

OTTER SWIMMING CLUB

(Founded 1869)



Annual Report & Accounts

139th Season 2008

President's Introduction

Whilst there have been many good moments for Otter in 2008, the issue of pool space has been a major problem, and is a continuing concern. Frankly it is unacceptable that there is not sufficient pool capacity in one of the world's major capital cities to fulfil our meagre demands, and, despite the posturing, the Olympic legacy is highly unlikely to change the position. This is causing real harm to the progress of the Club, and the blood pressure of Committee members!

As usual, the year's events are covered in detail in the Report, and thanks to Alex Starling for producing it. The highlight of the year has been the success of the ladies water polo A team who won all 14 National League games and were Division 2 Champions. The B team also won Division 4 with only 2 losses.

There have been some stunning swimming results – not only at the Olympics! – with a number of individual and team GB and European records being achieved. Perhaps the stand-out performance was the ladies 100 years+ 200 metres medley relay with a time of 2.05.13 which was just 0.15 seconds outside the World Record.

As always, great credit must go to all the coaches, and thanks to the Committee for their substantial administrative

input. The finances remain on a good footing for which Martin Flash must take the praise.

We are well placed to face the challenges of 2009, but a new pool from a benefactor would be a bonus! Good luck to everyone.

The President

Club Officers 2008

President	ROGER SHARPLEY
Hon. Secretary	KATHERINE MEARMAN
Hon. Treasurer	MARTIN FLASH
Vice Presidents	
ERIC BOLDON	LESLEY DAVIES
FIONA MARSHALL	ANTHONY RAY
ALEX STARLING	JAMES STEWART
Captain of Swimming	GINA HOBSON
Captain of Water Polo (men)	SPENCER CORRIGAL
Captain of Water Polo (ladies)	TRACY WHEELER
Water Polo Hon. Secretary	XAVIER WILLIAMS
Hon. Handicapper	LAUREN EDWARDS
Committee Members	
LAUREN EDWARDS	KATIE GOODALL
GRANT MONK	DEBBIE PAYNTER
ROGER PHILLIPS	MICHELLE SENEAL
DEIRDRE WARD	
Swimming Coaches	
STEVE BRATT	PETER CARPENTER
ADAM MCCARTHY	LUCY WILSON
JOHN HARDBATTLE	ROB WILLIAMS
Water Polo Coaches	
TIM KENDALL	NICK BULLER

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Apologies that this is a 'slimline credit crunch special edition' of the Annual Report. Thanks to those that helped provide the material, specifically Gina Hobson who is the most prolific writer of all Otters!

I am sorry to say that will be taking a step back from active club involvement. Since joining the club in 2004 I have enjoyed partaking of both swimming and water polo activities – many thanks to all those who have made my years as a full-time Otter an enjoyable and fun experience. Good luck to the next Editor of this little tome.

All the best for forthcoming season!

The Editor



Club Finance & Administration

In 2008 the Club made another small loss, admittedly less than budgeted, but a loss nonetheless. In view of this and the surrounding economic climate the subscriptions for 2009 were moved up as little as possible, but with the current structure (with ever-moving coaching and pool costs some 80% of the total), and our constant ambitions to expand the offer (despite our difficulties in 2008 – of which more later) a larger jump in the future should be expected. That said the Club is still excellent value for money for anyone who swims or plays even once a week, and the Club remains financially solid.

Income statement

Like any other club Otter must survive on its subscription income. True the Club has reserves, and there is some investment income, but both are dwarfed by subscriptions. The club must aim to breakeven on this income. The only significant addition (about 10% of the overall total) comes from sponsorship (Shell pool), investment as noted, and importantly from members voluntarily making a donation, which is credited to the Prizes & General Fund. We owe many thanks to the donors listed below.

Prizes & General Fund

John Bowron, Stephen Carter, Charles Doxat, Chris Eden, Tom Finlay, Martin Flash, John Fox, Laura Gallop, Peter Grace, John Iliffe, Robert Juxon, Ruth Kermisch, Conrad King, Alison Lievesley, Roger Lloyd-Mostyn, Nikki Ludgrove, Fabio Mozzicarelli, Marie Mulligan, Bill Myers, Damian Nogaledo, Desmond Plummer Kt.TD.DL., Philip Proost, Jim Ricketts, Nigel Salisbury, Mark Sears, Roger Sharpley, Liz Shaw, David Skidmore OBE, James Stewart, Bob Thomas, Paul Thorogood, John Towers, Anthony Van der Kraay, Emily Viskovic, Garry Willetts, Mike Woodman.

