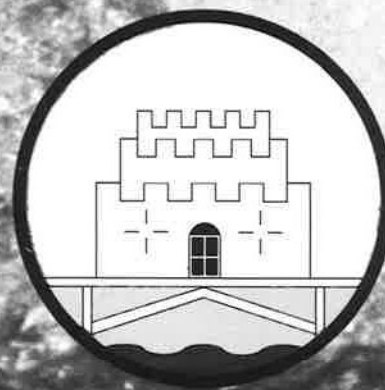




“The History Of
Bridgwater
Amateur
Swimming Club”

Centenary Year
1894 - 1994



Introduction

The Bridgwater Amateur Swimming Club is this year (1994) celebrating its centenary. This booklet has been prepared to give readers a brief history of the Club.

The 100 years have not been without incident. There have been periods when the Club has lapsed into inactivity for one reason or another. The plan of this booklet has been to divide the years into chapters where there has been activity, but also to have a special section at the end relating to the last 10 years (1985 - 1994).

So many people have been involved with the Club during the 100 years, that to refer to all the names researched, would lengthen the booklet many times over, and would reduce the pages to a meaningless catalogue of names. Those who have been mentioned have, in the opinion of the compiler, been involved with events of particular concern, or interest. If it is felt that any names that have been omitted, should have been mentioned, please let the Club know, and if it is decided to update this version, such omission can be rectified.

It was felt correct to list the names of the Club Presidents and this has been reproduced as an appendix at the end of the booklet.

Acknowledgements

Little is known of the early years of the Bridgwater Amateur Swimming Club. No records now appear to exist. Proof of the formation of the Club in 1894 appeared in the Bridgwater Mercury. Much of the information researched came from copies of this newspaper, and it is due to the help and co-operation of the Editor, KEN BIRD and his staff, particularly SUE MCDONALD and EDNA STOODLEY that we are able to reproduce as much detail as we have.

Valuable information for the 1930's to the 1950's was provided by former Swimming Club members. In this respect, the Club is most grateful to MESSRS.

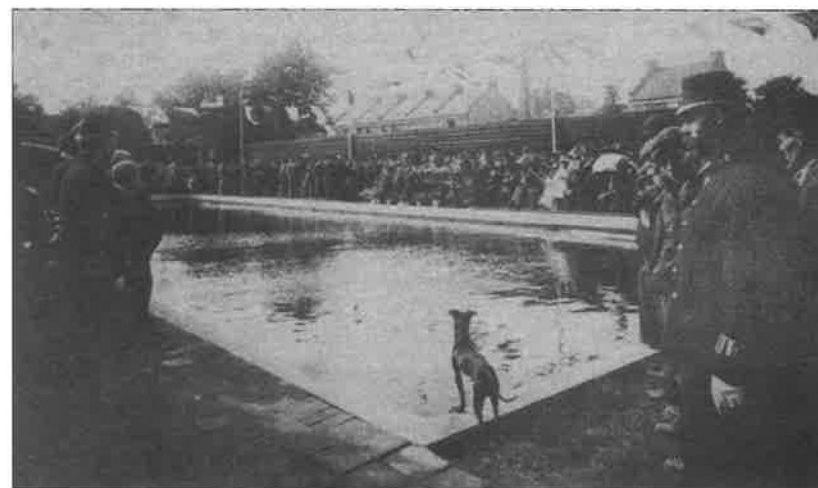
SAM CARDER	DENNIS PERRY
HENRY TRICK	LES COLLARD
ALEC BELL	HORACE PREW
Mrs MILLS	

Many thanks are also due to the researchers, MRS BOBBIE TUTT, MISS TRACEY JARVIS, MR. JOHN COOPER and MR. GRAHAME LOCK, who also accepts responsibility for the compilation of this booklet.

100 YEARS of BRIDGWATER AMATEUR SWIMMING CLUB

1894 - 1917

The impetus for the formation of the Bridgwater Amateur Swimming Club followed the opening of the Swimming Baths at the Old Taunton Road location on a, not unfamiliar, wet and windy Monday the 21st August, 1893. This occasion is admirably illustrated by JOAN ASTELL in her book 'Somerset at Work, 1870 to 1950'.



(Reproduced by kind permission of the publishers, REDCLIFFE PRESS LTD).

