

OTTER SWIMMING CLUB

(Founded 1869)

Annual Report & Accounts 136th Season 2005



Prepared by Katherine Mearman,
Catherine Cassidy & Martin Flash

PRESIDENT'S FOREWORD – OTTER ANNUAL REPORT 2005

2005 has been another successful year for Otter SC with many notable individual and team achievements both in swimming and water polo. These are fully recorded in this comprehensive report, excellently produced by Katherine Mearman.

Much of the success which the club has enjoyed over the last few years has been due to the commitment to provide the maximum pool time possible and high quality coaching. The programme available today is vastly different to that of 5 years ago and almost unrecognisable to that of a decade ago. This is a tremendous achievement but it does come at a price, and subscriptions have had to increase substantially for 2006.

However, the club is still extremely good value for regular participants and, whilst a period of consolidation is needed, the Committee remains committed to providing an environment in which serious competitive swimmers and water polo players can flourish. The club is, and always has been, primarily a competitive club and is rightly proud of its reputation and success.

I hope that those Club members who do not compete regularly are supportive and enjoy sharing in the reflected glory of the success of others.

Every year, a new set of problems arises which has to be dealt with by the Committee. I would like to thank every Committee member for their significant contribution during 2005 and for finding the time when there are so many other competing claims from work, domestic life, and training, to name but a few. My particular thanks to Martin Flash, the Hon. Treasurer, who has devoted so much time to the Club over many years and who has skilfully managed the finances – not without one or two arguments along the way!

2006 will certainly be a challenging year but I am sure that the same spirit of commitment, enthusiasm and a sense of fun from all members will continue to ensure success.

Roger Sharpley, Club President

Otter Swimming Club Officers 2005

President Roger Sharpley
Hon. Secretary Hugh Turner
Hon. Treasurer Martin Flash

Club Officers

Vice-Presidents

Lesley Davies Tony Ray
Paddy Doris James Stewart
Lucy Ryan Todd Sunderman

Captain of Swimming (men)

Scott Darling
Captain of Swimming (women)
Fiona Marshall

Captain of Water Polo (men)

Carl Ainley/Alex Kovachev
Captain of Water Polo (women)
Susan Pearce

Water Polo Hon. Secretary

Alex Starling
Hon. Handicapper
Stuart Whitney

Committee

Aileen Gray Rob Gray
Rachel Joyce Debbie Paynter
Grant Monk Katherine
Mearman
James Kerton James Palmer

Swimming coaches

Hayley Attwood, Peter Carpenter,
Ross Croasdell, Lesley Davies, Johan
Engelke, Adam McCarthy, Ruth
Morrison

Water polo Coaches

Nick Buller, Tim Kendall

Club Administration

In complete contrast to last year's report the financial performance of the Club in 2005 was bad. A significant loss was incurred, the most important (but not the only) reason for which is drop in Club members, especially swimmers. With a long perspective and in the overall scheme of things this is not a disaster but it does mean that in 2006 swimmers subscriptions in particular have had to go up significantly, and lady polo players subscriptions almost as much. In addition there is a tighter control of our use of facilities. However overall the Club offers as much pool space and value as it did before. There is an explanation below in greater detail. This year the layout of the accounts has changed. The purpose is not to confuse members but to reflect changes in the way the accounts are kept and presented. This too will be discussed later. Overall the Club's finances remain healthy and hopefully 2006 will see the equilibrium of the Club re-established.

Income statement

The most notably feature of the income statement is that total member revenue has stagnated. The previous year subscription income climbed under the influence of increasing numbers and increased subscriptions. This year the total figure was essentially the same as the last year. Generous souls continued to give to the Prizes and General (P&G) Fund, which is used to supplement annual income, but the total – of the same order of magnitude for many years – is now small compared to total income. In the distant past, before the Club paid for pools and coaches, the P&G was sometimes one third of revenue. We are nonetheless very grateful to all contributors; we still value very much what they give and the donors are listed below.

Prizes and General Fund

Justine Bond, Nigel Bond, Alistair Booth, Esteban Casuscelli, Pierre Cerri, Ted Evans, Wilton Fry, Micky Gallagher, Annabelle Gourlay, Vic Hardy, Jon Kay-Mouat, Conrad King, Matt Klaeffling, Roger Lloyd-Mostyn, Paul Marshall, Michael McHaffie, David Milne, Valeria Mizuno, Andrew Morton, Bill Myers, John Nalson, Doug Payne, Tracy Pitcher, Guy Powdrill, Peter Rae, Jim Ricketts, Nigel Salisbury, Tullio Salvatore, Liz Shaw, Malcolm Sheehan, David Skidmore OBE, Sheryl Slater, Tony Stanton, Alex Starling, James Stewart, Cliff Stossel, Manousos Syngellakis, Ben Tausig, Peter Thompson, Paul Thorogood, John Towers, Sam Tubb, Leon Walkden, Brian Walton, Katie White, Gavin White, Garry Willetts, Ed Williams, Xavier Williams, Scott Woodley.

There are two other items of income. The first is revenue from our investments which has grown largely due to ris-

ing stock markets and interest rates. The second is our normal sponsorship from Shell, which was this year complimented by sponsorship for water polo from Regent Inns. One of their bars was persuaded that this would be a good investment, quickly recovered!

The first change in the layout of the accounts occurs now for the miscellany of Club activities which should nominally break-even. For various reasons these frequently do not cover their costs so they have been moved to the expenditure side, to which we now turn.

The two big items of expenditure are pool time and coaching. The former climbed significantly this year as the Club grappled with the over-crowding of last year, and it would be fair to say that the Club expanded too far, especially in the light of the drop in membership, although this was not apparent until late in the year. The club has a 25-30% churn or turnover, neither new nor unusual for a Central London club, but making changes in membership pattern difficult to pick up, especially given the need to forward-book pool space and coaches. The coaching costs also increased compared to previous years, and in terms of the support and help we have had from the individuals concerned this has been money well spent. The increase represents an increase in number rather than rate. However together with the increase in pool time it has revealed another problem, which is finding enough coaches, especially but not only for swimming. The expansion of Club pool space in recent years (it has effectively doubled in hours since 2000, although increased by 50% in terms of space) means that there is little Central London space for the Club to occupy, but more to the point the Club now struggles to staff the space it does have. Financial constraints apart this is now the hurdle for any further expansion should desirable space come free.

In the next section of the accounts, Activity costs, the water polo and swimming expenses, especially the former, climbed in the year reflecting more competing teams in more competitions. Affiliation costs, largely but not only the ASA, were stable; the ASA now takes fees and provides insurance for all members including non-active ones. And lastly the prizes and trophies costs were also largely stable and include the silver spoons for the various club races and costs of refurbishing and engraving the many trophies, a task diligently carried out by John Iliffe, to whom many thanks.

Under Club activities are grouped all those activities referred to earlier which nominally break even. Safety measures now make it difficult for the open water races to cover their costs entirely from participation charges. The shop, ably managed by Tony Ray, made a small loss probably because some hats should more correctly have been

classed as equipment costs. The dinner however broke even, due not least to the superb efforts of Lesley Davies and her team.

Lastly the Administration costs are unchanged in content and layout. As part of building up of the insurance self-insurance fund the cost of insurance was larger than strictly necessary, and the increased postage cost reflects mostly the larger and heavier annual report last year.

In sum then the costs overwhelmed the income, but they reflect the current structure of the Club, which provides at least 2 spaces per week for each member. In addition our research shows that the annual subscription compares well in value with any competitive offering in London. Closing the gap between revenue and costs by raising subscriptions has been a logical if not an easy consequence (and was indeed foreshadowed in last year's report).

Balance Sheet

The balance sheet this year has both a different layout and some important differences in content. The layout differences reflect advice to the Treasurer from those who understand accounting who suggested greater clarity and better logic would not go amiss (considered by the Treasurer as a highly debatable point). The main items have not changed but are laid out differently.

The first important change in content is in the first section, long term assets. This group contains the Club's investments at cost (which stand at current market value at almost twice this figure), the self-insurance fund for the trophies and, the new item, the value of the trophies themselves. In the past this number has been kept off the balance sheet for two reasons. The trophies' valuations are uncertain and infrequent on the one hand, and in replacement terms are completely over-shadowed by potential engraving costs. However the consensus is that the figure is a reasonable one and the purpose of putting it on the balance sheet is to provide a comparison with the trophy fund on the liability side, making it in effect a target. This addition to the balance sheet is offset by a similar addition to the capital income and reserves.

The working capital section has no surprises; the large cash balance is explained later. Note that the reserves or contingencies figure represents net reservations for un-presented bills or un-received income for the year.

The following section, Provisions, on the liability side now, contains only sinking funds for future expenditure. This year the computer fund has gone down as the editor of the annual report now has her own computer with which to produce it, rather than relying on the services of various

offices as we have done in the past.

The next major change in the balance sheet is in the size of the Memorial Fund (and explains the cash in the bank figure). The Memorial Fund is the repository of funds given as capital, usually in memory of a departed member but also as gifts to the Club. And James Stewart has provided a very generous amount indeed his year, which accounts for 95% of the change and which next year will be reflected in additional investments. Other members provided sums in memory of David Craig, and our thanks go to the following donors:

Memorial Fund

Charles Doxat, John Gordon, Mark Grundy, Denis Lean, Malcolm Sheehan, James Stewart, Dennis Stewart, Mike Woodman.

The cosmetic changes to the accounts were not driven solely by the desire to clarify the presentation. This year for the first time the club has been run from one integrated database comprising both member records and the accounts and hence the opportunity was taken to make other changes. The format of the accounts has not changed since at least the previous Treasurer, during which time the Club (and the world) has changed radically. Running the Club without a database would now be inconceivable, but until now there have been two of them, one for membership records and one for accounting. This not only made for twice the number of entries (a subscription had to be recorded in two places), it also made co-ordination and analysis between the two cumbersome. This era is now passed, and in addition to the easier data entry analytical accounting is much improved.

The heavy loss this year alone warrants a period of stabilisation but there are other reasons too. As noted earlier having taken nearly all the Central London available pool space at acceptable hours the Club now has some problems managing it. From purely a financial point of view the strategy of the Club to date has been to expand and back new initiatives using our reserves as comfort, but expecting things to breakeven overall. Subscriptions did not change until a loss was incurred and a new structure merited it. Thus if we take the years 1990, 2000 and 2005 the Club membership has gone from 250 to 248 to 338 members, Active members from 110 to 111 to 200 and turnover from £5,096 to £17,624 to approximately £80,000. However during this time pools have improved their billing practices, and there has been a large growth in members paying by monthly standing order. The result is much tighter cash flow. Although the Club does not exist to make

profits, and budgets to breakeven, it may be necessary in future to change practice and budget to make a small surplus each year, the better to deal with the unexpected like this year. This is an issue on which all feedback would be welcome, as indeed on any other aspect of the accounts.

Financially this year has been a bad year, which hopefully we will get quickly behind us. Overall the finances of the Club remain strong and well able to support the Club's strong position in Central London, even in the country.

Despite the obfuscation engendered by the changes in layout and method, once again our auditor Tim Fraser exposed himself professionally by approving the accounts on behalf of members, and to him we owe many thanks.

<i>Income statement - £</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2004</i>
Subscriptions total	64,539	66,409
Special sessions	0	475
Prizes & general fund	1,944	1,207
Members income	66,483	68,091
External income	9,100	7,440
Capital income	1,020	782
Miscellaneous income	338	71
Other income	10,458	8,293
Income	76,941	76,384
Pool hire costs	(47,245)	(39,780)
Equipment costs	(3,747)	(1,899)
Pools & equipment	(50,992)	(41,679)
Coaching costs	(20,465)	(17,186)
Coaching	(20,465)	(17,186)
Water polo expenses	(3,382)	(2,198)
Swimming expenses	(648)	(963)
Affiliation costs	(3,236)	(3,479)
Prizes and trophies	(1,572)	(1,402)
Activity costs	(8,836)	(8,042)
Dinner	317	808
Open water races	(573)	(697)
Shop sales	189	1
Club activities	(67)	112
Insurance	(1,400)	(5,000)
Post and printing costs	(3,498)	(2,754)
Tax	0	0
Miscellaneous costs	(1,032)	(550)
Administration	(5,930)	(8,304)
Expenses	(86,291)	(75,098)
Profit / (Loss)	(9,350)	1,285

<i>Balance sheet - £</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2004</i>
Trophies	35,000	0
Fixed Assets	35,000	0
Investments at cost	21,209	21,209
Self-insurance investment	6,521	5,018
Investments	27,730	26,227
Long term assets	62,730	26,227
Bank	15,232	20,434
Debtors	3,695	4,607
Stock	4,327	4,040
Current assets	23,254	29,081
Creditors	(2,787)	(11,186)
Reserves or contingencies	(1,930)	(418)
Current liabilities	(4,717)	(11,603)
Working capital	18,537	17,478
Assets	81,267	43,705
Computer fund	1,680	3,750
Spoon fund	2,738	2,238
Sinking funds	4,418	5,988
Provisions	4,418	5,988
Life membership fund	10,539	9,459
Memorial fund	19,195	8,610
Trophy insurance fund	6,400	5,000
Capital funds	36,134	23,069
Balance b/fwd	14,648	12,128
Capital income & reserves	35,418	1,235
Result for year	(9,350)	1,285
Reserve funds	40,715	14,648
Reserves	76,849	37,717
Reserves & provisions	81,267	43,705

Investments #: Brunner Investment Trust 1290, Foreign & Colonial Investment Trust 7465, Fleming Claverhouse Share Plan 222, Flemming Claverhouse Investment Trust 1530, Scottish Mortgage Investment Trust 1835.