On the expenditure part of the income statement, pool hire costs came in slightly less than budget, because we lost a slot for polo at ULU, and Crystal Palace was out of action all year for swimmers and players. But we tried unsuccessfully to run a swimming session at Mile End and spent more on substitute space for polo. We lost our slot at ULU to another club, and at the end of the year we temporarily lost Shell as they introduced a new security regime. We spent a lot on equipment, primarily better storage cages, the increased strength of which matches their cost. Coaching costs came in slightly over budget but this probably says more about the budget than any increase in costs. In our activity costs there was no change worthy of comment apart from the steep rise in affiliation costs. This is a reflection of better organisation at the ASA, but these costs entail a quite inordinate amount of administration for little evident benefit. That said there is no escaping them.

<i>Income statement - £</i>	2008	2007
Subscriptions total	82,176	82,464
Special sessions	0	0
Prizes & general fund	1,554	1,096
Members income	83,729	83,560
External income	5,500	5,715
Capital income	2,108	1,061
Miscellaneous income	400	149
Other income	8,008	6,925
Income	91,737	90,485
Pool hire costs	(41,941)	(46,049)
Equipment costs	(4,900)	(1,627)
Pools & equipment	(46,841)	(47,677)
Coaching costs	(26,885)	(24,975)
Coaching	(26,885)	(24,975)
Water polo expenses	(5,615)	(5,935)
Swimming expenses	(906)	(1,752)
Affiliation costs	(5,083)	(4,420)
Prizes and trophies	(1,106)	(1,384)
Activity costs	(12,710)	(13,492)
Dinner	(262)	108
Open water races	(339)	(234)
Shop sales	371	(487)
Club activities	(229)	(613)
Insurance	(1,000)	(800)
Post and printing costs	(4,507)	(3,421)
Tax	0	0
Miscellaneous costs	(2,084)	(1,223)
Administration	(7,590)	(5,445)
Expenses	(94,257)	(92,200)
Profit / (Loss)	(2,519)	(1,715)

"I have examined the books and vouchers of Otter Swimming Club and have obtained all necessary explanations for me to confirm that these accounts show a reasonable view of the Club's activities for the year and its financial position as at the 31st December 2008." Hon Auditor. James Palmer



<i>Balance sheet - £</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2007</i>
Trophies	35,000	35,000
<i>Fixed Assets</i>	<i>35,000</i>	<i>35,000</i>
Investments at cost	30,142	30,142
Self insurance investment	11,241	10,201
<i>Investments</i>	<i>41,383</i>	<i>40,343</i>
<u>Long term assets</u>	<u>76,383</u>	<u>75,343</u>
Bank	11,567	11,664
Debtors	2,567	4,031
Stock	3,063	3,786
<i>Current assets</i>	<i>17,197</i>	<i>19,482</i>
Creditors	(3,957)	(5,690)
Reserves or contingencies	0	(6,824)
<i>Current liabilities</i>	<i>(3,957)</i>	<i>(12,514)</i>
<u>Working capital</u>	<u>13,240</u>	<u>6,968</u>
<u>Assets</u>	<u>89,623</u>	<u>82,311</u>
Computer fund	2,480	2,180
Spoon fund	4,538	3,938
<i>Sinking funds</i>	<i>7,018</i>	<i>6,118</i>
<u>Provisions</u>	<u>7,018</u>	<u>6,118</u>
Life membership fund	13,489	11,489
Memorial fund	20,012	19,697
Trophy insurance fund	8,983	7,983
<i>Capital funds</i>	<i>42,484</i>	<i>39,169</i>
Balance b/fwd	37,024	37,534
Capital income & reserves	5,617	1,205
Result for year	(2,519)	(1,715)
<i>Reserve funds</i>	<i>40,122</i>	<i>37,024</i>
<u>Reserves</u>	<u>82,605</u>	<u>76,193</u>
<u>Reserves & provisions</u>	<u>89,623</u>	<u>82,311</u>

Investments #: Brunner Investment Trust 2517, Foreign & Colonial Investment Trust 7465, Flemming Claverhouse Investment Trust 1530, Scottish Mortgage Investment Trust 2854.



The Club's activity costs (open water, dinner, shop) were much as in years past and made a slight loss overall because we price to encourage attendance more than to break-even. Lastly our administration costs went up largely due to the better printing of last year's annual report and handbook. The latter is now discontinued as all the information can be found on the web site, which should produce a saving. We also have persuaded the bank to desist from levying account charges, so our miscellaneous costs should decline in the coming year.

Overall this year's income statement reflected a healthy Club activity.

Balance sheet

The Club's investments have inevitably suffered with the stock market difficulties. However they still are worth some 14% or more than the balance sheet value recorded at cost.

The self-insurance fund for our trophies (and our other physical assets) has increased by the amount we put aside each year. We should not forget its purposes as an insurance fund, but it nonetheless acts also as a useful cash reserve. To act as a true self insurance fund the capital needs to equal at least one third and preferably more than one half of the insured (or balance sheet) value of the trophies and other assets.

Our working capital went up mainly because we called in

some reserves, an action that also largely explains why the total value of the club has risen. Other provisions have increased by the amount we put aside each year for computer costs and for replacing the silver spoons used for prizes in Club races.