Research of the Bridgwater Mercury revealed a notice dated 7th May 1894.

PROPOSED SWIMMING CLUB

Dear Sir, - His Worship the Mayor has kindly promised to preside at a meeting in support of the above to be held at the Young Men's Association, St Mary-street, on Friday evening next, 11th inst., at 8.30 p.m. Will you kindly allow me to ask all of your readers interested in the matter to attend and support him on that occasion? The object of the proposed club - the promotion of swimming, at all times a most useful accomplishment and a healthy exercise - should commend itself to all, and I trust a good number will make it convenient to attend and assist in the organisation of so worthy an object.

Yours truly,

D.C.E. Douch

Bridgwater, May 7th 1894.



1894 - 1994



The meeting on 11th May was in the nature of an exploratory exercise. It was agreed to try and form a club to be called Bridgwater Amateur Swimming Club. The Mayor agreed to become the Club's First President, and MR. D.C.E. DOUCH agreed to be Secretary (pro tem). Anyone desirous of joining should contact Mr. DOUCH, who would arrange to call another meeting at a date to be arranged.

The first full meeting when all the officials were elected, was held on Wednesday 23rd May. The following is, an extract from the Bridgwater Mercury of 30th May.

BRIDGWATER AMATEUR SWIMMING CLUB; -

A well attended meeting was held at the Young Men's Association on Wednesday evening, the Mayor (Mr H. W. Pollard) presiding. The secretary announced that the members already enrolled numbered 70. The Mayor was unanimously elected president of the club, and his worship promised a handsome donation to the funds. The following gentlemen were elected vice-presidents; Rev. C. Bazell, Mr. W. Bouchier, Mr. E. Bryant, Mr. G. G. Burrington, Mr. Wm. Bradfield, Mr. J. Collishaw, Mr. Jas. Cook, Mr R. Y. Foley, Mr. St. B. Goldsmith, Mr. Wm. Gooding, Mr. C. V. Hagon, Mr W. T. Holland, Mr. P. O. H. Reed, Mr. T. M. Reed, Rev. N. H. C. Ruddock, Mr. E. J. Stanley, M.P., Mr J. H. Waddon, and Mr. J. Ware. The officers and committee were elected as follows: -Honorary treasurer, Mr. W. Belcher; honorary secretary, Mr. D. C. E. Douch; committee Messrs. R. Popham, G. Fenn, W. S. Symons, A. S. Belcher, H. W. Chapman, J. Rich and Sylvester. The club will encourage swimming by organising races, and it is hoped water polo matches, and it also intended to practice life-saving drill and resuscitation of the apparently drowned. By becoming affiliated to the Amateur Swimming Association it will be enabled to invite expert swimmers from other towns to visit and assist it, and it is proposed to give and entertainment to celebrate the re-opening of the baths at an early date. The honorary secretary is now prepared to receive propositions from any wishing to become members.

The Mayor, MR. H. W. POLLARD was the Club's First President, with a number of well-known local dignitaries, including two Reverend Gentleman and the local Member of Parliament, as vice-presidents.

No time was wasted in organising swimming events, and it obviously aroused considerable attention when the Club members made their first public appearance in the July of that year.

It is hoped that readers will excuse the report in the Bridgwater Mercury of 18th July being reproduced in full and that the decision of the Mayor will not cause embarrassment to the present holder nor to the present Council on the speed with which the wheels of democracy turn (nearly 100 years to provide a covered pool).

BRIDGWATER AMATEUR SWIMMING CLUB AQUATIC SPORTS.

The members of the Bridgwater Amateur Swimming Club made their first public appearance on Thursday evening last, when they afforded a numerous body of spectators of both sexes an opportunity of witnessing some interesting aquatic sports. It was scarcely an ideal evening for a plunge; there was a rather cold wind, and the rain had rendered the water colder than was pleasant. A group of the bathers was photographed by Mr. A. Squibbs, of Fore street, as well as by some lady amateurs. The referee was Mr. W. King, the judges Messrs. A. J. Whitby and W. Hayward, and the starter and time-keeper, Mr. C. W. Fenn. The first was a two-lengths scratch race, in four heats, twelve competitors starting. Results:-

1. -W. Knight 1; W. Strong, 2; time 1 min 10 sec's.
2. -A. S. Belcher, 1; W. S. Symons 2; S. W. Tottle, 3;
- G. H. Kidner 0; time 1 min 7 sec's.
3. -E. Grabham 1; W. O'Brien, 2; E. Adams, 3;
- W. Lockyer, 0; time 1 min 10 sec's.