"I have examined the books and vouchers of Otter Swimming Club and have obtained all necessary explanations for me to certify that these accounts show a reasonable view of the Club's activities for the year and its financial position as at the 31st December 2005." Hon Auditor. Tim Fraser 9/2/2006

Members' News

Membership

The membership on the books at the year-end was 343(372 last year). There were 200(223) active members of which Active swimmers went to 119(140) and polo players to 81(83) In addition there were 19(21) country members, 69(74) non-active members, 18(14) junior members and 37(37) life members. The number of lady members went to 102(123), still about one third of polo players and slightly less than half the swimmers. The average age of Active members was 32(32). We had a 70(71) new members and we welcome the following to us:

New Members

Konata Alleyne, Jillian Anderson, Vic Apps, Thomas Bailey, Irakli Bakradze, Dave Baldwin, Justine Bond, Nigel Bond, William Bradlow, Nick Buller, Gabriela Cardoso, Esteban Casuscelli, Paul Champkin, Gary Chow, Greg Comiskey, Catherine Couquet, Amelie Courtney, Katie Dallimore, Helen Davies, Giuseppe Demarchi, Hector Drake, Nick Edelman, Oleg Egorov, Peggy Etiebet, Donna Ettebet, Carlo Fezzi, Erika Fiori, Christian Fleck, Nicole Freeman, Roger Frontado, Yannick Gaudio, Ling Gillespie, Claire Goymour, Rhona Gray, John Hardbattle, Sophie Hemsworth, Lourdes Heredia, Oliver Holman, Saul Kornik, Gerard Leahy, Alison Lievesley, Kathleen Loughlin, James Luke, Shona Macfarlane, Adam McCarthy, Robert Miller, Katrina Miller, Alice Miller, Lucas Miller, Benjamin Miller, Erica Moffett, Lachlan Pollard, Greg Posa, Morten Poulsen-Hansen, Anneke Ray, Lorna Reddin, Paul Renaud, Alan Rotsey, Andrew Russell, Justin Ryan, Leonie Ryan, Clare Serenyi, Rob Spurr, Gergo Szabo, Ben Thomas, Simon Threlfall, Sarpel Ustunel, Ciaran Walshe, Debbie Willet, Xavier Williams.

With a longer perspective than one year the slip in overall numbers, while having serious financial implications does not yet mean the club structure has changed fundamentally. As noted earlier the Club has few peers in Central London and makes its mark nationally both in swimming and water polo. In overall numbers we have attracted between 65 and 90 new members every year since we have kept records (1983). The greater reliance on Active fees might imply a higher turnover and less long term loyalty, but turnover in financial terms has oscillated around 30% and if anything gone down, and new members as a percent of active members has done much the same. The Club needs to hold onto its membership and especially its active membership of around 200 which it does of course above all through the activities reported on elsewhere, and its facilities which we comment on briefly below.

Facilities and coaching

The Club now has sessions every day except Friday for either water polo or swimming or both, providing per week about 9.5 hours of swimming, 8.5 hours of water polo and just under 400 spaces total, 230 for swimming, 165 for water polo (one third for ladies). The pool, times and sessions are not equal inevitably and there are several we would change if the opportunity arose, but for the moment as noted before we have taken all that we want and can handle.

The swimming coaching has been done by Ruth Morrison, Peter Carpenter, Johan Engelke, Lesley Davies, Ross Croasdell, Hayley Attwood, and Adam McCarthy, led by Ross and Lesley. The polo coaches were Tim Kendall and Nick Buller and we owe all of them our thanks for their commitment and good humour. Like the membership being a Central London Club brings its problems for the coaching as well, but the Club has a professional and dedicated structure, and the results speak for themselves. Purely from a management point of view the Club now has a problem and constraint in organising our coaching. The sheer numbers in the water alone pose problems of organisation. This is a challenge for the Committee. But overall without the coaches and their leaders, the Club would be nowhere.

News

First of all a correction to last years news is in order on Tony Milton's Olympic achievements at the Rome Olympics. He did not swim in the 100m but was a member of a successful 4 by 200m relay freestyle team - they set a European record in the heat (8m 26.9), and were slightly slower in the final (8m 28.1) but were best Europeans coming 4th albeit some way behind the Americans, Japanese and Australians. Tony was lead-off, followed by John Martin-Dye, Ricky Campion and our greatest swimmer of that era, Ian Black.

Secondly unfortunately it was not until last year that the Club heard of the untimely death in 2001 of an illustrious life member, Alistair Mackenzie Crawford. Alistair was born in 1935 in Scotland with historic Scottish clans on both sides of his family - the Crawfords and the Mackenzies. He joined Otter at age 17, and developed into an international-class breaststroke swimmer, and was Captain 1963-5. But he will be mainly remembered for his organizational abilities. Despite his unassuming, even diffident, manner, he was an inspiration to many younger Otters of that era, organizing special trips and extra training (at a time when such a thing was unfashionable!). He also edited and produced the best and only regular Club magazine we have had. Unfortunately for the Club from

the 1970s onwards he faded almost completely from the swimming scene to concentrate on his love of music, and with the benefit of inherited wealth, looked after the welfare of many less fortunate than himself. He died too young but peacefully at home, after some illness, in March 2001, just 2 weeks before his 66th birthday.

We lost last year a long standing member John Gardner, a member since 1946 and a constant supporter, in recent years from Portugal.

On a more cheerful note we gained a new life member last year, journalist extraordinary John Goodbody. John is chief sports editor for the Times and an avid behind the scenes Club supporter; indeed before the scenes too as when interviewed on television he is usually wearing the Club tie. Barbara Woodward, our China representative (and incidentally one of only 2 people in the Foreign Office speaking both Russian and Chinese) is god-mother to John's son.

John was in part instrumental in moving another life member, Mel Goldberg, to chairman of the ASA. Mel joined us after leaving Cambridge in 1960 to become a lawyer and was active in more ways than one in the Club in the sixties before professional life overtook him.

John was also behind an article on David Parr in the Sunday Times, who is now swimming faster than in his university days and amassing records left, right and centre (as reported later). The article was sub-titled '*racing into your old age keeps you fit and brings new depth to your sex life*' – which must be welcome news to all Club members.

Andy Morton, for many years the water polo correspondent for the Swimming Times has unexpectedly seen elevation to the ASA hierarchy and was recently installed as the President of ASA East Region covering mainly the 6 East Anglia Counties.

Other news from the older end of the Club is that Paul Thorogood is alive and well in Cornwall, impressed by the range of activities and kept busy supporting the new pool there. And Ted Evans at SCASA long course won 6 individual golds, with 3 best times, and 2 240 relay golds. Not bad after a stroke.

Otter Golf

Splendidly organised by Mark Grundy, a stalwart but not very large group met as in years before to tackle the Royal Wimbledon course, and its lunch menu. The



meet was also the occasion to see for the first time the new salver in David Craig's memory, seen here in Andrew's hands. The golf was won in convincing fashion by Rick Jones, (seen here celebrating modestly in the presence of Mark) and the field was as usual decimated



by the lunch. A good time was had by all. Next year the formula will change in that we hope to have more younger Otters playing golf, and more people attending the lunch which will be (indeed already is) an event in itself.

Globe Trotting

Elisabeth Attwood reports from Australia where she has been traveling and living for the past 18 months. "I've been working in Alice Springs for a year now, working on the local newspaper there, The Alice Springs News, as the sports reporter. I'm really enjoying the fantastic weather and laid back lifestyle. Unfortunately the location has rather diminished the opportunity for open water swimming (along with a bout of glandular fever) but I am happily coaching the Alice Desert Dolphins masters swimming club for the time being."

This year we said good bye to one of the clubs most dedicated members both in terms of dedication to swimming and to the behind the scenes organisation. Stuart Whitney left us sadly to travel around the world before he will settle down in New Zealand. He said this as he left: "It just leaves me to say goodbye (here saying just that in Sheffield). I can't quite believe I'm going and not coming back but it's happening. I shall miss all the gut wrenching training sessions, all the competitions (despite last week!), doing the handicapping and organising the races. Obviously, though most of all I will miss the people. No organisation can thrive without team spirit and great people and Otter has them all in droves and I will miss you all. Despite my bouts of stropiness, handicapping and general disdain for the cheesier excesses of your musical tastes I hope you will miss me. It's been a wonderful three and a half years of my life and I look forward to starting Otter, Auckland branch sometime next year".



Water Babies



Welcome to Leona Isobel Ryan (pictured with mum) who came into the world on 15th August 05, weighing 8 pounds 1oz. Congratulations to the Ryan family on their new addition. Lucy wants it to be noted that Leona is doing really well and goes swimming

every week. She seems to be a doggy paddle specialist at the moment. Mum has also been back in competition locally in Norfolk & came away from club champs with 8 trophies!

Namoi Britz couldn't resist the spreading the news, all the way from Moscow, of her new beautiful niece. Ruth Kermisch gave birth to Maya on Sunday 23rd Oct. Both mother and baby are doing well and already Ruth has made a welcome return to Otter. Julia Gregory and Patricia Walker also became mums this year. Congratulations to all of them on the new additions to their families.

Lydia Kan this year's Veteran's Cup winner, participates in the occasional meet, the open water races, school's matches and in this year's Dorking swimathon to raise money for Cancer research. Additionally Lydia is integral to Otter's overall well being. "I do my part as a team member in other ways" says Lydia. And this is very true, Lydia provides sports massages, snacks and encouragement, especially in the run up to big events.

SWIMMING

Irish Masters – 1st May

At this year's bi-annual Irish Masters meet, hosted by Cork Masters, Otter proved, once again, that they can not be beaten. 15 Otters made the trip over to Cork to take part in the first International meet on the Swimming calendar. Bullied / led by Captain McMarshall the Otter team who may have thought the weekend may have involved more drinking and a little less swimming were given orders in no uncertain terms that everyone was to swim all of their events. Hangovers and shopping were not going to be accepted as excuses for not showing on the block. At one point Katie admitted that she didn't want to swim her 100m free event but was too scared of Pitbull Marshall not to. The unanimous response was that everyone else felt the same. In the end though Fiona's bullying tactics paid off as Otter were crowned best International Team of the meet and were rewarded with a superb crystal trophy as a result. In addition to this success Otter were also the

2nd highest scoring team overall, second only to the hosting club, Cork who had 70 swimmers to our 15.

The stakes were lifted in the meet upon discovery that if you won your age group for your event you came away with a memorial wine glass to mark your triumph. Indeed the race was on to see who could collect a complete set for their dinner parties. Ted Evans was Otter's swimmer of the meet when he came away with 7 glasses for his 5 individual events and 2 relays and also set 7 new 'all comers' Irish records making it a clean sweep for Father Ted. Jane, Rach, Fiona, Gina, Jimmy K, Mike and Tony all also came away with an impressive number of glasses so if you are invited round to dinner with any of these Otters you know what you'll be drinking from!

After talking up his 200m swim in the pub on Friday night Jmaes Palmer (Peaches) was told in no uncertain by Rachel that he should let the swimming do the talking and with a sub 2.20 in the 200m free and a very impressive I.M swim on the Sat it looked like Peaches wasn't just all talk after all. Unfortunately for Peaches as the intake of Guinness increased it led to a decrease in his swimming performance. Indeed in the 50m free when the official gave him a time he wasn't happy with, he was even less happy that the electronic timing added 0.4 to his time. Then, to add salt to his wounds Jimmy K's time, which he had initially beaten, was not subjected to such a harsh time increase meaning that Peaches was scalped by JK. This led to a grudge match in the 100m on the Sunday afternoon. With both men in the same heat it promised to be a close race. And indeed at the 50m mark there was nothing in it. But through the last 50m it seemed youth was definitely on Jimmy K's side and in this race even without the computer's adjustment it was another Jimmy K victory.

Elsewhere in the Otter Men's camp Carl put in some solid swims for his 50m & 100m free but it was his 50m fly that was his swim of the meet. There was some concern about how Carl would get through any of his swims after the volume of Guinness he was consuming. But Carl's response was that he was fuelled by Guinness. In the Guinness vs Murphy's divide, Tony Ray of the Murphy's camp didn't seem to get any reward from his drink of choice. Despite coming away glass and medal laden he described his swims with the quote of the meet when he said simply "I swam like a pig".

A special mention must also go to Roger Phillips, who was put through hell before he even arrived at the pool after having his passport stolen at the airport was forced to take a later flight which was then diverted due to fog. So by the time he arrived at the pool he had some pent up aggression which he let loose in his swims. Despite all his upsets

it was definitely worth Roger's time to come to Cork. In addition to his individual successes Roger was also part of 2 record-breaking relay times. Along with Ted Evans, Tony Ray and Mike Wake the 4 Otter men had success in the I.M relay and freestyle relay. There was some concern when at the 3rd leg of the freestyle relay the Otter team was trailing by half a length. Peaches commented that although Mike was a good swimmer he wouldn't be good enough to pull back this lead unless the last swimmer in the other team was really slow. A sigh of relief washed over the Otter camp when the competition's 80yr old swimmer dived in and swam breaststroke for his leg letting Mike cruise home to an easy victory.

For the Otter Ladies, Jane was on fine form setting new all comers Irish records in the 200m & 100m free as well as giving Rach a real run for her money in the 100m Free. However, Rach had taken on board a pep talk from Fiona about pushing starts to the limit and although Rach wants to put it down to her lightning speed reactions in more rigid competitions it may have been a DQ. Luckily for Rach the referee ruled in her favour helping her in her quest for a wine glass set. On the other side of this fence was Afric Creedon's start for her 50m fly which was ruled as a flyer. Though despite this Afric still called this as her swim of the meet and has decreed it 'her' event. Afric had more success in the Ladies I.M relay team. Along with Fiona, Katie and Rach these 4 girls secured a victory that was witnessed by Afric's family. Indeed her 6yr old cousin was so excited at seeing Afric win this race asked if Afric would be on the telly. Although Otter may not have quite reached TV coverage level the Otter Ladies were picked up by the Irish Examiner and the Evening Echo. Katie Goodall, who participated in her first Otter meet also found the benefits of relays after getting to take home a wine glass. In her individual events Katie has definitely proved herself as a backstroke swimmer with good performances in the 100m and 50m events. Katie also helped secure Otter clean sweeps of bronze, silver and gold for the 'A' age group in the 100m I.M, 100m back, 100m & 50m free which added points to Otter's overall score. Gina G, who was also part of the aforementioned Otter domination, took home wine glasses in the 100m & 50m back. As for Captain Marshall, she was on course for a full set of wine glasses with success in her individual events until she was robbed of her 50m free victory by a late entry who was allowed to swim after the fastest heat and beat Fiona by 0.02 something Fiona maintains would not have happened had they gone head to head. Despite the upset in the individual 50m free McMarshall led out the ladies relay in a storming 27. swim prompting comments of 'damn yanks' as she emerged from the water in her AUS costume. This did nothing to deter the rest of the

relay team as Gina, Jane and Rach all swam super swims to secure a victory and a new Irish record that rounded off the weekend in style.