Our long-term capital has changed by an increase in Life members, and by donations to the Memorial Fund. We owe our thanks to the following:

Memorial Fund

Charles Doxat, Robert Juxon, Bill Myers, Desmond Plummer Kt.TD.DL., Nigel Salisbury, Roger Sharpley, James Stewart, Bob Thomas, Paul Thorogood, Mike Woodman.

As in previous years we have retained our ability to fund well thought-out initiatives, provided that overall we continue to aim to breakeven.

James Palmer survived his baptism of fire last year questioning the probity and methods of the Treasurer. Members owe him many thanks, and will be relieved to know he again found no cause for complaint.

Administration

New members now join only on the web, and we keep personal details there under controlled conditions. This means we can mail everyone (with an e-mail address) from

the web site. For all this work we owe many thanks to Andy Hudson. The Club Handbook has been completely transferred to the website

For both polo and swimming we would not have achieved what we have without our dedicated band of coaches. We owe many thanks to all of them our, plus several volunteer members for these and other tasks without which the Club would not function. All these volunteers could always use help.

Membership

At the end of the year the membership of the Club was made up of 363 (374) members. There were 143 (131) Active swimmers, 68 (80) Active polo players, 22 (27) Country members (including 4 polo players), 79 (84) Non Active members, 12 (14) Junior members and 38 (38) Life members. There were 105 (120) lady members, as before about one third of the polo players and slightly less than half the swimmers. The average age of Active members was 31 (31) and the average age of the club is 38 (39). Except for polo where the loss of ULU has been a blow, possibly not too much should be read into the declines in numbers as the database has inconsistencies especially relating to when people resign. Between 350 and 375 members the Club is probably 'full' unless we can find more pool space, and we ration its use differently. Neither is likely in the near future.

Within the overall numbers are 79 (82) new members (23 (20) of them polo players) and we welcome the following to the Club:

New members

Minde Andruskevicius, Lizzie Bellinger, John Bowron, Frank Braden, Emma Brooks, Stephen Carter, Damien Charveriat, Houda Chiguer, Aaron Clements-Partridge, Alex Davis, Rob Deakin, Mark Drenth, Lawrence Edgell, Fabiana Eggers, Garth Fox, Laura Gallop, Orion Ganase, Vera Gielen, Tim Grace, Patrick Green, Simon Greenberg, Phil Harper, Jo Hingley, Tori Hinton, Tony Hobson, Robert Hobson, Diane Hobson, Ian Jolly, Trish Keegan, Annabel Kehoe, Ken Kuroda, Wayne Lam, Jules Livingstone, Alan Logan, Ben Lomax, Shona Macfarlane, Paolo Manco, Nikki McDonald, Ross McInroy, Fabio Mozzicarelli, Rebecca Mulcahy, James Murray, Caroline Nickerson, Wataru Nishino, Noam Nishry, Katie Nurcombe, James Orrock, Wiebke Ortmann, Lori Peri, Mel Perks, Anna Polyanychko, Derek Prill, Yeu An Quach, Zuzana Ratveiska, Jérôme Rivière, David Roberts, Terence Rohan, Avilé Rumbos, Gabriele Santoro, Mark Sears, Emma Shkurka, Ivor Sokolic, Catherine Sorgdrager, Jen Stillman, Michael Stott, Chris Sutton, Shaka Taylor-Harris, Sarah Tollefson, Elliot Treharne, Tommaso Tufarelli, Anthony Van der Kraay, William Wall, Emily Wang, Elsa Werth, Matthew Whittaker, Thibault Williams, Daniel Worsley, Francesca Wright, Oleg Zubritskiy.



Members news

We had two new Life members, Richard Jones and David Gawler. The first a swimmer from the Oxford squad that included Derek Parr, and the second a polo player of distinction, both are now seen more often on the golf course than in the pool.

We lost a very notable Honorary Life member, Ron Stead. It would be difficult to write too much about Ron. He remained a strong supporter of the Club to the end of his days and contributed enormously as Honorary Secretary in the 1960s and as organiser of the Bath Cup. Not many of you will have known Ron but he made an enormous contribution to the Club over many years in the 50's, 60's and 70's, having been the Club Hon Secretary from 1952 to 1966, and then for a brief stint in 1970. He also organised the Bath Cup and Otter Medley schools relays for 40 years or more, lifting the events to major status with schools from all over the UK competing.

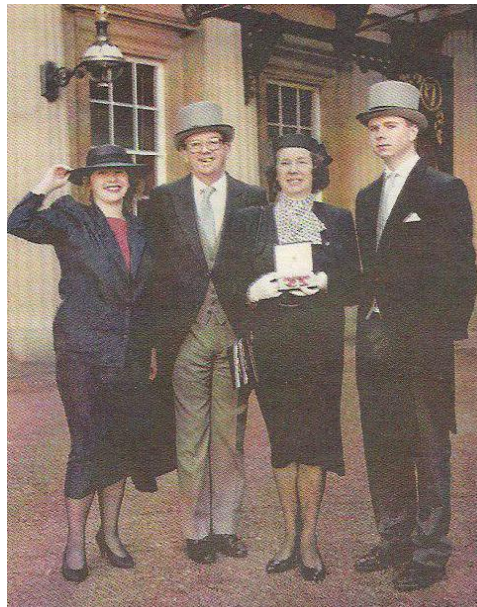


He was one of the very few members who was awarded an Otter gold tiepin in the Club's centenary year in recognition of his services to the Club.

