving onto communications, I hope that you are all aware of our club website which we try hard to keep up to date.

I know that we have had feedback that some parents would like to have more communications from the club – the point is that someone needs to find the time to do this. If there are any willing volunteers out there, please step forward!

Let me end with an apology. Swim 21 is a quality mark for the club that we were awarded 4 years ago and Carole did most of the hard work pulling

together all of the information required. This year we need to be recertified and I agreed to take responsibility for this. However I am afraid that due to Ann's illness, Mike's departure and me being new to my role, we have not yet achieved this. However I can assure you all that as a club we are committed to this quality system and intend to pursue recertification.

That's it for now and I hope very much that your children enjoy swimming with Ringwood Seals.