Outside of the pool the city's reserves of Guinness, Murphy's, vodka, gin and wine were seriously dented as the Otter Team hit the streets of Cork on the Friday and Saturday night. With a hard-core group sampling the nightclubs on offer in Cork. But it was the Sunday night dinner dance where the Otter's really let loose. With many reasons to celebrate including Afric's 30th birthday and Otter's new trophy the champagne corks were popped many toasts were toasted. Highlights of the evening were Fiona's marvel at what happens to Brits when Maddness comes through the speakers, Carl & Peaches in a 'love' triangle with a 60yr old lady, GG leading the dancefloor in the Macarena. But the undisputed talking point of the evening were Ted's dancing skills. Twirling the Otter Ladies around the dancefloor had definitely earned Ted title of 'dancer of the meet' to go with his title of 'swimmer of the meet'.

GB Masters, Glasgow – June 3rd-5th

The Otter Masters triumph again at the Great Britain Masters Swimming Championships. An elite team of Otters made a daring pre-Stockholm training appearance at Glasgow this weekend. Dazzling opening swims from James Stewart (seconds faster than his entry time in the 200m Back), and Lesley "When the going gets tough the tough get going / I only swim 200m+" Davies set the momentum for yet another weekend of good swims.

The handicapper, Stuart, loomed over the meet, calling shots that even the most dedicated Las Vegas Casino goer might have shied away from... predicting a 10.22 for Mighty Jane McMenemy in the 800m free, and a sparky 1.19 for Firestorm Marshal in the 100 Breaststroke, the exact times that they swam (though as usual he consistently failed to predict the men's times with any accuracy, why we ask does he pay more attention to the girls?). Backstroke babe Katie Goodall took four seconds off her entry time in the 200m Back, and after a chronic 50m Freestyle swim Jimmy K took gold in the 200m Breaststroke.

A fiery 200m IM won Dan Mikulskis his first gold medal in Masters Swimming, a small consolation after a 56. in the 100m Free left him in fourth, (saying nothing of the DQ...), as he added to the small Otter medal mine (mainly contributed to by multiple medallist "Father" Ted Evans, and his merry squad of Otter men, of whom

we should mention Tony Ray for some outstanding relay swims (even if he won't acknowledge them himself).

Another Otter star was newcomer to distance events, Rhiannon Guy (excelling in her negatively split 800m race with 10.45.87). Lauren Edwards produced a fearsome 2.43.04 in the 200m IM, showing a powerful medley strength. Steve "the Hoff" Marks produced a paced 100m Freestyle, indicative of fast times to come, and a blistering 50m Freestyle, making him fastest otter of the meet.

Other news? Well folks, if news had been left to the glamorous Otter ladies, apart from rumours of a little bed-sharing, it might have been a quiet match report. However after a hardy and debauched night on the beers with the Moldovan football team in the 'Cathouse' (stories of Estonian strippers and hedonistic Glasgow thrills firmly denied), Jimmy K and Dan staged another sporting coup, finding themselves sharing a row of seats on the BA flight home with none other than Colin Jackson. After finding his fame a hard hurdle to get over, likely lads Jimmy K and Dan persuaded Colin to sign a pair of their pants, before swapping stories about bygone sporting triumphs. (Colin was in Glasgow with the British Athletics Team, who had raced the US and Russia).

European Masters Championships: Report from the Pool - 20th August

Fiona Marshall reports:

It was a nervous bunch of Otters flying into Stockholm for the Europeans 2 weeks ago. Firstly we had all cleverly booked our BA flights from Heathrow, back at the beginning of the year while they were cheap, thinking we were onto a good thing by increasing our air miles at such a low price. It turned out to be perfectly timed to coincide with the BA strikes, so we had a nervous weekend leading up to departure wondering whether we would get off the ground. Fortunately we did without too much delay, however it wasn't to stop there. The city of Stockholm and the organisers threw all sorts of challenges at us, but we are a very determined bunch!

So the first day of competition was upon us. Mike kicked things off with his 200 freestyle (13th), followed in a few heats later by Steve (41st). Jimmy K was next up for the 50 breaststroke in his stylish new grey fastskin II, touching in a masters PB time and 23rd place. I was next off the blocks in my own expensive new blue fastskin II, and somehow managed the perfect finish (according to Mike!) to hold off the field in second place to the Swedish Olympian. Derek rounded out the day with a very quick 100 fly, to finish second in his age group.

Day two of competition saw Derek triumph in the 200 fly,



European Record Holders (L to R)
Ross, Jane, Fiona & Matt

Nigel Salisbury posted a very quick 50 backstroke for 7th place, and then we had the 100 breaststroke. Jimmy swam a very strong race, coming in for 12th place; Liz also swam above her expectations to finish 15th, and I couldn't quite hold off a fast finishing German, ending up with 3rd place.

Day 3 of competition was Friday, and we were all feeling slightly weary - a combination of lying around in the gorgeous sunshine between events, and the amount of pear cider we all drank at dinner the night before. It was a big day of competition however, Nigel kicked off with the 200 backstroke and finished just off the podium in 4th place. Then the two main events of the day - the 50 fly starring Britain's best with Derek Parr, Mark Foster, and Ross Croasdell making an appearance. This was followed by a hotly contested 100 freestyle for almost all the Otters present. In the 400m free and in the absence of Jane and Steve, Stuart flew the flag for the distance swimmers posting a masters PB and very gutsy swim of 5.13.82 to finish 27th overall.

Day 4 dawned at a ridiculous hour for the 200 breaststrokes Liz, Mike and me, although the bonus was that we didn't have to fight off the outrageously rude Italian or German men in the warm-up pool for the first time all



Gina Hobson in action in the freestyle relay

week. It was worth the early start though, as we finished in 10th (Liz), 8th (Mike) and 2nd (me). This was followed by the 50 free for most of us, again with guest appearances by Mark Foster and Ross Croasdell. Most were pleased (or at least philosophical) about their 50 swims, although Ross finished outside the top 20 and was heard to mutter "I haven't swum that slowly since I was 14 years old". The day ended with the 100 back for Nigel, who rounded out the week with another closely contested 4th place. There were some great swims and it was a well run competition, with the main complaint being that there really wasn't enough space around the pool for all the spectators, so we had to spend much of our time lying in the sun outside.

European Masters Championships: Open Water Report

Stuart Whitney reports:

After a rather mixed day of personal pool performances on Friday I cut a rather nervous figure on Sunday before the Open water event. We were assured during the previous days briefing of relatively balmy 21 degree water temperature in the lake it was being held at, 6km from the centre of Stockholm. However, rather chilly, overcast weather didn't make the lake look too inviting but I hadn't trained so hard for so long to back out now so I joined 2 other British challengers in my age group wave, the largest of the whole race. We were to swim one complete circuit of the lake going off in waves by age group 15 minutes apart. As we waded into the lake to start, the nerves fortunately subsided a little as I could see that everyone else was equally as pensive. I started quite steadily, just wanting to drop into a rhythm which I could maintain for the duration and I ignored the group of swimmers who went off like a bats out of hell at the start. The water itself was surprisingly pleasant, a perfect temperature for open water swimming and the course was reasonably simple to navigate although trying to follow the group of swimmers in front



Ruth Morrison powers home in the breaststroke

was proving increasingly difficult as they disappeared into the distance, it seemed I was in front or near the front of the second group of swimmers. As the swim went on it was just about possible to work out where you were in relation to the course, but it did seem very long, much further than the 3km I swam at the Worlds in Italy last year. However, it was possible to gain some sort of enjoyment from it although the legs started getting very heavy towards the end and I couldn't raise much of a sprint finish to beat off a late surging German on my inside, much to my irritation. My final finish time of 52 mins 39 seconds (20th out of 32) seemed to confirm my thoughts about the distance, a view shared by others swimmers I spoke to that the course was closer to 4km rather than the 3.2km advertised. My time was 12 minutes slower than I swam in Italy last year for a supposedly similar distance and the winning times were around 10 minutes slower which seemed to back up this view so however well it was organised they sure pulled a fast one over the distance!

However, I think I swam it pretty well and am glad I gave it a go. I thought Stockholm was an excellent venue for the event as it's a lovely city and I think all Otters enjoyed their experience during the week.



What are the girls looking at? (L to R): Rache I, Gina, Gareth & Jason

Southern Counties - 24th September

Gina Hobson reports:

An elite band of Otters traipsed across London to the last ever Southern Counties event in Enfield on Sun. The main attraction was to be the Whitney-Palmer head to head in the 200fly, so spectators were most disappointed to hear that Whitney had withdrawn, citing stress. But to his credit, Peaches put on a fantastic show alone, going 2.43 and removing those 175m demons from Crystal Palace. Peaches was a popular figure throughout the day,

with the Otter club name being disregarded by other teams in favour of Team Peaches...I'm not sure if it'll catch on.

Big well done to Fiona for smashing the Southern Counties record for 100br by 2 secs (1.17), although she wasn't too pleased when she realised it will probably be obsolete by the end of the year. There were pbs by Rhiannon, Katie, Lauren, Peaches, Fiona and Andy, although I may've just pulled those names from thin air, so apologies if I've left anyone off. And it was great to see Lesley back in the pool after her open water exploits. On a personal note, I'm pleased to report that Captain Marshall has been removed from the top of the 50bk list (it's a 34.9 Fiona, in case you'd forgotten!). Overall, everyone came away with at least one swim they were pleased with....the countdown to Sheffield begins in earnest.

Nationals – 28th October

Katherine Mearman reports:

The fastskins were purchased, the red bull was flowing, and the caffeine pills were readily available in the Otter camp, as 33 Otters made their way to Sheffield for the 2005 Masters Championships.

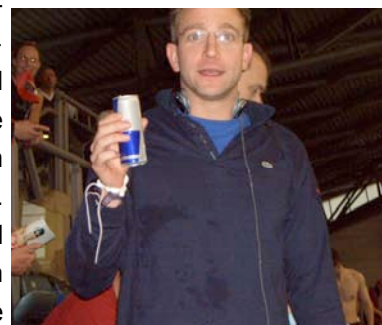
In true Otter style we were all hoping for Personal Bests to prove that all that training (or lack of it) was worth while. However, despite the fact that we shouldn't measure our success on beating others, us Otters are slightly competitive and the bid for glory against fellow Otters does provide a certain level of motivation. And indeed there were a number of Otter showdowns and grudge matches throughout the weekend, which made for some spectacular swimming and spectating. Indeed, former Ladies Captain, Lucy Ryan, came along to do just that - oh, and introduce us to her new daughter, Leona, who was very well behaved, if not slightly bemused by the strange surroundings. But it seems we definitely have a new recruit on our hands. Let the swimming begin.....

OTTER SHOWDOWNS

Events kicked off on the Friday night with the 1500m. An event not popular with many swimmers, but is laughed at by our distance swimmers Stuart and Rhiannon. As this meet was to be Stuart's final appearance before he set off on his world travels prior to emigrating to New Zealand, he was hoping to go out in a blaze of glory. But unfortunately it was not to be and instead the meet was more hell fire and brimstone with the 1500 being the 1st indication that all was not well. But for Rhiannon, who proved that she is indeed one of Otters most improved swimmers, had the

swim of her life with a 19.04 swim and a silver medal for her efforts.

The big showdown after the 1500m was the 100m back with a Otter race-off between Gina, Katie and Lauren. At 50m Gina G was just managing to hold off Katie and drove it home to a narrow victory with only .2 hundredths of a second separating her and Katie with Lauren taking 3rd in this inter-Otter race. Gina's reign continued in the 100 Free when she held off Katie White in her heat but more importantly was the



Matt Staines pronouces Redbull as offical sponsor of

fastest Otter Lady overall with an awesome 1.01.5 swim and a bronze medal. The Otter Line ups continued in this event with 1st of many head-to-heads for Lauren and Rachel. It was Rachel who hit the pad 1st in an impressive 1.02 and Lauren just behind in a 1.03. Next up it was the turn of Fiona and Jane who battled it out with Fiona just taking glory from Jane with a 1.01.7 but just short of the bar set by GG. For the men it was all about breaking the 60 second barrier and doing it comfortably. Peaches, Earl and Andy were just held off by that barrier all going 60 point, however, this was still one of many new PB's for Andy. Tim Fraser and coach Pete both just snuck under the barrier with 59 swims. Jason proved he is indeed a 100m swimmer with an impressive 57 sec swim while it was Matt's 55 sec swim and new PB that proved that fastskins are worth buying. However, for the men it was Dan that took overall Otter glory with a speedy 54 sec swim.

Continuing to battle it out in the distance events Rhiannon and Stuart went up against each other in the 800m. And for added entertainment from the spectators gallery I went off just after those 2 in the adjacent pool. Nobody knew where to look. Come the end of the swim there was a lot of wall punching from both Rhiannon and Stuart as Rhiannon finished in the same time that she had spilt for



Dinner in Sheffield

her 1500m (but still took gold in her age group) and Stuart finished well outside the time he is capable of which prompted, as well as wall punching, a lot of toy throwing out of the pram and general stomping around. Luckily by the 2nd bottle of wine on the train journey home he could see the funny side of it. While in the North pool I went out in an very conservative pace for my 1st 400m with a real worry about how my fitness would hold out. But when I got to 400m and realised it wasn't hurting I thought I should pick it up a bit. So I did and managed to negative split an 800m coming home in a PB swim, a silver medal and glory in the last ever Mearman/Whitney showdown.

In the 200IM it was Rach and Lauren again going head-to-head and at the 150m mark there was nothing in it. But Rach really worked her turn coming out of the breast-stroke and took off for the freestyle leg to touch Lauren out for glory and a silver medal. The ladies show down continued in the 100m Fly. GG set the bar high with her 1.11 swim - which without her glasses couldn't believe what she was reading on the scoreboard. So in the Jane and Fiona race off there was a lot to play for. But these ladies have nerves of steel and both came home in impressive 1.10 swims with Fiona just touching out Jane in the Otter race but couldn't take away Jane's 1st individual gold medal of the weekend. On the men's side there was some 3 way action with Derek, Peaches and Andy. Peaches proved his worth as a fly swimmer with a brilliant 67 swim and just managed to hold off a charge from Andy who also touched in a 67 for a 5sec PB in this event and Derek who was 3rd here was gold in his age group. For overall Otter glory in this event Tim Fraser showed the younger Otter men what's what with a superb 64 swim to top the Otter rankings.

