

Morpeth ASC

Chairman's Report 2016

Once again this has been a very exciting and busy year for the club. I am sure everyone will have their own individual highlights; I will attempt to share some of mine here.

Before I get into details though I would like to go back to last year's AGM and remind the members what I had said in my nomination speech. Before anyone voted I made the committee members aware that by voting for me they would be voting for some hard work for themselves, I made the members aware that I was not able to commit as much time as the previous Chair so would need other members of the committee to pick up many actions if it was going to be a successful year. The question of a 'Deputy Chair' came up but I explained that I would go into this expecting to have 10 or 11 deputies, all willing to help as and when needed. It was a leap of faith to assume that this would be the case but I am proud (and just a little bit relieved) that this has proved to be the case time after time this year. I cannot possibly make a comment on each of the occasions that this has been the case, whenever I have asked anyone for help they have done everything I have asked, even more pleasing is the amount of times when committee members have come to me and said '*shall I do...this or that.*', or '*Do you want me to pick up....whatever*'. It really has felt like a true team effort and on that basis I am proud to stand again for Chair of MASC.

The first 'challenge' of my new role was to select and appoint a new head coach. Nothing I had ever done before, but with two wise 'deputies' (Thanks Peter and Carol) by my side and the support of the committee I think we came to what has proven to be a fantastic appointment for the club. Kay Howe began her role in the summer and within a very short space of time went about getting herself and her team trained, educated and motivated to begin delivering sessions, training, planning and organising competitions as if she had been doing it for years. I was overwhelmed with the positive comments from very early on in her tenure, and the comments still keep coming today as I am sure they will in the coming years.

Competitive swimming has clearly benefitted from the coaching strategy and planning that Kay has now put in place. Morpeth is now regularly taking good sized squads to events throughout the year which is a real achievement for a club of our size. At the peak of the competitive calendar we managed to get several relay teams to compete at county level as well as individuals throughout the age group categories. Although the number of swimmers competing at regional level is still relatively small, the hard work and dedication of coaches, parents and swimmers that I now regularly see makes me think this number will only increase in the up and coming years.

Our one and only English and British National Swimmer may have been in the smallest possible squad at Sheffield but even getting one swimmer to this level is a great achievement and serves as a great example of what can be achieved when attitude, dedication and hard work are all combined. Later in the year we were able to *double(!)* the size of that squad and take *two* swimmers to the Scottish National's, again a brilliant achievement and an experience that will hopefully inspire others in future years.

It hasn't just been with our top competitive swimmers where we have been making progress this year; a change to the structure of the Sunday sessions has proved very successful as well. Not only has it allowed new members to have taster sessions and coaches to do assess each new swimmer, it has also allowed some of the senior swimmers to take up roles as young Aquatic Helpers – hopefully some of these helpers will become the coaches of the future and go on to support this club or other clubs in the long term.

Other examples of important projects that are up and running this year, supported by me but really lead by others on the committee are: Stirling swim camp – a great event that many swimmers see as one of the highlights of the year, now being organised by Sylvia B, Diddy League has proved to be a fantastic introduction into competitive swimming in previous years and has been taken on this year by Valda B and the Northumberland Hub training sessions have been the result of collaboration between similar smaller clubs in the region – Morpeth have been well represented by both Mark A and Kay H over the last year.

So as the year started off with the big challenge of appointing a new coach, the year was to end with another big challenge – at least a month of pool closure! Right in the middle of the season – nothing could be done about it other than collectively rolling up our sleeves and getting a plan together. This ultimately proved to be the best example of the kind of ‘team culture’ I had hoped to create. An enormous amount of effort went in to organising the use of other pools, it was clear there would be no help from outside – this was something MASC had to sort out for ourselves. Committee members, parents, coaches, lifeguards and swimmers all pitched in to minimise the disruption caused by the closure and I would like to thank those who helped in the many different ways needed to make it all happen.

There were a couple of positive outcomes of this pool closure that we need to consider going forward. This is the first time for many years that land training formed a part of the program and there seems to be a will to continue this from many members. Also, having seen other facilities around the area we now have the necessary experience and contacts to maybe use these again for either ‘one off’ events or even incorporate them on a more regular basis for training.

Personnel Changes

Our gala secretary (Denis Mooney) indicated that he needed to give up the role this year after several years and several hundred (if not thousand!) emails he leaves us with our thanks and by giving us plenty of notice we were able to find a new volunteer to take over. Lynda Garland stepped up to the challenge. It is great to see her back at the club not just because she has been such a big part of the club over the years but it is also a great indicator that Fraser is well and truly on the road to recovery. As many of us are, or will soon be, or already have been, parents of teenagers I am sure he has been in many people’s thoughts over the last year.

Last month Derek Thompson decided to step down from both his poolside duties and committee duties. Where do I start? 45 years a volunteer at the club, countless hours and numerous official roles at the club during this time. MASC almost certainly wouldn’t be in the strong position it is today without the hard work and dedication Derek has shown over these many years. I have had a few suggestions from members of what we should do to thank Derek for his long service, something else we need to discuss in the near future.

Finally, just a quick word of thanks to anyone I have not already mentioned. It would not be possible for this club to exist if it were not for all the volunteers, coaches, parents and swimmers who, every day, give up their time for the club. In whatever capacity, however big or small the commitment is many thanks to you all for supporting me and the club over the last year.