4. -A. Leaker, 1; G. Mead, 2; time 1 min. Each of the winners of the heats came in an easy first, but the final contest was very close. Leaker only winning by a touch. Knight had the misfortune, after turning, to foul with another competitor, and afterwards to come into collision with the side of the bath.

Final-A. Leaker, 1; W. Knight, 2; A. S. Belcher, 3; Grabham, 0; time 57 sec's.

It has been announced that at this point the Mayor and some members of the Corporation would take a plunge, and such an event was naturally awaited by the spectators with the keenest anticipation. Some disappointment was felt, therefore, when his Worship, coming to the front, asked that he might be excused. Mr Jas. Collishaw, Chairman of the Baths Committee, undertook to go in alone, and attired in a picturesque costume he took a header from the spring board, and showed himself a thorough master of the art of swimming.

The next item was the four lengths scratch race, which was also contested in four heats. There were 18 entries, but only eight started.

The heats resulted as follows:-

- 1.-W. Strong, 1; W. Knight, retired; time 3 mins 3 sec's.
2. -A. S. Belcher, 1; S. W. Tottle, 2; G. H. Kidner, 3; time 2 mins 42 sec's.
3. -W. Lockyer, 1; E. Adams, 2; time, 3 mins 24 sec's.
4. -G. Mead, 1; time 2 mins 56 sec's.

The final was won easily by Belcher with a vigorous side-stroke. Mead swimming will with an easy breast-stroke and taking second place. Lockyer swam very pluckily throughout.

Final-A. S. Belcher, 1; G. Mead, 2; W. Strong, 3; W. Lockyer 0; 2 mins 27 sec's.

The racing over, a team of four members, Messrs. Belsher, Simons, O'Brien and Kidner, gave a demonstration of the life saving drill which is practised by the Club in connection with the Life Saving Society. Mr. Douch acted as instructor, and the display proved very interesting. First, the rescue drill, on land illustrated four different methods of seizing and assisting drowning persons; and afterwards two of the team plunged into the water, and were rescued and brought ashore by the other two according to the successive methods. The rescue drill followed, showing first on land and then in the water, three different ways of releasing oneself from the dangerous clutch of a drowning person, either by the wrists, round the neck, or round the body. Finally, one of the party simulated unconsciousness, and was brought ashore and resuscitated according to the Sylvester method.

Mr. A. S. Belsher and Mr. W. J. Simons members of the club, then gave an exhibition of ornamental swimming, and this was perhaps more enjoyed than any other item of the programme. Both showed themselves to be accomplished swimmers, and the facility with which they disported themselves in the bath was really surprising.

The programme having been concluded, the MAYOR distributed the handsome silver medals to the winners. He said it gave him a great deal of pleasure to come and see the races, and the public interest shown in them was very gratifying to him and to the Corporation who were anxious that the Baths should be a success, not only for swimming, but from a health point of view. It was a matter of congratulations that during the present season upwards of 2,000 bathers had visited the baths. If people supported them well, no doubt the Corporation would take steps to cover in and heat the bath. (Applause). He was sure they must all be very thankful to Mr. Douch and the various competitors who had interested and amused them that evening, and especially for the very good drill in life saving, than which nothing could be more useful. (Applause). Last year it had been suggested that prizes should be offered for the encouragement of swimming in the elementary schools, and he offered to give a cup, but as nothing further had been done in the matter, he did not consider it should be allowed to rest as it was, and he would place at the disposal of the swimming club a five-guinea challenge cup to be contested for monthly, and to become the absolute property of the member who should win it three times in succession of six times altogether. (Applause).

On the motion of Mr. W. H. ROBERTS, seconded by Mr. COLLISHAW, the Mayor was accorded a hearty vote of thanks for attending and presenting the prizes.

Hearty cheers were given for his Worship and for Messrs. Douch, Belsher and Simons. The success of the meeting was very satisfactory and was largely due to the efforts of Mr. D. C. E. Douch, the Hon. sec, assisted by Mr. Belsher.