PB's AND MEDALS GALORE

Even without the pressure of going up against a fellow team member the Otters still proved that they could pull some awesome times out of the bag when the going gets tough. In the 200m breaststroke Mike Wake started a trend by going 9 secs faster than his entry time and picked up a gold medal. For the women Liz Shaw had a storming swim in an impressive 3.05 but it was coach Ruth who made her stamp as a 200m breaststroke swimmer in a time of 2.53 and a silver in her age group. In the 200m back Tony Ray was pleased with his time going 2 secs quicker than entered and picking up a silver medal. For the ladies GG's swim was fantastic both for her time and her gold medal and Katie was just behind her with a great swim and a bronze. Fiona had storming swim in the 100m breast with a lifetime PB of 1.15 and a gold but was given quite a scare by Peaches who gave her a good run for her money in this event finishing in a 1.17. Mike Wake also

picked up a gold in this event while Dan, who was perhaps not fully focused on his swimming was just outside of his entry time but still took bronze in his age group. And Club President, Roger Sharpley, also swam well in this event considering his training has been hampered by work commitments. In the 50m free Matt also managed a lifetime PB with a fantastic 24. swim. We all know this wasn't a result of his strict training regime so the question is was it down to the fastskin, the red bull or the caffeine pills or a combination?? PB's followed in this event with Nigel Bond going 2 secs quicker than his entry time. But for Earl it didn't go quite to plan as he was the kipper and bumped out of the A Team relay and into the kipper squad. And the lifetime bests just kept coming as Jane went sub 29 for the 1st time ever. And Prawn had her best swim of the weekend in this event too. In the 200m free the husband and wife team, the



Celebrating the victories in the pool over dinner in sheffield.

Whites, both swam well in this event with Katie just beating husband Gavin in a 2.25 swim. I managed to prove to myself that maybe I do have some sprinting capabilities in me with a PB swim and Jane picked up her 2nd individual gold medal in this event but Rach was the fastest Otter lady and silver in her age group. In the 50m back Aileen had her swim of the meet with the 35sec swim she was looking for. Unfortunately Katie G also had a goggle shocker as they snapped just before her event. After much swearing and rushing around she managed to get a new pair in time for her event. Though it may have gone some way to prevent her from swimming her best in this event. A curse which she dispelled in the medley relay as she touched in a 33. putting her at the top of the Otter rankings and promoting her out from the kipper team. In the 100m I.M Dan was just outside of the 60sec swim he'd hoped for with a 61. swim but he still picked up silver. While both Matt and Andy were again both successful in continuing their run of PB's with a 1.03 and a 1.08 respectively. In the ladies pool Helen Shaw got things started with a 6 sec PB. Liz also had a great swim breaking the 1.20 barrier as did Izy Kenning who made a welcome appearance back in the competitive circuit and Lauren had a superb swim with a new PB in a time of 1.12. And Captain C put up the fight of her life against the infamous Tara Hutt but was just touched out for gold in a fantastic time of 1.09.

Fiona also proved her iron fist ruling over the relays and



The Party Train - Where the Sheffield apres party happened!

important rule of last one to hit the wall in the individual events is the kipper and is bumped from the team is worth while with some impressive results including 6 gold's and 6 silvers. It was also noted that it was good to have a big turn out from the Otter men so that we could enter some good relay teams including gold in the men's 240 medley team with Tony, Mike, Derek and Roger claiming glory and silver medals for both the 100+ and 120+ team for the freestyle relays. The Otter ladies have always been impressive when it comes to relays and this year was no exception. Proving this by bring home gold in both the women's medal relay teams for the 100+ with Katie, Ruth, Izy and Lauren and in the 120+ with Gina, Fiona, Jane and Rachel. Congratulations to everyone who took part in the relays.

THE RECORDS

Otter once again proved they are a force to be reckoned with as we put 2 European records to our name. First up it was the awesome Derek Parr, fly swimmer extraordinaire. With his very own write up in the Saturday Times, this man just continues to get faster as he managed a lifetime PB by 5 seconds as well as setting a new British and European record in a superb time of 2.37. Congratulations Derek! Inspired by Derek's achievement and prompted by her new British passport Fiona was able to join Jane, Ross and Matt in the mixed 120+ relay team. Matt and Ross led out with Matt proving his 24. individual swim was no fluke by repeating it again in the relay with Ross doing the same to enjoy the feeling of hitting the 100m mark in a fantastic 48.8. Captain C took the 3rd leg and Jane "doesn't break under pressure" McMenemy drove it home to take gold and set a new British and European Record. Congratulations team! Upon their medal presentation Jane was the nominated team representative while the rest of the team, with 1 Aussie, 1 Yank and a Scotsman, were under strict instructions not to talk in case it prompt-

ed an inquiry to the validation of the records.

THE COMEDY MOMENTS

It never fails that under the pressure someone breaks and prompts a comedy moment that will be immortalised in Otter history along with the likes of the Darling/Gillman showdown and the Powdrill 350m swim. This year was no different. In the 50m back it was Rob Alderton who provided the entertainment. Lining up for his swim he was focusing so hard on the swim that he forgot about the simple things. Such as his goggles. In the water positioned for his backstroke start he failed to notice that his goggles weren't over his eyes and instead were still sat on his head?! What the official thought as he looked down at the swimmer poised and ready to go but wearing his goggles on his head rather than over his eyes we'll never know. Despite this error Rob still managed to go quicker than his entry time but it was at the cost of losing his lenses in the process. Doubt he'll make that mistake again.

But the winner this year of comedy moment is Rhiannon and her 440m swim. The Otter team were on their feet as Rhiannon was coming in to hit the wall well under the 5min mark and win her heat. But there was confusion in the gallery as Rhiannon didn't stop. Instead she turned and sprinted off for her final 50m, or so she thought. Turning at 425m she came off the wall hard for her final length. Then the realisation hit. No-one else was swimming. Stopping halfway back down the final length Rhiannon thought, or rather hoped, she might have gotten away with this and that perhaps no-one noticed. Then as she stuck her head up she heard the Otter cheer erupt from the balcony and knew she had been caught. After a 2k swim down even Rhiannon could start to see the funny side of what she'd done. She still managed an superb 4.54 swim and a bronze in her age group. Now that Rhiannon is not at work she is off back to school to brush up on her counting skills. Well done Rhiannon.

Congratulations to everyone who took part this weekend and help make it so successful. A special thank you to Fiona for organising and bullying everyone into the relays and to Tony Ray for putting in all the entries. Also a big thank you to Lesley for arranging the hotel and booking the meal, even when illness meant she couldn't be there herself.

WATER POLO

2005 was another good year for the water polo side of Otter although not quite as eye-catching as 2004, the club still hauled in its fair share of trophies and accolades. Our numbers have grown to the point where we can now field five full teams at any one time. We consistently attract high-calibre players from abroad, and a revised coaching structure has reaped rewards from the individual through to team level.

We also took our first foray into sponsorship cunningly, in conjunction with a pub (Walkabout), giving us an excuse to hold even more social events. This also gave us the opportunity to get spanking new team kit, lovely day-glo blue kamikaze trunks for the men and porno see-through wedgie-fied suits for the girls. (Rumours that one of the girls actually managed to breathe when the suits were zipped up were hotly disputed. On the bright side, Andy Reese has not yet nabbed any of them for his own wear...)

In all, 2005 has been about working on the firm base that has been laid in the past few years building on past successes to give the club the strength from within to give ensure it has the potential to become one of the major clubs in the UK. The club is truly going from strength to strength and the changes — and lessons learnt — from the past year can only ensure the club's status in water polo in the UK continues to grow. Below are reports from each of the squads for the year. Needless to say the Ladies will make the most interesting reading.

Otter I

This has been a difficult season, following the repatriation of most the Otter International All Star team from last year, which saw the almost all of the starting seven move to foreign shores including such far-flung places as Singapore, Hong Kong and New Zealand. [Editor's note: the ladies' team has not got over these losses yet either]. The targets set at the start of the year became unrealistic, though coming 3rd in NWPL would have been nice. Having said that, this year has seen the emergence of significant talent, all both 1st & 2nd teams which will hopefully stay at the club for years to come.

Excellent support work from Ben Tausig (vice/acting captain), Andy Piller (taking on captaincy duties in the pool after the loss of Carl Ainley) and Alex Kovatchev (acting captain). Eric Boldon provided support as men's secretary. Tim Kendall showed great determination and effort in his role as head coach. Crucially, Alex Kovatchev prevailed in the head-to-head 100m 'who has the biggest *ahems*[censored]' competition, beating all-comers,



Men (L to R): Williams Johnson-Mota, Saul Kornik, Lachlan Pollard, Oliver Holman, Jarek, Alex Kovatchev, Jason Eckert, Alex

claiming some illustrious scalps from the swimming fraternity along the way. Dan Mikulskis' lack of facial decoration was noted at the annual dinner.

It was an interesting season in London League, as we were reigning champions, much was expected — although the season's main focus for the season was National League. A series of absentees, void matches, questionable refereeing and valiant defeats conspired to stifle any Otter I challenge for the League, although the team certainly didn't lose the title without a fight, or several fights. Notable events include a game against Sutton which finished 6-a-side and with at least 4 Otters unable to take any part at the end of the game following a choking attack on our hole forward, which prompted the entire bench to jump in to intervene.

After more off-season hard training, including a tournament in Genoa, Italy, we began the NWPL in mid-September. From last year's starting rotation, only two players remained. The rest of the squad was replaced with newcomers or players who did not start last year. It quickly became evident that this would be a rebuilding year and the rebuilding process would have to happen in the NWPL, Division 1.

Our record in Division 1 reflects the rebuilding year that we had, but misses some of the positives. The average age of our current squad is significantly younger than last year's team. There is therefore huge potential for growth and longevity with the current group of players. In addition, many of the newcomers are British born. The new players will give the Otter team more consistency and carry-over from one year to the next.

Several of our losses, specifically to teams in the bottom

half of the Division were lost in the final minutes of games, or because of one particularly weak and lopsided quarter of play. This can be attributed to a loss of concentration and reflects the inexperience of the squad, as a whole. Even through the many losses we suffered, and the close nature of some of those defeats the team atmosphere remained strong and we even became a more cohesive unit as the year progressed.

Although the 2005 Otter performance squad did not achieve the goal it had set out at the beginning of the season, the lessons learnt during the rebuilding year will be more useful in building the Otter clubs of the future. Today's Otter team is younger than in previous years and with the right support structure will most certainly be a team to rejoin the Division I ranks within two years. The experience gained and lessons learnt from playing the best players in Britain during the 2005 year campaign especially for some of the younger players will be critical to the team competing in next year's NWPL. The current Otter team is comprised of many British nationals who will allow for continuity of the squad and limit the defection of players from one year to the next. The strong team spirit, even after a season of missed goals shows not only the character of the current players but the health of the team, as a whole.

Otter II

Under the new leadership of Pierre Cerri (or Peter Gimp, as he is affectionately known), Otter's second team went from strength to strength, putting together a string of excellent results, on which it can look back on with pride.

The year started with the clinching of a creditable second place to Hellfins (a team largely made up of NWPL Division 1 players) in the 'friendly' Thameside league. Bolstered by some new and not-so-new additions (Giacomo Gozzi, back from Italy, and Jason Eckert, Irakli Bakradze, Giuseppe DeMarchi, Ciaran Walshe & Esteban Casuscelli), the team took their good form into the start of the London League Division 2 campaign with a handful of convincing wins and a successful tour of Genoa.

There will be more of the tour to Genoa elsewhere, no doubt. But suffice it to say that the match against the Nervi U16s that was the hardest of the tour (damn, those little buggers like to swim!). We found our level with a hard-fought draw in 3 additional periods against the Nervi U14s, and the remaining matches were won in an entertaining fashion. The final match was played in the fantastic Sciorba Aquatic Centre, with pre-match player announcements by the compère, and the ladies contingent who supported us were treated to a spectacle of elegant but effective water polo!



Sadly, a few players were lost at the half-way stage, either to travel or the lures of the 'other' team, but we moved on undeterred in our quest for London League Division 2 domination. A second tour to Holland in August with the ladies (see later) further cemented team spirit. A return to London saw somewhat less emphatic wins, including a freak loss to OMW by one goal, but the march up the divisions continued. We welcomed back the prodigal Saul Kornik, fresh from his sabbatical (a.k.a. bumming around on a dhow up the coast of Africa), and briefly, another newbie, Xavier Glynn Williams (until he was seduced by the 'dark side' – the firsts). But sadly, we had to say goodbye to Timmy Cosulich who had been a stalwart for a couple of years and who had organized the fantastic Genoa trip.

Despite being denied a spot in the final at the Old Starts annual invitational tournament, we still came away with one award, centre-forward Alec Innes seizing the top scorer's mantle with 12 goals. However, 10 of these were scored against Cambridge's female goalie in the massive shallow end goal, and the rest were penalties.

The main focus and goal of the season was gaining admission to the National Water Polo League. After some shaky, if close, losses at start of the 2006–07 Thameside league, the team travelled to picturesque Walsall to compete in the 'potential clubs' tournament under the distinguishing moniker, "Otter 1869".

The opening game against unknown entity Basildon finished with a convincing 17-7 Otter victory, the goals coming from all players on the squad. But only one hour's break left the team tired, causing an inability to convert man-up chances and slack defence prompting the odd vocal outburst by new Frenchie, Yannick Gaudio along with the performance of ex-Otter Kevin Steele (Geoff taught him everything he knows!) resulted in a 16-9 loss, having only been down 5-4 at half time.

But a satisfying meal at the lavish West Bromwich Travelodge and beers over the boxing before retiring early

(yeah, right!!!) meant that the team arrived at the Gala Baths in the morning fresh and ready to open up a can of whupp-ass on another local rival – Ealing Crabs. Again, a failure to convert extra-player chances in the first period meant Ealing ‘raced’ to a 2-0 lead. This was soon 3-1, then 4-2 at the half. However the Otter man-up machine finally kicked into action and with Ealing giving away 1 (!!!) majors in the second half, 5 unanswered 3rd period goals and a 5-3 final period meant we ran out 12-7 victors. Later, the youngsters of Birmingham City put up a brave fight but were no match in the end for the experience of Otter 1869, with a 5-1 third period and a worthy 9-6 win meant we could return home, satisfied with our performance.

Particularly noteworthy performers were Jason Eckert, who led all scorers in the tournament with 17 goals in 4 games, and Messrs. Gaudio and Kornik, who also featured in the high scorers list.

Otter 1869 were granted admission into NWPL Div 4 for 2006 after a brief (utterly stupid and groundless) rejection and look forward to carrying on the good work from the Walsall weekend.