His achievements were, however, of secondary significance to the nature and character of Ron – a great friend to all (although he didn't suffer fools gladly!) and a marvellous person who was always willing to help

John Towers, former GB goal keeper has been in contact with Harry Kačić in Dubrovnic where in 1961 Otter were the first foreign team to visit their new 50m pool. John also visited Neil Payne in South Africa. Neil was water polo captain before John in 1971.

In the Chelsea church St. Luke's a new park bench was installed in memory of David & Jean Craig who were community stalwarts, as well as both being fervent Otters. The news was given with a fine photo both of them plus Anne and Andrew shown here, when Jean, the first owner of an Otter broach, received the MBE:



Greg Moore in Dubai wanted to wish everyone at Otter all the best.

David Milne wrote from Amsterdam where he has moved from Barcelona after 5 years there, a Dutch wife and new baby being not least of the reasons for the move.

Otter Golf

Andrew Craig

Once again in on a gloriously grey, spring day a somewhat bedraggled group of Otters of varying pedigree and ability stormed the bastions of the difficult first hole at Royal Wimbledon Golf Club. The results were typically underwhelming but the endeavour on par with that cramping last length of a 1,500m – not that I've ever swum that far! The honours were taken by David Miller followed closely by Bob Palmer and David Gawler. Martin Flash valiantly teed off with his ante-diluvian woods and Alex Starling valiantly teed off into the beech and oak woods¹.

The cavalry arrived in time for lunch which was enjoyed by all – up to the ridiculously high standards of RWGC, as ever. It was good to see some old faces there, and most people took the discreet route to the car park after a lubricated lunch, rather than the path of valour, otherwise known as the afternoon round, which saw most of us in the woods on most of the holes.

Thank you, everyone who came, for making it a memorable day – and again, well done to David Miller for back to back victories.

¹ Editor's note: I actually nailed the fairway from the first tee. It was the remaining 17 holes that proved problematic.



Swimming

Perth

World Championships, April 2008

Gina Hobson

The Otter team came back with a sizeable medal haul, including gold in the 100-120 ladies fc relay, comprising of Gina Hobson, Michelle Senecal, Ruth Morrison and Lisa Wujec (1.55.76); **world champions** – well done ladies! Silver was won in the 120-160 medley relay team, including Gina, Ruth, Otter first-timer Lizzie Bellinger, and Michelle (2.08.90). The medley was an exciting race and in the end we beat the French team, including world record holder Karlyn Pipes-Neilson, by only a few hundredths to claim second. Both Michelle and Lizzie swam storming legs and Michelle clinched second behind the punchy Japanese team. The team's time was well under our British Record pace, had Michelle been British!

In the individual races, butterfly was certainly Otter's strength. Lizzie came away with two silver medals in the 50 and 100 fly (29.78 and 1.07.34) and was unlucky to get pipped to the first spot on both occasions; Michelle also picked up a silver in the 200 fly (2.33.39), and similarly, was

in the gold medal position but couldn't quite hold off the fast-finishing German; Gina sneaked a bronze in the 100 fly (1.09.04) by 1/100sec, which partly made up for missing bronze in the 100fc by 1/10th.

Aside from the individual medals, numerous top ten finishes were achieved. Some of the highlights include Lisa posting a very speedy 1.04.86 in the 100fc and scoring 10th; and Anna Ochocinska's punishing IM and br programme clearly worked in her favour when she picked up an 8th and 9th in the 400IM (6.15.13) and 100br (1.25.97), respectively. Both Ruth Morrison and Catherine Couquet represented 'international Otter' and were glad that they made the trip; even if the Perth weather didn't quite live up to expectations.

Also of note, Otter some-timer, Di Hobson, proved that cycling 1000s of km might be an alternative to the standard pool training and taper, and achieved 17th and 13th in the 50 and 100br (49.63 and 1.46.61). Ric Jones and Tony Ray were ever present to cheer on the team and posted some respectable times themselves. Ric assures me that for the Europeans next September (2009) in Cadiz Otter will be able to boast 2 'oldie' teams – Otter stalwarts, step up!

The 'Otters masquerading as others' had good meets, with Enrico Hahn achieving numerous pbs; I'm especially in awe of the 7th place in the 200bk (2.30.66), swum in the outdoor pool with the sun beating down (and why was it the men enjoyed lovely weather when they were outside and the women had to endure rain??). Peter Rae got into his stride

as the meet progressed, recording a speedy 2.16.76 and 4.53.08 for the 200 and 400fc, and achieving two 9th places.