Newspaper articles suggest that the swimming season culminated in a day of "entertainment" at the end of August each year. Such entertainment included handicap races for boys and men, as well as, in 1902, a race over one length (33 yards) for ladies residing in Bridgwater with prizes to the value of 10/6 and 5/-. These events were open to amateurs only, the precise definition of an amateur being: -

Definition of An "Amateur"

- An Amateur is one who has never competed for a money prize, declared wager, or staked bet, and who has never taught, pursued, or assisted in the practice of swimming, or any other athletic exercise, as a means of pecuniary gain; and who has not, knowingly or without protest, taken part in any competition or exhibition with anyone who is not known as an Amateur.

It appeared that, in addition to these more serious events, the concluding entertainment consisted of high and long diving competitions, diving for plates, walking the greasy pole, obstacle races, and between the various events, a discourse of lively music provided by Mr. E. J. TOUTS Quadrille Band.

A photograph of Bridgwater Swimming Club members taken in 1910, revealed many well-known names, some of whom later donated trophies, which are still today being competed for by Club members.



The pattern of one or two public displays and competitive events, including water polo matches, continued throughout the years from 1910. Although the Great War (1914-1918) adversely affected the membership of the Club, with the older members being conscripted into the armed services, the younger members, and a handful of officials, particularly the Secretary, MR. EDGAR WOOD, kept the Club going throughout most of this period.

It was only at the end of 1917, with membership reduced to minimal proportions, that a suspension of Club activity was agreed.

1919 - 1937

However, on 30th May 1919, the 26th annual meeting was held, with particular tribute being paid to MR. WOOD, and an agreement made to resume normal Club activity. Having seen the Club through this difficult period, MR. WOOD handed over the secretaryship to MR. P. HUGGINS.

There was little of note outside of the usual series of events during the following decade, although a report in the Bridgwater Mercury during 1930 would, no doubt, have had the Health and Safety authorities and the A.S.A. rushing about in a mad panic. It read,

SWIMMING EXHIBITION

The attention of the spectators was held by Miss Snelgrove, who gave an appreciative exhibition of fancy swimming, included one length with breast stroke, one length with crawl stroke, propelling with the hands in various ways, waltzing in the water, spinning like a top, swimming like a duck, water wheel, and swimming with hands and feet tied. The Hon. secretary of the swimming club (Mrs. P. S. Huggins) thanked Miss Snelgrove for her exhibition, especially in spite of the coldness of the water, which only registered 64 degrees.

One wonders how long she swam with hands and feet tied, a difficult enough handicap made worse by the temperature of the water.

An advertisement in the Bridgwater Mercury of 16th August 1933, was of great interest to the researchers. It was known that swimming in the River Parrett was a popular pastime in those days, and this reproduced notice proved it to be so.

Late Advertisements

A GREAT SWIMMING RACE

DUNBALL TO BRIDGWATER

by permit of the S.C.A.S.A. (under A.S.A. Laws)
will take place

TUESDAY EVENING, AUGUST 22ND

Open to all members of affiliated clubs
of the A.S.A.

Entrance Fee 1/-
SILVER CUP AND OTHER PRIZES.

Also Greasy Pole, Entrance Fee, 6d
100 yard's Race, Entrance Fee, 6d
Collection in aid of Bridgwater Hospital.

All Entries should be sent to
P.MILLS, Monmouth Street, Bridgwater, or
P.S. HUGGINS, St Mary St., Bridgwater
not later than Saturday August 19th

It was reported that this event on the evening of 22nd August was watched by "several thousand people" who lined the banks of the river near the Bridgwater Town Bridge to await the arrival of the swimmers participating in the race from Dunball, a distance of approximately 5 miles.

Quite possibly the popularity of this event may have led to the formation of the Bridgwater River Swimming Club, the first evidence of which is a programme dated 26th July, 1934, which has been kindly loaned by Mrs Mills, widow of MR. PERRY MILLS, a member of this newly formed Club.