Across the course of the season, everyone contributed to the success. The captain led from the front (albeit with some quite incomprehensible team-talks – seriously, Pierre, keep the accent for the ladies!), ably assisted by vice-captain Chris Eden [Ed: I have been asked by the team to mention that Mr Eden has vastly improved his temperament and composure in the pool resulting in some awesome polo. Good stuff!!]. Paul McCann will step into Pierre’s shoes in 2006 and hopefully his solid defence, together with the odd game-breaking cameo lob from his own half will inspire the team to another good season and our first National League season. Owen Job was a fine keeper in London League, denied his deserved first team spot due to administrative issues, and Ed Buckley was solid both in nets and outfield. Matt Joyce contributed, mainly with his voice, but scored some valuable goals in-between the wild misses and ‘injuries’. Timmy “quick hands” Cosulich put away many a goal before his untimely departure. Another new member, Olly Holman, had a fantastic game against Croydon, notching up 2 goals within a minute of getting in, and will surely contribute a lot over the coming seasons. Grant Monk was consistent as ever, with the odd delicate lob as well as proper shots, and his experience was always valuable (e.g. knowledge of bars local to opposition pools) and was never without his trusty cooler. Manousos “Moose” Syngellakis has shrugged off his swimming roots and come over to the fun side, and defended doggedly when not slotting goals away at the other end. Jason Eckert scored a hatful with his left-arm cannon and Saul Kornik proved the right-hand

equivalent. Utility player Yannick Gaudio joined towards the end of the year and immediately made a difference (especially with the post-match tea, courtesy of Eurostar). Ex-captain Geoff Lynn saw his hard work as captain in 2004 bear fruit and, while not eating/having babies, was fighting away in front of goal. We were also fortunate to have old-hands Ludovic Merle (have we lost him to rock music forever?) and Hugh Turner play the odd cameo rôle too. Finally, thanks to Tim Kendall for his coaching, which often goes unmentioned.

Otter III

The Otter III team competed in the Middlesex League division III; regularly turning up with a full squad of 13 even at a few away games - possibly the best indication there is of a healthy Water Polo section. This year they played to a level of quality not seen for some time. The defence was considered sufficiently whale-like (they know who they are) to stop any battleship encountered, the mid-field fit and mobile, and an attack ready to take on the world. Unfortunately on match day the opposition and the refer-



ees turned as well conspiring to ensure a consistent played 6 lost 6 season.

But the main point of the III team is to enjoy the game and the beers afterwards - turning losing on the score sheet into a winning season in the bar and even greater aspirations for next year.

Some of the old timers represented Middlesex at SCASA level - Hugh Turner at the over 40’s and Paul Hindle at the over 50’s

Otter Ladies

Otter Ladies has built on last year’s successful competitive haul and more or less doubled in size this year. For London League and Winter League, we split into two equally strong teams — Otter I and Otter II. We won both London League and Winter League, although we’re not sure which of the two teams did win [Ed: probably mine...], but the other team came second. Top goalscorer for London League for the tournament was our own Tracy

Pitcher. Winter League was a bit of a contradiction in terms, with an almighty mess-up in the organization leaving us to play the final matches in the sunny summer. Credit goes to Debbie Paynter who stepped into the mess and managed to sort out 4 months of hassle in the space of 2 weeks. We're very glad to hear that she will continue to act as LL/WL secretary and schedule both LL and WL next year - meaning much improved standards of organization in future. We won't even need to bribe her to win...

Next stop was the tour to Genoa in May. The successes went to our heads and we went over thinking 'Oh, we can cope with Italian teams, no bother'...Ah, wrong. Well we did ourselves justice in between the indecent exposures, drownings, beatings up and general roughness, as in we managed to survive and score some goals. We really learnt how water polo is played properly! Credit goes to Nicole Mahoney who was singled out for praise by the Italian coaches for her awesome work in goals.

Our super new coach, Nicholas Buller, started with us in April and immediately started preparing us for this year's National League. By preparing, we mean near-death boot camps of swimming and polo drills. He had a tough job for selection — with the sheer numbers and strength of the squad, it was inevitable that some would be disappointed but we're thankful to his and Susan Pearce's efforts in bringing out a brilliant squad for NL this year.

All this work paid off beautifully for the most, but ended in tears. We finished second after losing to Liverpool by one goal, but we still had the chance to go up a division in the playoffs. Sadly, we lost this by one goal as well — frustrated and disappointed are too mild to put how we felt. On stats, we were by far the strongest team with a (far!!) better goal difference tally, three of our players in the top 10 scorers, not to mention Scumbag (sorry, Lyndsey MacFarlane) being the overall winner with a whopping 40 goals. None of us made the major queen list [Ed: a personal 'pew' to this] and were bottom of the table for team majors. Scorelines for the matches were regularly the likes of 18-3, bar a few close calls with our main rivals, Liverpool and Sheffield.

Such fantastic results beg the mention of the players involved. A welcome surprise was the return of Sabah Brinson just in time for National League. After Nicole Mahoney left in October to return to Oz, Katie Loughlin stepped into her shoes and was instrumental to the club's success later in the season. We'd lost pit machine Sam Tubb this year as she had a cub (more later), but new recruit Peggy Etibet proved just as strong and scary in the hole. Old hands Ruth Dunkerley and Tracy Pitcher brought their experience (in polo!!) to the team, and coupled with the fantastic, er, aggression from Katie White

(aka Rottweiler) and cool-head play from Annabelle Gourlay gave brilliant results. KFC, when not clubbing on Saturday nights in her hotpants, had all in awe with her left-hand backhanders. Jo Alden (aka Inspector Gadget) used her extendable arms to block or pinch many a ball from the opposition and Bronwen Bew, Nicole Freeman and Nicola Davidson brought fantastic strengths to their games. Last, but not least is Captain Susan 'Butterfingers' Pearce who continues to lead, inspire and gel the team into the force we are today — truly the backbone of our success. We wish her every luck in her continuing endeavour of learning how to catch the ball.

The well deserved 'Player of the Year' goes to Lindsey MacFarlane, aka Cambridge tab 'Scumbag'. Never mind her amazing performance as lead goal scorer, she set up countless other goals, won most of the sprint offs and crucially, made cake for each and every NL weekend (this had nothing to do with the vote though, honest).

TOURS AND SOCIALS

Genoa

Once again, the annual tour kicked off early for some of the girls [Ed: and Eric and Kova too, who are big girls anyway] decided to visit the Liguria coast of Italy a full week before the barbarian hordes descended and destroyed it. This year's tour was to Genoa in Italy, home of Timmy, Flipper and Alessandro, whose club Rari Nantes Nervi hosted the bulk of the matches. Get this; they have their own 50m outdoor pool, with a bar/café beside it. Perfect for beers and stuffing your face while watching matches!

The bulk of the tourists arrived on the Friday, and after a quick dumping of bags, clothes and general dignity all trooped out for the first sight-seeing of the day, the towns of Portofino and Santa Margherita. We gawped at lots of really rich people and Ralph Lauren's luxury yacht, which was so big that it quite possibly had its own 50m pool somewhere inside it. A ferry brought us back to the Nervi pool for our first matches of the tour, which as it took the men forever to change the ladies' match went on in floodlight, outside. It's probably just as well some of the pool was in shadow, because there were several cases of the polo cossies not quite covering our dignity, due to overenthusiastic Italian hole defence. Still, it got the referees inside. A quick change (we beat some of the men out) and we were more than ready for food and some liquid refreshments. And someone started the coin game, so that's all we remember of that night...Intra club shenanigans abound, with Gergo making his mark on the ladies' team (but when did he ever not pull) and a different, mysterious case of "I was fighting him off all night" being answered with a "Didn't look like that from where we were stand-

ing...!!” Casualties included the aforementioned Gergo being carried home and Kova going MIA. We didn't find him; he found himself the next morning when he woke up on the pavement behind the club, where he had passed out. Nice. Other notable faders were Flipper.

The second day of the tour started delicately. Sadly the teams were split up and we didn't get to watch one another's matches. But on the bright side, the girls turned up to play Camogli and found a long lost otterette playing for them. Our joy turned to pain when she marked the pit effectively. The seconds had a good match against Fratellanza Ponte X, and then all trooped off for the final matches of the day in Ronco Scrivia Swimming Pool, with the ladies playing their second match of the day and the men's firsts their first match. Best thing was the reappear-



ance of Mr Doug Woo, who showed that he had lost none of his polo or dancing skills — though still hadn't found any dress sense! The final match didn't finish until 12am, whereupon it was straight to the restaurant with the other teams and guest (yet another) ex-otterette Sara Balestrazzi (half your age plus seven rule, anyone?). The night ended relatively early at 4am because we couldn't find any bars open. So some decided a skinny dip would cheer them up...

The final day dawned and the girls were very very glad we had no matches that day. All we had to do was swan around and watch the men struggle with their hangovers. We split into two camps of supporters (so that neither of the teams would feel neglected) — some went to watch the seconds play Nervi Junior in an indoor pool, the remainder went to watch the firsts play Rari Nantes Nervi (again) by that lovely outdoor pool. The seconds put in an amazing performance to win their match, but we aren't too sure how the firsts did because we got distracted by the regional U-25 tryouts. Oh mama mia!

The remainder of the day was spent drooling by the pool or bar (depending on your preference) until our flight home. This year's tour should follow in the same vein — we are going to Sicily!

The Netherlands

One sunny weekend in August, the Men's Second and Ladies' teams ventured to the annual pish-up (I mean, Meerpolo tournament) in Culembourg in the heart of the Netherlands. Well, the girls ventured over on Friday with the men only appearing when the tents were up and the bar was running. Funny that... Friday night was a taste of things to come as the girls took it upon themselves to give the night a Hawaiian theme. Grass skirts and leis were par for course, along with exotic cocktails. By the end of the night the marquee was filled with drunk, dancing Otters. As is customary in those parts, we started a limbo competition with a polystyrene surfboard but most people just fell over. Our own California Chick, Nicole Freeman showed us all how to party true beach style.

After a late/early finish, we were up at the crack of dawn to brave the lake and kick off our respective tour campaigns. The men were first up and the water was fresh, to say the least. After a brief thrash around to warm up, they soon hit their stride against a fairly weak team. Having barely been in England for a day, Australian poet laureate Locky Pollard demonstrated the skills that have subsequently made him such a force within the club - an ability to recite ridiculously long passages of poetry. He may have scored some goals as well. The ladies kicked off with an equally good win and, in particular, Nicole Mahoney shone in goal with some fantastic saves. Notable exclusion to this was Jo Alden, who refused to get out of bed for both early morning matches. SHAME!!!

More water polo was played across the weekend and, to be honest, it all started to become a blur after the mid-morning/mid-afternoon/mid-match drinks. We blame Grant Monk and Andy Reese. We do know for sure that each team only lost one game and so came second in their divisions. Other than that — who knows!

The real fun was on the Saturday night. Again, the marquee was open for business and this time the men's team decided to dress up and get in touch with their feminine side. Pierre Cerri caused much consternation in the girls' team by actually looking better than any of them in a skirt. Later, while the ladies' and ladies' teams (whoops – typo) men's and ladies' teams hit the dance-floor, Andy Reese guest starred on stage. I hope the band enjoyed his Bezesque dance style. Chris (aka Ginger) proved that pink definitely is not his colour? Cat will testify to this, having incinerated the offending item. Incoming Second Team Captain Paul McCann showed off a fine pair of legs in a hula and the others just seemed far too comfortable in the wigs and skirts. The ladies themselves certainly did not disappoint, with Miss Bew having the Dutch men drooling after her (excellent for scoring free beers), Debbie show-

ing everyone how to dance and Nicola Davidson behaving admirably bad on her first ever Otter Tour. Couple of the tournie would have to be Liz and Hugh, when can we get our hats? All in all, it was a quiet night for otters - no one went skinny dipping or wrestling and a certain Miss Gourlay did not do impressively well in the pulling stakes. Yeah right (!).

Sunday alternated between a bit of beach volleyball, the odd match, some more beer, the official presentation of prizes and the unofficial Otter presentation of an aquatic-themed prize for lady of the tournament awarded to Jo for sheer bravery in ignoring both Bronwen and Cat's call to get out of bed for the morning matches before we made our merry way home. Thanks to Debbie and Becky who organized it and to the ladies who transported and put up all the tents on the Friday morning. Here's hoping the 2006 tour is as much fun!

As a final thought, I have to say thank God for those Otter dressing gowns as before, after and, for some, during matches, they provided great warmth! [Ed: what a wuss, it wasn't that cold!!!]

Socials

Um, er, apparently we had more socials throughout the year. We don't actually remember them, nor was Ben there to recall them for us. Suffice to say copious amounts of alcohol were drunk and there was lots of team bonding. All in the name of the sponsorship deal, of course. Sadly, the bulk of these socials were not so much in the vein of last year — celebration of many many victories — but more farewell parties for the following Otters who left us. The Otter Annual dinner was sadly and regrettably missed by the bulk of the ladies National League squad, as it clashed with some of our matches. But an admirable effort was made by the men's teams to make up for the loss of the lassies.

And finally...

It remains to mention the births, marriages and departures. We are proud to announce two new Otter cubs, Connor Morris Reid from Samantha Tubb; and Angus James Macaulay Lynn from the fat b*stard himself, Geoff Lynn (no, it wasn't sympathy weight gain, it was always there). We pass on our best wishes and congratulations to Robinson and Osh Tindall; Alex and Jo Monk and Valeria Mizuno and James, and hope they have long, happy married lives together. Those who left us include Douglas Woo, Todd Sunderman, Robinson Tindall, Carl Ainley, Timothy Couslich, Rob Gray, Joel Miller, Nicole Mahoney, Gergo Szabo, Ciaran Walshe, Fred Hellner, Annabelle Gourlay and Alex Kovachev. Spencer Thursfield has not officially left, so far as we know, but is too lazy to come to

training. Pending deserters are Beccy Vivan (she of the website fame) and Jo Alden.