Manchester

GB Long Course Masters, June 2008

Gina Hobson

The Otter team, consisting of 21 swimmers, wrestled the top club trophy away from Spencer by achieving more top 3 places and point scoring swims than any other team. Certainly in recent years this is the first time Otter has won the trophy, having placed second or third in the past three years. Massive congratulations and thanks to all the swimmers; this was a brilliant team effort and wouldn't have been possible without all of your swims. We eventually beat the next best team by over 30 points.

The records

It was in the relay races where Otter achieved record glory. In the ladies medley 100+ relay, Cat Dobson (33.4 pb), Fiona Marshall (34.4), Lizzie Bellinger (29.2) and Gina Hobson (27.9) smashed the British and European record by over 3 seconds and were only 0.15 away from snatching the World record.

In the 120+ ladies fc relay, Fiona (28.0 pb) led Gina (27.9), Jane McMenemy (29.2), and Lisa Wujec (28.9) to another



British record, reducing our own standard by a further 0.5 seconds.

In addition to the relay records, a huge number of Club records were broken by the following swimmers: Roger Lloyd-Mostyn (50fc); Ted Evans (100fc, 50bk); Peter Rae (200fc, 400fc, 1500fc); Dave Roberts (50fly); Enrico Hahn (200bk); Jane McMenemy (100fc, 200fc, 400fc, 50br); Catherine Couquet (100fc, 50fly); Lesley Cook (400fc, 1500fc, 200IM); Lizzie Bellinger (50fly); Cat Dobson (50bk); and Fiona Marshall (50br).

Further relay glory

There were gold medals for the experienced men's 240+ team (fc: Roger Lloyd-Mostyn, Tony Ray, Ted Evans and Peter; medley: Tony, Coach Steve Bratt, Derek and Rae) and 100+ fc ladies (Cat, Anna Ochocinska, Jane Leighton and Michelle Senecal). There was also satisfaction for Gina, Fiona, Derek Parr and Peter in the 160+ mixed medley relay, who beat teams including Spencer and Barnet, and took gold in style.

There was slight relay trauma, which resulted in a few last minute runs to the changing rooms to search for missing team mates, but everyone was on the blocks in the end! Special thanks to Lesley Cook and Lisa for dropping everything and rushing to the blocks after some miscommunication from Captain Hobson! Thanks also to Jane L (and Dave) for hanging around til the very end of the meet to swim in the final relay.

Frontcrawl

The Otter ladies were dominant in the fc events, with Jane McMenemy comfortably winning the 200 and 400fc in her age; and Fiona taking gold in the 50fc (28.2); Gina gold in the 100fc (1.02.0 pb); and Michelle gold in the 200fc (2.18 pb), all in the 30-34 age. Despite having to endure the auditory delights of the local disco til 3am on Fri night, Liz Shaw posted a speedy 32.3 and a top 10 finish. There was also silver for Catherine Couquet in the 100fc, a 100fc pb for Lisa (01.04.8), and bronze for Lesley in the 800fc.

Dave Roberts walked away with the fastest Otter award posting a punchy 25.6 in the 50fc individual and then 25.4 when he led off the mixed fc team. Peter showed true competitive spirit and determination not to get beaten by a bunch of girls and achieved the fastest Otter 200fc time (2.17.9), winning the 55-59 age. And in between finding errant Otters for relays, Tony rediscovered his fc form and was pleased with top 10 finishes in the 50, 100 and 200.

Fly

Enrico Hahn, Derek and Roger took on the 200fly and all lived to tell the tale, picking up a fourth and two golds respectively, although Enrico admitted that he may not go out quite so quickly next time. Dave (27.3 pb) and Adam McCarthy (28.6) pulled out swift 50fly swims, with Dave winning a bronze medal in the ultra-competitive 25-29 age group.

The Otter 30-34 ladies achieved a 1, 2, 3 in the 100fly, with Lizzie, Gina and Fiona picking up medals. There was a 1, 2 in the 50fly for Lizzie and Gina, with Lizzie (29.3) only .05 away from the British record. Michelle decided to make the 100fc a little more interesting by swimming fly and comfortably won her heat.

Breaststroke

Perhaps a little unusually, there was a squadron of Otter ladies lined up to take on the 50br. Gina laid it down with a 40.1 to start, which was quickly bettered by Macca (39.9), Anna (38.0), and Fiona (35.3). Fiona just missed out on gold by 0.8. In the 200, Enrico pulled out a 4.5 second pb to finish 3rd and Jane L also claimed a bronze in the tough 25-29 age group.

Backstroke

400bk specialist, Jane L, swum a fantastic, if a little unorthodox, 200bk, to take gold in her age. And sprinting specialist, Cat, was just pipped to silver in the 50bk, having very sportingly given the other competitors a chance by finishing with her head. Coach Steve pulled out a 40.1 in his 50bk and claimed a silver.