PROGRAMME	
EVENT 1. Two Mile Scratch Race for CUP and Medal. 1. G. Dancy. 2. L. P. Mills. 3. D. Look. 4. R. Rowley. 5. E. F. Gould. 6. T. Collard. 7. S. Barrow. 8. K. Martin.	
EVENT 2. High Diving. 1. H. Hole. 2. W. Slocumbe. 3. R. Rowley. 4. S. Barrow. 5. H. Hole. 6. T. Collard. 7. S. Barrow. 8. K. Martin.	
EVENT 3. 440 Yards Scratch. 1. H. Hole. 2. W. Slocumbe. 3. E. F. Gould. 4. T. Collard. 5. S. Barrow. 6. K. Martin.	
EVENT 4. Greasy Pole. 1. L. Collard. 2. R. Rowley. 3. H. Hole. 4. E. Reed. 5. T. Collard. 6. R. Martin. 7. G. Dancy.	
EVENT 5. Town Race. EASTOVER: G. Dancy, P. Mills, L. Collard, R. Martin. WESTOVER: C. Ash, J. Look, D. Look, R. Slocumbe, E. Reed.	
C.W.S. Ellicott Family Butcher. Specialities: Corned Beef, Pickled Onions, Or Tongues. Four Patrons Solicited. HIGH STREET BRIDGWATER.	Geo. E. Johnson The Jeweller, Eastover, Bridgwater. 1901 Sport Trophies, Wedding and Engagement Rings. ALL REPAIRS. Moderate Charges.
MILLS' are the Local Agents for "MOCCASIN" FOOTWEAR FOR GENTS AND LADIES' WEAR Prices: 12/11, 14/11, 16/9, 21/- 25/- MILLS' Footwear Dept., 10/18, Monmouth St., Bridgwater.	

Research has shown that the Bridgwater Amateur Swimming Club continued its activities at the Old Taunton Road Baths at least until 1935, but there after no published reports of meetings or galas have come to hand, although the Bridgwater River Swimming Club continued to thrive.

Alas, in 1938, a report in the Bridgwater Mercury of 11th February, stated, "regret at the lapse of the Bridgwater Men's and Ladies' Club was expressed at the annual meeting of the Somerset Amateur Swimming Association".

1947 - 1955

The outbreak of the Second World War curtailed the activities of most sporting organisations, so that the reported lapse was, in a swimming sense, not as disastrous as it may otherwise have been.

The fortunes of the Bridgwater Amateur Swimming Club were again revived in 1947 when a report of the first gala was given in the Bridgwater Mercury of 9th September.



1894 - 1994





1894 - 1994



1983 Squad

Another milestone occurred at the same time as this success. It was a far less conspicuous decision, but the long term effect of maintaining a record of Clubs progress is quite significant. The scrapbook, compiled by Mrs YVONNE LOCK, former Club Secretary, is of considerable interest to every one of all ages, and often causes great amusement amongst young members when they see photographs of senior squad swimmers as they were at a very young age.

Mr RAY MOORE, the retiring Chairman, commented, in his report to the 1983 A.G.M that "I have been associated with the Club for over 15 years, and the Committee this past year was the best I have ever known and I am honoured to have been a member of it".

At the same meeting, congratulations were also afforded to DEBBIE DAVIES for obtaining a national qualifying time, and taking part in the age-group competitions at Blackpool earlier in the year.

The Last 10 Years

A successful start was made to this last decade when Mr BRIAN BEWLEY, Chief Coach to the Club, was elected President of the Somerset County A.S.A for 1985/86, the first time such an honour had been bestowed upon any member of the Bridgwater Club.

1986 saw the first exchange visit between Bridgwater and Gudensberg Swimming Club when a party of swimmers and officials from the German Club made a brief visit during October. Exchanges have continued ever since, firstly on an annual basis and latterly, biannually.

Bridgwater's long awaited indoor pool was finally built and opened by The Princess of Wales on 16th April 1991. The Club was guaranteed use by Sedgemoor District Council (having time allocated each Tuesday evening and early Saturday morning). Although basically a leisure pool, the complex does provide a 25 metre, six lane pool, adequate for teaching and competitive use.

In recent years, the Club has been well supported financially by various local businesses and national undertakings. Amongst these are COURTAULDS FILMS (formerly British Cellophane Ltd), NATIONAL RIVERS AUTHORITY, NATIONAL WESTMINSTER BANK, BRITISH GAS, NUCLEAR ELECTRIC (Hinkley Point), WOODBURY BROS & HAINES.