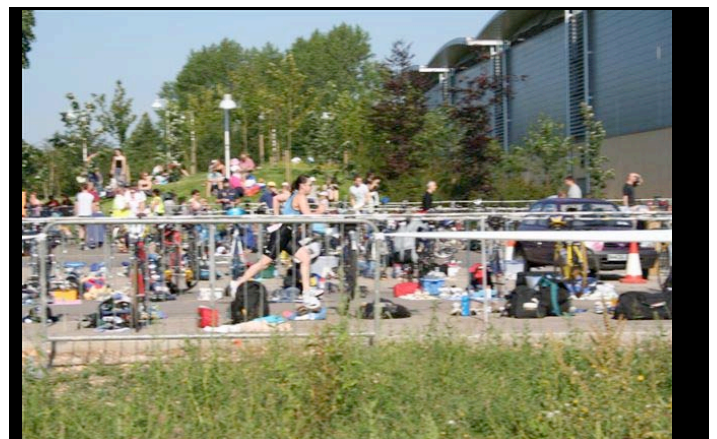
MULTI SPORTS

Otter Triathlon

2005 saw another busy year amongst Otters on the triathlon circuit. Isabelle Kenning, Helene Shaw and Dave Bailey took part in the relay event in the grounds of Blenheim Palace in May. A good result for Otter, the team also had time to enjoy the great venue. Blenheim was the first of busy season for Helene who notched up a fair few triathlons in the year, including Windsor, Bath and Salford. In Bath, Helene was joined by Jane McMenemy and Rachel Joyce to make a weekend out of the event: there was shopping, Bath buns, a bit of sight seeing...and, a triathlon. The cycle course took in a few of the neighbouring villages, and a lot of the nearby hills to make this a tough course on what was a hot sunny day! Rachel took part in the Olympic distance event, winning the women's event, and Helene raced in the Sprint distance achieving a good finish in her age group. Jane was on hand, as official Otter photographer shooting some great action shots in the transition areas!

Two weeks before Bath, Rachel took part in her first half Ironman distance event in the Gatorade Big Half Triathlon. Having picked up a last minute spot in the event, there was not too much time to think about what was involved (2km swim, 90km cycle and 20km run). The race got off to a good start, and Rachel was first out of the lake swim with a good lead. However, there was a pause in the transition area in order for Rachel to correct the commentator and let him know that "the first man out of the water" was actually a woman! Rachel maintained her lead in the cycle and increased it in the run to win the women's race by 10 minutes, and come 7th overall.

In August, James Palmer once again took up the chal-



Rachel Joyce finishing the Bath Tri-athlon

lenge of the London Triathlon. James' preparation showed his dedication to the sport. His cycle training started in February, when he dusted off his bike and cycled from London to Cambridge through rain, sleet, snow and an unrelenting headwind. This type of dedication coupled with his attention to the transition stages of the race paid off with a great performance at London, beating his previous time for the course. (Anyone checking the results of this event, please take note of James' transition times!!)

Jane McMenemy also stepped up to the triathlon challenge by covertly entering the Great South Triathlon in Brighton in September. Jane stormed the sea swim to exit the water a good few minutes ahead of the next swimmer, and a good cycle and run secured her a top 10 finish in her triathlon debut and refreshed enough to enjoy an ice cream by the sea afterwards!

To round her season off, Rachel competed in the Half Ironman UK in Longleat. Joined by her very own support team: Jane McMenemy and Lydia Kan this event took part in the grounds of Longleat, better known as a safari ground. Luckily the lions and tigers were kept on a close reign for the weekend and no unusual injuries were reported!! The conditions for the race were not ideal, but it was the same for everyone. It was an early start (4.30am) when Team Joyce made its way over for the starting venue. Rachel made a strong start in the swim, which was 2 laps of a lake and was first through transition out of the age group women (recording the 3rd fastest time out of the elite women). Then it was onto the 90km cycle. Now it has been said that hills are not Rachel's cup of tea...this is unfortunate given that the course involved a 3 mile hill, which at its steepest had a punishing gradient of 17%! Competitors had the pleasure of enjoying this 3 times! After the tough cycle, luckily the organisers had the foresight to offer competitors a helper in the transition area, who kindly reminded Rachel that she did not need her cycle helmet for the 13.1 mile run!



Rachel gets ready to start her 1/2

Again the run course was very hilly, but finding a second wind from somewhere (probably the 50 energy gels consumed around the course) Rachel started to gain grounds on the 3 women in her age group who had overtaken her on the cycle. By the final lap Rachel had the current leader in her age group within her sights and over took her to win the age group and take 10th place in the elite category. In doing so, she qualified for the first Half Ironman World Championships in Clearwater, Florida. Big thanks from Rachel to and Lydia for their support, which was a massive help on a tough day of racing!

Katherine Mearman Summits Kilimanjaro

At midnight on 4th August myself and college friend Tracey started our ascent to the summit of Kilimanjaro. For the 3 days prior to this we had ascended approximately a 1000m a day, walking approximately 7 - 11km a day. Although the distances covered were not particularly taxing we were walking for approximately 3 - 5 hours a day simply because we were walking so slowly in order to ensure that we didn't burn ourselves out for the later stages of the climb which were much tougher. One of the best things about the route we took (the Marangu Route) is that it is a steady incline all the way (except the summit climb) so that you can get into a good walking rhythm.



They say the summit climb starts at midnight due to the amount of walking you need to do in that day - all in all I think that we walked for about 15hrs that day. But I think that they start the climb in the middle of the night because if I could have seen what we were actually having to climb there is no way I would have done it.

The climb to Giliman's point, 5681m, takes approximately 6hrs. The idea being that you reach that in time to watch the sun rise. At this altitude in the middle of the night it was -10C outside. Once we were above the 5000m mark, where the amount of oxygen available in the air is half of that at sea level, it is much harder to catch your breath and also you feel out of breath after only taking a couple of steps. Tracey was really feeling the affects of the altitude and the cold and when we were only and hour from

the top when she simply refused to keep walking. Tracey admitted later that in her mind at that point lying down and dying seemed preferable to walking. However, as the sky started to change as the sun was starting to rise. This was a huge bonus for both of us because it would mean that the temperature would rise dramatically. At approximately 6.30am we both reach Giliman's point in time to just see the sun rise above the cloud line below us. To see the sun rise from beneath you and know that, being on the equator, we were the first people in the world to see the sun rise that day was amazing.

As good as it felt to have reached Giliman's Point after such a hellish climb we still weren't at the summit. I felt that I hadn't come this far to not summit this mountain. I certainly wasn't about to come back and do it another day so I told my guide that I wanted to go on. And although this climb was easier than the ascent to Giliman's it was by no means a simple stroll, especially at such altitude. But we both made it. At about 8.30am we both reached the summit of Kilimanjaro and stood 5895m at the top of Africa. Kilimanjaro is the highest mountain in Africa and is the highest free standing mountain in the world. It was an awesome feeling of achievement to stand at the top of it.

Beijing Mountain Bikers' Kayak and Running Race

Barbara Woodward reports:

In the light of this new found Otter enthusiasm for hard core activity, may I commend to you a remarkably Otter-like event from which I emerged a victor yesterday.

The event was the second annual Beijing Mountain Bikers' kayak and running race. Smell a rat already? Why would mountain bikers want to kayak and run....unless it was to make sure that they were home for the tri-nations rugby on tv at 3pm (way earlier than any mountain biking ride here has ever been known to finish, by the time half the peleton have got lost, had punctures etc).

As a variation on the well known Otter pre-race hassle-the-handicapper, the Mountain Bikers have a pre-race "debate the race". After an hour of impassioned discussion: should the kayak course be round one lake or two, and if so, should it be once or twice round the course; should the run lap be round one lake or two and if so once or twice round? With the course settled, the second phase of the debate started: should the event be solo or teams and if so should the teams be mixed and should they be drawn at random or appointed? And how should we score, by points or time? This may make organising the half mile seem simple.

Around an hour after the start time, the race had been

established as twice round two lakes in the kayak and twice round one for the run and I had drawn as a partner the most competitive triathlete in the group. He was already talking tactics and strategy while I was wondering if the kayak was waterproof (the lake is very green and makes the Thames at Windsor look like a Swiss mountain stream). The start saw us powering away down the lake doing (a rather poor imitation of the sort of) power bursts that characterised Pinsent and Redgrave at their peak—not to speak of a certain amount of "frank discussion" about each other's paddling technique! We had a near disaster at the narrow bridge which was the passage to the second lake and a bottleneck for other boating traffic on the lake and the kayaks behind us made up valuable time, but we powered away again once we got clear.

There was, of course, method to this madness, since my partner was not the fastest runner and (as you know), I am certainly not. We finished the kayak leg in first place and set off on the run. (For triathletes, a kayak-run transition is much more uncomfortable than a bike-run transition.) Next in to the dock were a stronger runner than either of us, but with a partner who decided not to run. Our saving grace was that the two top runners (in different boats) were still navigating their way around the assorted swimmers (sic), pedal boats and algae in the lake. So my partner finished in 2nd and I got 4th in this fiercely competitive international field and we were declared overall winners. Sadly no-one has (yet) seen fit to present a trophy of the magnificence that characterises many Otter races (or any trophy at all), but I do have a couple of large blisters!

Southsea Pier to Pier - 17th September

Katie Goodall reports:

Not content with swimming 60k in a week, two Otters (armed with factor 40) made the trek down to the south coast to participate in the annual Southsea 1.25 miles pier to pier race on Sunday. After some time spent intimidating the opposition with their recently acquired La Santa tans, the Otters were given their numbers and a quick safety briefing. The instructions sounded simple enough: aim for the pier, turn left at the castle, avoid the SeaCat and if you hit France you've gone too far - no problem! The main point gleaned by the Otters however was the free Mars Bar on offer to all finishers.

After a confused start in which one of the Otters had to be reminded which direction she was swimming in the race started. With the instructions to "swim towards the other pier, its round the corner" ringing in their ears and buoyed up by the prospect of chocolate the Otters optimistically set off.

The swim turned out to be a very pleasant (if not particularly speedy) affair with the sun making a welcome appearance. The water temperature (though described as a “balmy” 19 C) was a little chilly after the tropical climes of La Santa.

Notable events during the race included Rhiannon and Katie managing to find each other and crash despite there being at least 50 other swimmers; Katie making an unscheduled stop after swimming straight into a navigation pole and Rhiannon attempting to draft behind the Isle of Wight ferry. The orange finishing buoy proved hard to spot but eventually both Otters emerged from the sea, Rhiannon in 11th in a time of 23.50 and Katie in 13th in a time of 23.57.

Having mustered the last of their energy for the Mars Bar sprint finish the Otters settled down to enjoy the spoils of, ahem, victory on Southsea’s fine beach. The sun was shining, the waves were lapping on the pebbles and an elderly gentleman was taking an evening dip in a leopard print thong. A perfect end to a sunny day at the seaside.



*Closer examination/manipulation of the results revealed that all those who finished ahead were in fact Portsmouth Northsea age group swimmers. After much discussion and some bribery the judges declared it an Otter 1 and 2 in the Masters event.

Life in the fast lane Racing into old age keeps you fit and can bring new depth to your sex life

As reported by John Goodbody, Derek Parr gives Otters 2 reasons to keep training:

It’s taken Derek Parr, a world 200m butterfly champion, quite a while to beat his personal best. In fact, it’s taken more than 40 years. His fastest time for the 200m butterfly is now 2 minutes 42.81 seconds, which makes him the world’s fastest swimmer in the 60-64 age group. As a teenage competitor, his best performance in trials was 3 minutes 02 seconds.

Parr is one of the stars in a growing sports phenomenon, the world of Masters Swimming. Although the Olympics

are still dominated by swimmers under 25, there has recently been a boom in national and international events for older athletes. Sports swimming was once largely restricted to teenage boys and pubescent girls. By their early twenties, when most athletes were reaching their peak, swimmers were ready to retire. Not any more. Men and women are racing into old age: some still compete when they are over 100. Zimmer frames are seldom needed to get the oldest competitors to the blocks, though: enthusiasts find that the sport keeps them active well into their eighth, ninth or tenth decade.

Some will have been serious competitors in their youth. Many will have been club swimmers. However, a large number have never seriously competed in the sport before and have progressed to county and national events from gentle exercise in their local pool. Research shows that it can keep their sex lives in the swim, too.

Parr joined Masters Swimming after something of a competitive career break. He swam very little between Oxford University and his return to this country in 1988 after working abroad as a journalist for Reuters for 19 years. Now retired, he trains up to five times a week, averaging an hour a time, in the Queenswood School pool in Potters Bar, Hertfordshire. “When I was at Oxford in my early twenties, the university team trained only three times a week for less than an hour a time.

Training now is far more intensive,” he says. “And there is a huge incentive when you ‘age-up’ to a new five-year band and you have the chance of setting records or personal bests in a higher group.” Parr is a member of the Otter Swimming Club based in Central London, the club that first brought Masters competitions to Britain in 1972. One of its members, Ransom J. Arthur, an American professor of psychiatry, had inspired the event in the US two years earlier. In Britain there are now more than 400 clubs catering for Masters Swimmers. And at this weekend’s National Championships in Sheffield more than 1,000 competitors, ranging in age from 25 to over 90, will be racing against each other, by crawl, breaststroke and butterfly.

Dr Ian Gordon, the head of Medical Services to British Swimming comments: “Masters Swimmers in middle and old age have far better physiques than most of their contemporaries,” he says. “Because swimming is a non-weight bearing activity unlike, say, running, competitors rarely suffer injuries. It is easier on your joints than jogging. Swimming also helps your flexibility and suppleness, exercises all the main muscle groups and makes a huge contribution to your aerobic fitness.”

And there is evidence that it can boost your sex life. Dr

Gordon quotes two studies, the first from Harvard University in 2000, in which research was carried out on 160 male and female swimmers in their forties and sixties; the second last year by the University of Arkansas. Both showed that swimmers enjoyed their sex lives far more than their equivalent age groups among non-swimmers. The activity also helps to ward off depression because exercise increases levels of endorphins, the feel-good hormones in the brain. However, he warns that anyone with a history of heart problems or underlying medical conditions should seek medical clearance before plunging into serious training.

Peter Thompson's Channel Adventure(s)

Peter reports:

Following in the footsteps of performance swimmers like Captain Matthew Webb, Alison Streeter MBE and, most inspirational of all, Otter's very own Katherine Mearman, I set off for France at 5am on 14 July 2005. Reaching the starting point at Shakespeare Beach that morning had involved one unsuccessful attempt in 2004, plenty of cold water conditioning at Tooting Lido, seven and eight hour swims in the balmy shallows of Dover Harbour and a fair amount of pie-eating to maintain both my morale and my body fat percentages.

I only really began swimming in my 30's when I started



Peter getting preparing for the off at 4.55am

'competing' in Triathlons (breast-stroke in a wetsuit wasn't fast or efficient), and I decided I should learn freestyle and then had a crack at a Channel Relay in 2003. As we were about to finish in 13 hours (plenty of self-congratulation and thigh-slapping) we were approached by a boat carrying a solo American swimmer who had started 3

hours after us and finished an hour before we did - I was awestruck by the achievement and wondered if I had it in me to even attempt it.