The starts

Special mention to Ted, who again showed that age is no excuse for being slow off the blocks, with reaction times of 0.7. Also mention to Lisa, who apparently just couldn't be bothered at the start of the 200fc, and decided to sit on the block for nearly 2 seconds (1.9); that must be a Club record!



Massive thanks to Coach Steve for his enthusiasm and filming prowess throughout the weekend and to Tony for his organisation of the relays and ensuring that everyone made it to the blocks in time! Winning the team trophy is no mean feat and certainly goes to show that Otter is a team to be reckoned with.

Sheffield

National Masters, October 2008

Gina Hobson

A record number of record breakers?

Jane McMenemy got the recognition she deserves in the tough 40-44 age group and broke the 200m fc British Record, coming home in a fantastic 2.13.48. Dan Bullock nailed the 800m fc in 8.54.55 and claimed the British Record in the 35-39 age group. And Lizzie Bellinger continued her assault on the 30-34 fly records, taking the 50m British Record in 29.26.

In the relays there was success for Dave Roberts (fc), Dan Cotton (bk), Fiona Marshall (br) and Gina Hobson (fly) in the mixed 120-159 medley and fc races. They beat all challengers and claimed British and European Records in both events. Fiona and Gina were joined by Cat Dobson (bk) and Macca (fc) in the 120 ladies medley and fc events,

where they had further success claiming the British and European records in these events too.

Further relay excitement

As ever, there was drama galore in the relay races. Despite Tony Ray's gallant efforts to get everyone to the blocks on time, Peter Rae had to step up a little early when Tim Fraser was missing in action. Still, Tim got there in the end and the 200-239 team (including Steve B and Dan B) won a bronze medal for their efforts. Jane Leighton shocked everyone, but mostly herself, with her lightening takeover in the ladies 100-119 medley relay; sadly, she was just 0.01 too quick, and despite Lisa's plea for the judges to 'do it for the children', the team was cruelly DQd. Next time ladies!

Club Handicap

After a fiercely contested series of races throughout 2008, it was Jean-Louis Benavides who emerged victorious and beat the field by 5 points. Michelle Senecal came a close second, with Anthony van der Kraay and Enrico Hahn coming in on joint 3rd. A massive well done to all.

Water Polo

Men's First Team

Spencer Corrigan

There was a lot of player movement on the first team from the prior year. We lost a lot of important players from 2007 – Graeme Gunthorpe, Sasha Mease, Alfonso Tucay, Owen Job, Rhys Campbell – so it was difficult to make up numbers at the start of the season. On the plus side, several very capable players from the second team advanced up to the first team for the London League season – Ollie Holman, Pierre Cerri, Spencer Corrigan, Ed Buckley, and we also added a new player for London League in Oleg Zubritskiy.

Unfortunately, the London League season was beset early on by a struggle to make up numbers, as we had several regular players unavailable for the whole season – Eric Boldon (work), Richard Thomson (travel), Richard Chambers (travel), Berk Goksal (moved home), Carl Ainley (injury), Oleg Zubritskiy (moved home), Ben Tausig (moved to US). Our London League campaign did not start off well and we lost a few close games due to a lack of cohesion between players not used to playing with each other, plus a rotating line-up of starters. Eventually, we started to gel and started winning those close games against our traditional rivals like Croydon, Putney, etc.



As the summer wound down and we looked ahead to National League, players started to attend on a more regular basis and we were lucky enough to pick up Tim Grace, recently of the French first division team Montpellier.

Heading into our first weekend of NL Div 2, we had high hopes because we knew we had a good team, but were wary as we had only 8 and 9 players for our first three matches, which were in a proper 30m pool. Our first NL weekend we proved that despite the fact we had a short bench, we had experience, a load of talent and were a team to be reckoned with. We beat Birkenhead in a tight match, drew Sheffield, and managed to push eventual league winners Tyldesley to the brink before giving up a last minute goal and losing by one.

With the addition of a few extra bodies, including Tim, for the Sheffield weekend, we again had high hopes. Our first game against Hucknall was a comprehensive win that introduced Tim quite nicely to the GB NL, as he helped himself to 7 goals. Unfortunately, we celebrated prematurely that night and came out completely flat the following day and lost two very winnable matches. This left us in a tight spot in the middle of the table, next to some very ordinary and inexperienced teams.

With the sting of disappointment still fresh in our minds, we headed back to Loughborough to play our main rivals Tyldesley again. Through a complete team effort, we took

their main scorer Mike Cowburn, ex GB player, completely out of the game and won comfortably. We managed to keep up our composure and took the other two games that weekend as well, to break away into second.

The fourth weekend in Lancaster should have been a run of three easy games, but some disciplinary issues haunted us and as per usual, we made things harder than they should have been. We managed to maintain our perfect record on the Saturday, but the curse of the premature celebration came back to bite us on Sunday, and again we came out flat and lost to a very ordinary opponent.