In Conclusion

The Club has encountered some difficult times during its 100 years, but has always emerged stronger and, we hope, wiser. The continued existence of the Club is in the hands of its members, not only the swimmers, but also the small band of willing volunteers who give up countless hours of their time for the benefit of the Club. Words of appreciation seem insufficient, but a sincere 'Thank You' is all they expect.

How fitting to finish with a photograph of swimmers for whom all such effort is gladly given.



Back row left to right

James Kyd, Ken Rouse (assistant coach), Gavin Evans, Karl Bryant, Richard Bryant, Simon Gitsham, Peter Ross, Matthew Gitsham, James Gibson, Tom Dwyer.

Row 2 left to right

Nicola Upham, Tara Crossley, Helen Harding, Kerry Rayner, Lisa Smith, Amie Pinnell, Stephen Pinnell, Beth Ross, Christopher Upham, Laura Monaghan, Hannah Clark, Lynsey Randall, Julie Milroy, Katie Baker, Duncan Hill, Gemma Smith.

Row 3 left to right (seated)

Christopher Monaghan, Joshua Tobin, Libby Taylor, Stephen Williams, Penny Boyd, Tom Wilkinson, Peter Cooper, Andrew Slocombe.

Row 4 left to right (seated)

Karen Randall, Graham Smith, Laurie Peric, Paula Ashton, Richard Smith, Katie-Jayne Harding, Nicola Smith, Michelle Drew, Frances Bennett.

The text for this booklet was produced by Grahame Lock. Within the text Grahame has failed to mention his own contribution to the club's history. This final chapter, produced by his friends over the last 15-year's, details that contribution.

Grahame Lock became involved as a parent initially but his enthusiasm for the art of swimming went beyond most parents' involvement with the club. He embarked on the ASA teaching/coaching ladder that culminated in his final qualification as an ASA coach. He was helped along the way by the willing cooperation of swimmers and teachers within the club. The expertise he acquired was put to good use with the swimmers who have gained in strength and performance over the years. All of which was aided by his diligence and precise record keeping. His legacy to the club is the perfect spring board for the club to dive into the next 100 years.

Appendix

THE PRESIDENTS OF BRIDGWATER AMATEUR SWIMMING CLUB

*From the inception of the Club until 1972, it was always the Mayor of Bridgwater
who was elected President of the Club.*

1894/95 Mr H. W. POLLARD	1950/51 Mr E. WILLS
1896 Mr R. C. ELSE	1952 Mr P. WILLS
1897 Mr F. C. FOSTER	1953 Mr G. N. HAYBALL
1898/99 Mr T. GOOD	1954 Mr A. B. JOHN
1900 Mr W. THOMPSON	1955 Mr R. BIDDISCOMBE
1901/03 Mr T. W. MANCHIP	1960 Mr J. G. HEADFORD/ Mrs A. B. POTTERTON
1904/06 Mr H. W. POLLARD	
1907 Mr F. WILLS	1961 Mr A. D. FROST
1908/09 Mr R. O. SULLY	1962 Mr C. W. MILNE
1910 Mr H. W. POLLARD	1963 Mr G. C. HARRIS
1911 Mr W. THOMPSON	1964 Mrs B. M. DAVIS
1912 Mr R. O. SULLY	1965 Mr L. J. PORTER
1913/14 Mr D. BRADFELD	1966 Mr E. J. DAVIES
1915/17 Mr F. G. HAGGETT	1967 Mr L. G. STEER/ Mr G.C. HARRIS
1919/21 Mr S. BERRY	
1922 Mr F. H. ALLEN	1968 Mrs B. M. DAVIS
1923 Mr W. H. J. MASDING	1969 Mr H. J. AYRES
1924 Mr H. M. B. KER	1970 Mrs M. E. REES
1925/27 Mr W. DEACON	1971 Mrs I. A. Y. TESTER
1928/30 Mr F. O. SYMONS	1972 Mr J. H. D. SAUNDERS
1931/33 Mr C. BRYER	1973/78 Mr L. STACEY
1934/36 Mr F. J. REED	1979/80 Mrs I. A. Y. TESTER
1937 Mr W. CHARD	1981 to
1947/49 Mr R. WASHER	date 1994 Mrs B. TUTT