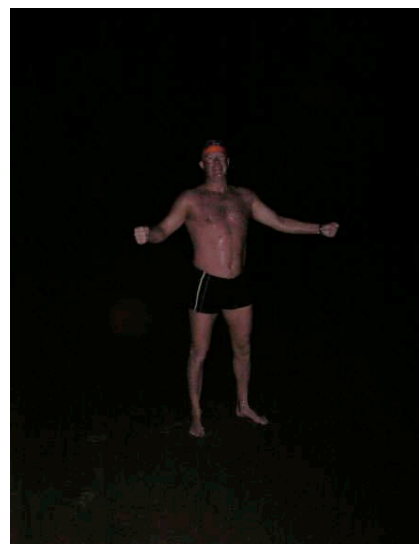
I was pointed in the direction of Freda Streeter of the Channel Swimmers & Pilot's Federation and met up with her, daughter Alison and numerous successful Channel Swimmers in May 2004 and was given plenty of support and encouragement to give it a go. I joined an amazingly



Peter mid channel

cosmopolitan group of swimmers (Katherine and Katie Hope included) of all levels of competence, who met on the shingle at Dover every weekend. We trained all Spring and Summer, braving cold, chop, flotsam and jetsam, building a real esprit de corp and drawing confidence from the swimmers who'd both failed and succeeded before. Sadly I failed at 1st attempt, crawling back into the boat at 15 hours. To cross successfully, one needs a combination of determination (your own), structured cold-water training (delivered by Freda) and some basic swimming skills (mmmm?). As a late starter, I realised I was somewhat lacking in the ability department, so I joined Otter in Autumn 2004 and started swimming (almost) religiously twice a week.

Now, anyone who has witnessed me thrashing around in Lane 5 will not mistake me for a technically competent swimmer, however I am convinced that the training at Otter gave me the foundation I needed to get across at my 2nd attempt. I won't bore you with details of the swim, other than to say it was 17 hours long and I ended up with a double-size tongue (from the salt) and quite stiff shoulders but I was delighted to get there and formally retire from distance (or cold) swimming.



17 hours and 50 seconds later Peter hits French soil.

If anyone wants to have a crack at it and wants to have a chat about any aspect of the Swim, feel free to say Hi on Thursdays or Sundays.

CLUB EVENTS

Otter is a club with a long history. Founded in 1869, there are a number of traditional events that take place throughout the calendar year. These range from open water swims down the river Thames to dancing the night away at the annual Otter dinner. The events are open to all club members and we actively encourage members of all abilities to participate. Here are some of the highlights in 2005.

Dorking Relay - 12th March

Katherine Mearman reports:

Once again Dorking set the scene for the annual Swimathon in aid of Cancer Research. The swimathon comprises of a continuous 55 minute sprint relay for teams of up to 6 people. With each swimmer sprinting a distance of 50m counting as one lap to your team's overall total. This year Otter sent 2 teams: the Otter 'Men' and the Otter Ladies to take on Dorking finest including some speedy 15yr olds.

It seems the stringent selection process for the men's team, who were looking to challenge the record of 111 laps which they set 2 years ago, meant that many of the men failed to cut the mustard and it was only Otter Lady, Rachel Joyce, who was able to step up and fill that all important sixth spot on their team. Along with Rachel on the 'men's' team was: men's Captain Scott Darling, Guy Powdrill, Gareth Earl, Ben Martin and Steve Marks. Steve, fresh off the plane from New York, was hoping to 'ease' himself back into training with a session at Crystal Palace. This was not to be the case, Steve, was frog marched down to Dorking with the rest of the men's team in Guy's car. For the Otter ladies, we were transported to Dorking and led out by the ladies Captain, Fiona Marshall. Joining Fiona was myself, Rhiannon Guy, Aileen Gray, Lesley Davies and Lydia Kan. Let the games begin...

Despite the announcer's failure to line the teams up for a racing start the 2 Otter Captains did manage to lead their teams off with an explosive first 50m. The first 10 minutes saw all the Otters putting in some strong performances. Rachel's lack of a pain threshold meant that the rest of the men's team were forced to pick up the pace or face being out done the only girl on the team. Luckily all the men managed to step up to the plate with superb swims from Scott, Ben, Steve and Gareth. Though there were some mutterings in the men's camp that Guy 'Ironman' Powdrill was perhaps the weakest link. For the women, strong performances were put in by Fiona, Aileen and Katherine, first timer Rhiannon was put through the paces but proved herself a welcome addition to the team, Lesley showed herself to be back on good form and that Otter can expect a

lot from her this year while Lydia's fine performances in the pool proved she has no excuse not to compete more for the Otter team.

At the 15 minute mark the lactate was really starting to kick in and their seemed to be some concern from all involved: Had we really only been going for 15 minutes? Surely the clock is wrong? Is it really my turn again???? There was less standing behind the block waiting for your next swim and much more sitting on the window ledge, which became sitting on the floor, which deteriorated into lying on the floor..... Utter exhaustion was felt by all. Guy managed to sum up this feeling with the quote of the day: "You know when you dive in and swim the first length, turn and then when you're under water you think -'God I wish I was dead!!'"

However, in true Otter style we pushed through the pain threshold with a little help from our very own Mr. Motivator, Scott. Cries of "dig deep team" and "it's mind over matter" could be heard from poolside. And whether we continued to dive in time and time again as a result of Scott's pep talks or whether each 50 was seen as a chance to escape them remains to be seen. With just over 10 minutes to go the 'men's' team was told that they all just needed to do 6 more 50's each in order to break their record. A few quick calculations and they figured out that they would all need to hold faster than world record pace to achieve this. Not to be deterred they all stormed through the last 10 minutes to finish on 111 laps equaling their record and proving they were the fastest team in the pool despite looking the worst for wear at the end. In the Ladies lane, spurred on by the fact that they raised an extra £10 / lap for each lap completed after the first 80, courtesy of Fiona's colleagues, gave them all that extra incentive. And at the end of 55 minutes the ladies completed 93 laps earning an extra £130 for Cancer Research. Smiling faces and pizza all round.

Congratulations to everyone who took part in this year's event and helped raise in excess of £500 for charity. Thank you to Scott & Fiona for rounding up the teams and a special thank you to Juliette Clark for organizing the event.

Club Championships

Last years Club Championships were a roaring success with well over 50 Otters competing in at least one of the events resulting in Fiona Marshall storming away with the overall ladies trophy and James Kerton floundering home in the final event to take the mens title.

The Club Championship events are scratch races (i.e.

there is no handicap) and are open to all Otters and the only sure way to be in with a chance of having one of these prestigious trophies to grace your television set is to enter as many events as possible.

Gina Hobson reports:

Club Champs - Night 1

The competition was fierce and frantic with 4 events to get through in the evening. Some of the competitors didn't quite reach the heights of Sheffield at the weekend but there's nothing like an Otter grudge match to motivate even the most lactate fatigued swimmers.

In the men's events, Dan Mikulskis dominated proceedings winning the 100m breaststroke, 100m butterfly and the 100m IM to show why the Otter relay teams are so keen for him to finally reach 'proper' masters age next year and to help continue the record breaking trend. But he didn't have it all his own way and Locky Pollard sprinted home in the 50m freestyle to carry the flag for the polo team. Rumour has it he might do some more competitive swimming next year.....

The ladies events were even more competitive with a different winner in each of the four races. Jane McMenemy flew home to win the 100m Butterfly before retiring to stop watch duty. Lauren Edwards then claimed the 100m breaststroke before Rachel Joyce snatched a photo finish in the 50m freestyle touching out Gina Hobson by less than a water molecule. Anneke Ray rounded off proceedings with a fine swim in the 100m IM.

Club Champs - Night 2

With men's points leader Dan Mikulskis opting for a curry over swimming (or perhaps it was due to getting beaten by a couple of polo boys the night before), it was left to Peter Carpenter and Jason Parrish to see whether they could close the impressive points lead Dan had amassed. In short, they couldn't, but thanks guys for making the final score board look like it was a good fight! With Coach Ross showing up to swim, it was pretty much going to be a race for 2nd across the 3 events. Fellow coach Pete saw off Jason P to claim 2nd in 100fc, Ben Thomas showed his potential in the 100bk, and Rob Alderton showed he's not just a backstroker by clinching 2nd in 50fly. In the girls' races, Rachel Joyce was out of the picture, being on holiday in the US, so it was down to me to try and bridge the 6 point gap Lauren had built up. Again, in short, I couldn't. However, I did manage to clinch the 100fc and 50 fly titles (with Anneke Ray 2nd in the fc and Lauren squeezed 2nd in the fly), before Anneke stopped me having it all my own way, taking the 100bk. So at the end of it all, the top 3 places look something like this:

Men:

1. Dan Mikulskis 39
2. Jason Parrish 36
3. Peter Carpenter 35

Women:

1. Lauren Edwards 55
2. Gina Hobson 53
- 3=. Rhiannon Guy, Anneke Ray 41

Handicap Events

Throughout the year there are a series of events both open water and pool which are handicapped for everyone's benefit. In 2005 we had the skilled Stuart Whitney residing over the handicapping times. Stuart did a fantastic job of predicating everyone's times to ensure that we saw a variety of winners from across the lanes throughout the year. If that does not motivate you to take part then maybe the chance of a trophy will. Many of the events carry individual trophies as well as the overall handicap trophy. This year that honour was given to Katie Goodall for some fine performances throughout the year. Here are some of the highlights from the 2005 events:

Open Water Events

Hon. Handicapper, Stuart Whitney, reports on the successes of the 2005 open water swims and handicaps:

The Mile - Windsor

Despite awful weather predictions and even more awful Friday night traffic 24 swimmers figured why bother going all the way to Glastonbury for a soaking when they could swim the Otter mile at Windsor and do it for a fraction of the cost. A 'star studded' men's line-up featuring Darling, Powdrill and Earl brought back memories of halcyon days gone by before cycling and burgers brought the glory years to a halt. The ladies race looked a very open affair with traffic robbing us of Rachel Joyce and illness robbing us of defending ladies champ Gina Hobson.

Just before 8pm the swimmers plunged into the Thames without the usual gasps and screams about the cold water, it seems the weather and the rain had done their job. As the race started men's captain Scott Darling lived up to his pre race boast and went straight to the front of the field with Guy Powdrill and Gareth Earl in hot pursuit. However, Powdrill cracked early, screaming "I'm bloody knackered" as he slipped down the field into last place in the handicap (*note: The Otter Committee are considering forcing Powdrill to pre-qualify for next years race on the back of this performance*). Just behind, that bastion of Wednesday morning training Sheryl Slater was the first lady out of the blocks, tracked by our ladies captain and

proven open water specialists Helene Shaw and Diedre Ward.

As the swimmers came under the bridge it was clear that Darling just couldn't break the under-trained Earl who was cutting him down with every stroke. It was a photo-finish on the line with Darling snatching defeat from the jaws of victory, Earl prevailing by less than a second. How we laughed. Polo player Ed Buckley was a superb third in the men's event. In the ladies race Sheryl Slater kept the in form duo of ladies captain Fiona Marshall and Katie Goodall at bay with a pillar to post victory. In the handicap Cat Cassidy decided that the trophy wasn't going to leave her household by taking flatmate Tracy Pitcher's title, with polo clubmate Nicola Davidson and club president Roger Sharpley rounding out the podium.

Interestingly, the finish times were on average four minutes faster than last year. Current is obviously a factor here although we suspect we started a couple of hundred yards before we should have done (oops!). This would have disadvantaged the faster swimmers somewhat in the handicap as they will have had less time and distance to close the gap on the slower swimmers. However, closer examination of the times by your handicapper reveals Cat was a deserved winner whichever way you looked at it and many congratulations to her on her improved swimming over the last year. Closer examination of the times by your handicapper also reveals Powdrill was still rubbish.

After the race swimmers and spectators made their way to the Bexley Arms for a well deserved drink and buffet and where Scott Darling could tell anyone and everyone who could listen that I had robbed him of victory. Club president Roger Sharpley presented the winners with their deserved trophies, except for Sheryl's as Gina Hobson obviously liked her trophy so much last year she didn't give it back!

My thanks as usual to Lesley Davies for spotting assistance, to Roger Sharpley for presentations and to Tony Stanton for organising the boat.

The Half Mile - Henley

As per usual the M4 traffic did it's best to disrupt this years Half Mile at Henley but Otters, used to swimming through brick walls during Ross' training sessions were not going to let a little motorway gridlock stop them getting to the start line virtually on time. Despite a few last minute drop outs 25 swimmers were prepared to brave the Thames, rather cooled by the weeks rains. Defending champion Helene Shaw was unable to make this years race leaving a line up entirely at the mercy of yours truly's handicapping, a task which took up far more of his time than anything he felt like doing at work that week. Feeling the heat from your superiors at work is one thing, heat from a

disgruntled Otter at their handicap mark is on another planet entirely.

At just before 8pm Lydia Kan had the honour of starting off this years race as she enjoyed a full 50 second gap before the next group of swimmers including club president Roger Sharpley took the plunge and attempted to reel in Lydia. One by one swimmers dived in to the bemusement of drinkers at the George and Dragon pub until a full 4 minutes and 15 seconds after Lydia, Otters version of Michael Phelps, Dan Mikulskis dived in for his attempt to sweep past them all. As the swimmers made their way down the Thames past all manner of highly desirable properties and watched closely on the boats by John Illife and myself and on the river bank by my better half Jo it was clear that the ladies were dominating the race.

As they past the finish line marshaled superbly as ever by Lesley Davies, it was in form Katie Goodall who swam a tactically masterful race to fend off a fearsome late burst from Fiona Marshall and Gina Hobson to claim her first ever handicap victory and the George Rope cup. Fiona and Gina couldn't be separated by the spotter at the finish and were awarded joint second with ever consistent Katie White finishing in fourth. A special word of praise for open water debutant and 5th place finisher Lauren Edwards, a swimmer hardly built for open water swimming who set a new Otter record for layers of clothing worn after the race.

After the race swimmers enjoyed the usual superb barbeque laid on by our friends at Henley Sailing Club at their superb riverside setting where club president Roger Sharpley presented the winning trophy to Katie. My thanks as usual to Roger and Lesley. Also to John Illife and Dave Bailey for spotting duties. Also thanks to all swimmers and guests who braved the traffic to make the race on time and adhere to the instructions. It doesn't sound much but I know Henley S.C were very happy with how it all went which ensures this great event can continue in the years to come.