Going into the last weekend in Bath, we were down a man with the recent departure of Michael Cartmill back to Australia, and we couldn't catch Tyldesley for the title, nor did we have second completely sewn up. The deciding match was against Invicta, who as a club have proved problematic for Otter in the last couple of years. A strong performance all round, including an inspirational cameo from former captain Greg Moore, led us to victory and we secured a second place finish. Despite there being one more game on the Sunday, we had cause to celebrate that night as we maintained a perfect record on Saturdays throughout the season – 7 wins from 7 matches. On the Sunday, we faced an equally long-faced Solihull and ground out a last win of the season, to finish with a final record of 9 wins, 1 draw, and 4 losses.

Despite missing the first three games of the season, Tim Grace finished third in the league with 45 goals scored. Our illustrious trio of Bryan Field, Richard Chambers and Orion Ganase managed to finish joint fourth in major exclusions, with 15 for the season, behind 19 for the league leader.

Finally, we decided as a team to pass on challenging for promotion to the first division, as we were entitled, due to many players not being available for the challenge match, and the uncertainty about who would be around next season. Overall, it was a very successful NL campaign, especially considering we didn't have a proper pool to train in for most of it.

Men's Second Team – Otter 1869

Chris Eden

An independent reader looking back over the record books would get the impression that the Men's second team was the black sheep of Otter water polo in 2008. And in a way, they'd be right. This has been a season of great struggle, unfamiliar to a team who had enjoyed a considerable amount of success in the last five years. However, it was also a season of considerable growth and, towards the end, the hint of a return to success in future seasons.

With some significant losses in personnel (among others Greg Pienaar to the South Coast and marriage, Yannick



Gaudio to the South Coast of France, Bruno Fabre to his travels, Ollie Holman and Spencer Corrigan to the first team, Sarpel Ustunel to fatherhood), the year was always going to be based around the remaining core, together with the introduction and integration of new talent.

We were fortunate early on to have the talented Russian Oleg Zubritskiy in our ranks and he brought some firepower to the team. Thibault Williams, fresh off the plane from South Africa, brought a burgeoning enthusiasm. Youngsters James Hindle, James Orrock and Lori Peri added some youth.

Early season preliminaries were completed with second place in the London League – a mere warm-up for the main focus of the season, the National League. Denied invaluable training facilities at Crystal Palace, which has underpinned the success of previous seasons, and still developing as a unit, the first weekend was expected to be tough.

And it was. As were subsequent weekends. Our first points arrived only at the penultimate weekend, staged at Marlborough College, a fantastic facility. Leeds was the opening fixture and we knew about their main strength – a burly Hungarian centre-forward who regularly racked up a hatful of goals. The addition of the excellent Wataru Nishino, recently arrived from Japan, added a cutting edge to the side. But our travelling supporters were witness to a poor start and an even worse finish surrounding a mediocre middle section, which resulted from a lack of application of

the tactics discussed or work in training. A 19-6 final result did flatter Leeds but it was not a close game.

Birmingham on Sunday morning was our biggest hope for a win yet. They were missing their key man, a “mature” but clever player which the team was based around. Still not a team to be taken lightly, Otter started with far greater purpose than the day before and finally the control and composure started to come with each goal scored by us and each goal denied to them. Albeit the weakest team we had faced, the job still needed to be done and it was done effectively, a final score of 8-5 meaning a welcome two points.

Croydon in the afternoon was expected to be another tough match for us. I don’t think they expected a tough match from us. Our best performance of the season so far, we took the game to the opposition from the start. Although they were always ahead, it was never by many as we executed a strong drop against their dangerous hole-men and they struggled to find a way through. At the other end, Nishino and Nogaedo were having chunks taken out of them by the Croydon centre-backs, the referees oblivious to it. So often one of the quieter, more subtle members of the team, it even induced an outburst from your humble writer, earning the coach a yellow card. Sorry Tim. They did eventually edge it, 14-10 and finished a point away from the division title, but to us it felt like a win, so transformed were we and so buoyed by putting in the kind of performance we always knew was there against an extremely strong opponent.

The closing weekend was back in Walsall, a veritable haven in the Midlands. Two wins would mean there was a chance of avoiding the bottom spot and automatic relegation. Ahead of the first match, there had been considerable work in training on how to effectively defend the Leeds Hungarian as well as attack their defence. Without the presence of captain Estrella through suspension, the plan was still executed perfectly as attacks were repelled and their main player effectively neutralised, Padden swatting away many of their outside shots with ease. At the other end, there was equal success, the first quarter finishing 4-1 to Otter. Considering our final goal tally against them at Marlborough was 6, it was already a fantastic start. The game continued in this vein, with Otter never falling behind and led by a solitary goal going into the final period. Could the unthinkable happen – the unhinging of the promotion challenge of the Northerners while maintaining our bid for near-safety in the division? Tragically it wasn’t to be. A couple of lapses in defence let Leeds in twice and no goals the other end meant a heart-breaking loss. The Hungarian was reported to question – “why didn’t you play like that all season?” If only he knew the half of it! But a huge compliment to the team, still.