The Quarter Mile – Tooting Lido

On a lovely sunny evening in glamorous Tooting the final open water event of the year was held, the quarter mile.

Twenty two swimmers lined up for the race which was ran as a staggered start with club treasurer Martin Flash leading off proceedings and was allowed to swim for two minutes twenty one seconds before the next group of swimmers started by which time Martin had covered over a length and a half over the 4.4 length course. It seemed an insurmountable lead according to some but one by one swimmers dived in to attempt to reel in Martin and a fair few succeeded. It turned out to be another triumph for the polo girls with competitive newcomer Bronwen Bew

streaking ahead of the field to claim a commanding victory. Distance swimmer extraordinaire Matt Staines made all that recent gut wrenching endurance training worthwhile claiming the runners up spot with Gina Hobson claiming third, wiping the floor with the handicapper in the process who had the self inflicted misfortune to share the same start time as her.

The Pool Handicap Events

100m Freestyle

A deadly new tactic was unleashed in the race by the convincing winner Julia Gregory as she had fallen pregnant in order to win sympathies and influence her handicap time. To her eternal credit the sight of the bump on her midriff worked, so a handy hint to swimmers in the future is to resort to that old Otter pastime of bishing, boshing and bashing. It's a lot more fun than moaning and is proven to succeed! Not soon to be mothers Katie Goodall and Lauren Edwards dead heated for 2nd closely followed by in form Jason Parrish and coach Ross Croasdell who complained afterwards that he had done all he could do to at least make himself look pregnant.

150m Freestyle

There was a sensation at QMSC pool when 25 swimmers signed up for a handicap race that was beyond 50m. Not only was it beyond 50m but it stretched to the particularly nasty distance of 150m. I was truly grateful that this amount of swimmers took so much organising that he was prevented from swimming the race himself.

Not for the first time, it was lane 2 'bandit' Jason Parrish who beat the handicapper to claim the eight points and the trophy. Jason, who really should be swimming at the front of lane 1 if he ever could be bothered to turn up for more than a session a week just beat home recent shoulder injury victims Alex Freelove and Jane McMenemy. Another 'bandit', lane 3's Andy Hudson followed close behind with Steve Marks, fully tapered after his Stockholm extravaganza with a strong showing in fifth. In 18th place and propping up the table Scott Darling continued the recent form trend of Otter men's captains in handicap races and can join Guy Powdrill (remember him?) in pre-qualification next year.

A special word of praise for Otter competitive newcomers Peter Thompson, Nigel Bond and coach Peter Carpenter who might be best advised swimming a few more competitive races so they are eligible to win a 'prestigious' Otter handicap race if they continue their current form. You need three competitive swims to qualify remember.

200m Freestyle and 50m Veterans

Christmas party season must have come early this year, as it was a very depleted crowd in the pool. Scott Darling was seen racing off for the change rooms allegedly to "make a start on the mince pies", but it was a dedicated bunch who stayed on to race for club and glory. The overall handicap trophy is a hotly contested event, and with Katie Goodall holding a slender lead at the top of the points table, it was all to play for in the 200m.

Three heats went off, heat one had wildcard entry Catherine Couquet romp home to win the overall race. All eyes were on heat two with Rhiannon and Ben taking it out in a photo finish which was too close to call, with Alex Starling close behind. Katie G had the swim of her life from lane 1, holding off a fast finishing Lauren (who is second on the points table). Heat 3 saw Dan chasing down the pack from 13 seconds behind, but he couldn't quite catch the heat winner Rachel Joyce.

After waiting through all the 200m swims, the veterans lined up for their 50 race. No-one was entirely sure about how old you needed to be to qualify as a veteran, so the honorable treasurer made the call, and deemed everyone over 40 eligible to swim. ID was checked (Katie was rumoured to be trying to enter, in an attempt to boost her overall points tally), Lesley and Rob used the tactic of "timekeeping" during the 200m, to save their energy while their fellow competitors slogged it out over 200m. The trophy was sitting at the end of the pool, so there was real silverware to race for!

Some pretty sketchy handicapping had the field spread across the pool, however Rob Alderton swimming backstroke was flying down the pool and came very close to taking out eventual winner Lydia Kan. We had a mini trophy and spoon presentation after the race, well done Lydia! Thanks to all who competed.

Otter Training Camp – La Santa 2005

Training camp organiser Gina Hobson recounts this year's trip:

Give or take a few, 20 Otters made the annual pilgrimage to Club La Santa, Lanzarote. The majority of us foolishly braved the 4am check in at Gatwick, and I think we'd all admit that we weren't at our sparkly best. Once check-in were convinced Deirdre's crutches weren't concealing weapons or drugs, we all boarded and were off. Unlike last year, at least we arrived on time, and once the beds and sofas had been bagsied, headed to the pool. There were several last minute changes of coach in the run up to the week, and a huge thank you has to go to Ruth, who stepped in at the last minute, and Ross. More about their

close teamwork later. Once in the water we quickly realised that Coach Ross had it in for the swimmers, and in particular the distance lot, this year. One set that stuck in my mind was 5x 800m fc followed by 5 x 200m pull. OMG. To his credit, Ross was in the pool getting stuck in destroying the alien, but this was of no comfort to (whinging) Whitney, who was heard to moan on several occasions that 'this is f*****g miserable'. To add a little variety to proceeding, the coaches organised a blue vs white team showdown on Sat afternoon, headed up by Captains Marshall and Peaches, respectively. The programme included 50, 100, 200, 400, 800 fc, 100 fly, 100 and 200 bk and br, and a 200 IM, with the obligatory relays. To say that tactical discussion and planning consumed the next 24 hours would not be an understatement. Obviously, this was the normal friendly Otter event. I could go into some detail about the banter and underhand techniques utilized to put off the opposition, but I'll stick to the swimming highlights. The biggest upsets are as follows: 50fc - Captain Peaches got scalped by the ginger warrior, Carl. 100br - Lauren got beat by Mike, who we worked out was just about old enough to be her Granddad. 100bk - Katie G beat yours truly, and continued to make a bloody good claim on the ladies bk crown all week. There was also excitement in the 100br, when it was thought that Captain P might take the br crown from Captain Marshall. But the Pitbull wasn't in a generous mood and took it by a couple of inches. Not that I'm biased in the slightest, but respect has to go to Andy Hudson who completed 2 x 100 fly and a 200IM, taking on Lauren Queen of IM, in a very short space of time. In true Otter style, it all came down to the last 4 x 100m fc relay, where the blue team of Prawn, Carl, Mike and Rhiannon romped home to victory. Cue much celebration. Well the Aussies weren't going to win anything else over the weekend. Other pool highlights included Rhiannon devouring the metres and deservedly earning swimmer of the week. The girl is going to fly in Sheffield. And Lauren kicking Steve and Peaches arses in the fc section of the 6 x 100m lactate set. Several people also noted surprise at seeing occasional Otter, Matt Staines, leading several sets including the 200m pull sets, but I think the sudden motivation can be easily explained by the appearance of an old team-mate. Again, more later.

Moving away from the pool, Katie Hope did her best to bankrupt La Santa by taking part in as many of the activities on offer as possible. By the end of the day she was literally asleep at the dinner table. Surprisingly, not even the witty Otter conversation could keep her eyes open. Also on the sleeping front, Carl, Peaches and Danny Lim seemed to only raise their heads from their beds/bar top for the odd swim session and a few beverages – good

work lads. Matt Johnson educated us in the rules of basketball, and with some stern refereeing and scoring, steered his team to victory. He also triumphed as king of the beer mat flipping game – a total of 26, if anyone's bothered. On the second attempt, the beach volleyball contest



took place, with the core team of Captain Peaches, Steve, myself and Prawn destroying the opposition. There were also numerous surfing trips, with me, Matt and Prawn venturing to the other side of the island, but inevitably finding ourselves back at the blown out mush of Famara. There was windsurfing, with the instructor taking a shine to Rhiannon. And diving, with Steve spending some serious time and effort perfecting his somersaults. From what we saw thesetended to involve removing all of the water from the diving pool by landing on his back, but Steve assures me he perfected one and a half rotations on the final day....

And so to the part you've been waiting got (and probably the only reason why you started reading this what must seem like a lifetime ago), the evening fun and frolics. This year the team were particularly adventurous, and under the guidance of Peaches, threw ourselves into the melee of Puerto del Carmen. It was here that we witnessed Deirdre holding the floor's attention with crutch dancing and limbo, before disappearing with the Prawn to dance until the sun came up. Everyone made their way to the dance floor at some point to make some shapes, but special mention should go to Roger for the enthusiasm that he showed – inspired. Also, Katie G showed huge levels of stamina and willing to be one of the last ones standing every night, and then still get up for training in the morning. And, along with Steve and Andy, participated in the traditional SSM game - it was great to have some new viewpoints. The cheesy music, cocktails with sparklers, and potential for gossip mean that trips to this resort are firmly on the schedule for next year.

Exciting news on the La Santa disco front – they've demol-



When the coaches are away....the team get stuck into the La Santa cocktails!

ished the grotty old one and built a lovely bar and dance floor over 2 floors, behind the Olympic pool. What with the karaoke (beautiful rendition of 500 miles), cocktails, and comfy chairs, a large percentage of the team had found their new home. And this is where a number of the Otters came into their own. Under the guise of discussing the following days programme, Ruth and Ross disappeared very early on during the evenings, not to be seen again. Then Matt bumped into an old Uni swimming buddy, and with the helpful pulling tips from Peaches, Carl, Katie G and myself, forged a 'special' friendship. Finally, Prawn has to be given a mention for her general naiveté in the world of pulling. On pretty much every evening, Prawn had a gaggle of boys (chavs) around her, who, according to the Prawn, 'just wanted to be friends', no matter how much we tried to convince her otherwise. On the final night, Prawn had to admit that we were right when she unearthed a devious plot to see who could bosh the Prawn first. Fortunately, she escaped physically, if not emotionally, unscathed. Huge thanks again go to Ross and Ruth, who devised and dealt out some great sessions (although we obviously didn't appreciate it at the time), Mike for his additional coaching support and videoing, and to Peaches for taking on organising the extra-curricular activities. Lets do it all again next year!



Taking a break from the swimming and other activities on offer. Enjoying a team dinner in La Santa.

The Annual Dinner

This year's dinner, organised by Lesley Davies, Aliene Gray, Katherine Mearman and Lu Hindley, was another successful event in the Otter social calendar. The stories are too numerous to tell but they say a picture tells a thousand stories. So here are a few of the stories from the night....



Between a Pilla and a Posa



Mr & Mrs Brown and Alex Freelove sit down for dinner.



The President's table



Peaches loves a lady (or two) in red.



What's with the maple leaf Lochy?



(L to R) Rachel Joyce, Jane McMenemy, Es Brown, Alex Freelove, Gina Hobson & Fiona Marshal



The soon to be Mr & Mrs Martin

Trophy Winners 2005

Date	Trophy	Event	Donor	2005 Winner
1874	Ladies' C. C.	5 L handicap	Lady friends of Members	D. Mikulskis
1889	Brown Challenge Cup	100m Backstroke (M)	G. S. Brown	R. Croasdell
1893	Macdonald C.C.	2 L Handicap	A.R. MacDonald	K. Wadey
1896	Thorne-Thorne C.C.	Open Water points total	Dr. L.C. Thorne-Thorne	K. Goodall
1898	Dudley C.C.	Mile Open Water Scratch (M)	Dr. J. G. Dudley	G. Earl
1899	Collis Brown C.C.	400m Freestyle (M)	Maj. W.A. Collis-Brown	M. Syngellatis
1905	Buller C.C.	Club Championship (M)	W.A.H. Buller	D. Mikulskis
1911	5th Humphreys C.C.	100m Freestyle (M)	Jack Humphreys	R. Croasdell
1911	G.H. Rope Averages Trophy	Handicap points total	Club Members	K. Goodall
1914	2nd Annison C.C.	100m Breaststroke (M)	F.E. Annison	D. Mikulskis
1914	2nd Annison C.C.	100m Breaststroke (W)	F.E. Annison	L. Edwards
1921	J.W. Rope Memorial	Half mile Open Water	Club Members	K. Goodall
1923	George H.Rope Cup	Golf competition	G. H. Rope	R. Jones
1931	Synge-Hutchinson C.C.	Veterans 50m handicap	Col E.D.B.Synge-Hutchinson	L. Kan
1934	Baldon C.C. (missing)	150m Handicap	Club Members	J. Parrish
1935	Jonas C.C.	200m Handicap	Alfred Jonas	C. Couquet
1948	2nd Tom Batt C.C	Quarter Mile open water	Friends of Tom Batt	B. Bew
1951	Cunningham Plate	Mile Open Water Handicap	Club Members	C. Cassidy
1952	Edgar salver	100m Individual Medley (M)	Club members	D. Mikulskis
1952	Edgar salver	100m Individual Medley (W)	Club members	A. Ray
1955	Pyers Mostyn C.C.	4 L Handicap	Lady Mostyn	J. Gregory
1966	Peters Tankard	100m Butterfly (M)	Nigel Peters	D. Mikulskis
1970	Hodge C.C.	10 Widths handicap	Club Members	A. Hudson
1977	Millner C.C.	100m Freestyle (W)	J.R.G. Millner	G. Hobson
1993	Jackson Trophy	Club championship (W)	Richard Jackson	L. Edwards
1996	Arthur Batt Trophy	200m Individual Medley (M)	A.G. Batt	D. Mikulskis
1996	Arthur Batt Trophy	200m Individual Medley (W)	A.G. Batt	R. Joyce
1998	J.H.R. Haswell Trophy	Water Polo	Mrs G. Haswell	A. Kovatchev
2001	Club championship	100m Backstroke (W)	Club Members	A. Ray
2001	Club Championship	100m Butterfly (W)	Club Members	J. McMenemy
2001	Club Championship	400m Freestyle (W)	Club Members	G. Hobson
2001	C.G. Forsberg Memorial	Mile Open Water Scratch (W)	Club Members	S. Slater
2002	Alex Ferguson Memorial	400m I.M. Handicap	J. McMenemy & A. Booth	R. Guy
2003	Water Polo Cup	Women's Team award	Club Members	L. MacFarlane
	No Trophy	50m Butterfly (M)		R. Croasdell
	No Trophy	50m Butterfly (W)		G. Hobson
	No Trophy	50m Freestyle (M)		L. Pollard
	No Trophy	50m Freestyle (W)		R. Joyce
2004	David Craig Salver	100m FS Handicap	Club Members	A. Hudson