Sunday lunchtime and Otter met Birmingham for some pride and the hope of some points. Strengthened by the return of their top man, they were certainly a different prospect. Only one man, though. Shouldn’t be too hard to stop, after all, he’s half the size of the Leeds centre. Wrong! Nine goals



almost won it alone, as Otter put away just 11, Birmingham finishing with 15.

It was a disappointing end to a season which had featured some merit-worthy performances. Looking to the future, there should be great optimism, especially in the younger breed growing in experience over the years to come underpinning the future success of Otter Men's Water Polo, supplemented by a few old heads.

As ever, thanks must go to our tireless coach, Tim Kendall, who puts considerable thought and effort into constructing training sessions (to develop both the individual and the team) and effective match strategies to make the best use of our abilities, as well as much other, often un-noticed, work behind the scenes.

Men's Third Team

Paul Hindle

The very fact that we can put out an Otter III water polo team is sure testament to the health of the water polo section of the club.

The purpose of Otter III is to be a competitive outlet for both the older polo players and our newest polo players. For the oldies it is a platform to allow them to continue playing and for the newcomers it is a learning platform and springboard into the senior squads.



In 2008 they competed respectably in the Middlesex League (Division 3), the London League Referees Cup and the Thameside Water Polo League (Division 1).

Ladies' Team

Tracy Wheeler

2008 turned out to be a fantastic year for Otter Ladies. We started with some ambitious goals which we knew would require hard work and dedication. And ended with lots of medals, trophies, promotions and musical rounds of "We Are The Champions...".

Lots of new players joined us in the beginning of the year. This allowed us to make our first achievement – entering a B team in the National League. The B team would play in the newly created Division 4 and hopefully gain promotion, whilst the A Team would aim to finish top of Division 2.

Ambitious goals like these required lots of preparation. As well as spending our precious Saturday nights at training matches around the South East, we went on tour to Belgium to seek out tough competition. This turned out to be the polo equivalent of Glastonbury, with competitors staying in miles and miles of tents to be woken every hour by a blast of a

French/Dutch/German man's stereo. It turned out that we were tougher competition than we thought. Our two teams achieved respectable places in the top 10 (there were 30 teams!). Our hard training (including countless underwater lengths, hours spent eggbeating with heavy balls on our heads and infinite hours of squats) proved us well.



By the time National League started in September we were fired up and raring to go.

The A team came away from their first match slightly astonished. We had won all three matches easily, scored 43 goals, and let in only 9. "Maybe other teams were just getting warmed up" we thought, "the next weekend will be tougher". The next weekend followed the same pattern as the first. We quickly became the team to beat. We won all our 14

league matches, scoring a total of 180 goals and letting in only 44. Only in one match did we nearly slip up, but we managed to come back from 3-6 down to win with the deciding goal coming from Marie Mulligan on her 21st (??) birthday. Our "end of league celebrations" started with three matches remaining, as at that point it became impossible for any team to beat us as we so far ahead on the score table. We celebrated in true style by paying to be thrown around on Blackpool Pier, and heading to the bar for a human-pyramid building competition with our local rivals.

It was not long after team selection, that the newly constructed B team began developing and working well together. We went on to experience similar success to the A team by winning all but 2 games of our season. Our competition varied and we came out with some fantastic score lines, 33-2 in one game, fairly impressive considering a game consists of 28 minutes of playing time! This type of success provided us with the confidence to go on and achieve against the slightly tougher sides. The highlight was our last National League game against our local London "rivals". Even armed with the knowledge of having already won our division by points, there was no complacency, and we put on our best performance of the season to win 17 – 5. We completed the season by scoring a total of 134 goals and only allowing in 57 goals in.



As well as winning the trophies for Divisions 2 and 4, Otter also returned from the final National League weekend with a 'clean play award' for committing the fewest major fouls and two 'best goal keeper' awards. Many congratulations to Zuzana Ratveiska and Paula Croxson for saving all those goals.

Winning means promotion. So next year Otter Ladies will play in National League Division 1 for the first time and are already preparing for the challenge. Otter B will play in Division 3 and aim for more success. We will sadly be without two of our 'steady-old hands'. Cat Cassidy and Katie Falkner-Corbett-Corcutt have gone in to retirement. We would like to thank them for all they contributed to the club, especially Cat in her years as team vice-captain. Other thanks must go to team members who have organised weekends away, tours, team kit and pool bookings. Without your efforts the team cannot function.

Lastly, we would like to show our thanks to our extremely dedicated and hardworking coach Nick Buller. We really appreciate all the time you give us and what you have helped us achieve as a team, and apologise for all the times we have not been quite as all the ball as we could be!

