

Masters Swimming Report

The period can best be described as 'a year in the life of Amanda Heath', either competing under the Spencer banner or with her Maidenhead club. Having moved up an age group, Amanda (65) set records in a variety of events almost every time she entered the water. Not so fortunate was her Spencer (and Amersham) team-mate Guy Emerson who also moved up an age-group. Having overcome a 5 year cancer struggle, he has suffered problems with liver, heart and kidney stones finally culminating in a shoulder reconstruction. This considerably shortened his 2022 season but naturally we are all hoping to see Guy back in the water as soon as possible in 2023.

It was our turn in November 2021 to host the SER leg of the National Inter-County MASTERS competition. This turned out to be a rip-roaring contest at the new Wycombe pool and was won by Hampshire. In fact Hampshire won almost half of the 72 events so the B&SB performance in coming a close 2nd was fantastic. In the ensuing virtual gala, Hampshire's success translated into 3rd place nationally with B&SB coming 4th out of more than 20 districts. Wycombe S.C. personnel and officials contributed greatly to the success of this event. Individual B&SB winners were Pip Williams (x3), Miroslav Coicici (x2), Julian Swain, Dave Milburn, Laura Cooke, Libby Hetherington and the evergreen Duncan McCreadie - one each. 7 relay squads also triumphed. All 32 team members played their part. Later in the month Amanda Heath competing on her own won events at Barnet (1500fs) as well as at Newport Swim Wales SC (5 Golds) - such versatility.

In January 2022 at the SER LC gala at K2 Crawley we had 42 entrants and again our female competitors were outstanding with both Amanda Heath and Pip Williams taking 5 Golds and Karen Leftley winning 4. Almost as significant was the single Gold on 400fs for Becky O'Brien who was coming back to fitness after an enforced lay-off. For the men both Dave Milburn and Guy Emerson collected 3 Golds. Later in the month Pip took 7 Golds from her 9 events at Aberdeen Silver City Blues SC gala.

February was an altogether quieter month but almost inevitably it was Amanda Heath who again came up with 5 wins at Royal Navy SC event (Millfield). 2 different local swimmers also prospered, namely Heidi Gore (Bracknell) with 3 wins and Sophie Trotter (Wycombe) with one Gold. In early March there were almost 50 local entrants at the Bracknell SC MASTERS meet, around 25% of total swimmers. Fittingly the most wins (5) were recorded by Harry Middleton and Kirsty Johnson of the home club, who were joined on that number by Pip Williams (Wycombe). The next day both Amanda Heath and Dave Milburn were undefeated in their 3 events each at the Swim Wales LC MASTERS meet in Swansea, where Becky O'Brien stamped her renewed authority with 4 Golds. By popular demand a 1500fs LC was run one evening at K2 and our 5 local entrants all came away with a medal. At the same time Amanda Heath continued her sensational year with a 10 Gold medal haul in Guernsey - the stand out performance being her new World Record time for 100 Br (SC) of 1.28.18.

The B&SB interest was maintained throughout April/May at a number of provincial events, notably at Nottingham, Newmarket, Wolverhampton and Erith, where many individual medals were obtained.

By all accounts the British MASTERS LC in Aberdeen over the period 17-19 June was a tremendous event with many new World, European and British records set. Once again Amanda Heath took centre stage with an individual World record swim of 3.12.63 (65-69 age group) on 200 Br. She was a contributor to 2 more World records in the 4x100 mixed medley (240 years) and

Womens 4x100fs (280 years) Spencer teams. There was also a European record in the 4x50 Spencer mixed medley relay team and 3 individual British records for 100br, 200bk and 200 fly respectively. Phew - I am worn out just writing this! Not to be outdone, Becky O'Brien amassed 9 medals (7 Gold) at this same meet.

A number of our swimmers competed in Rome in August at the European MASTERS, notably Amanda again with 2 more World records on 100 and 200br and Dave Milburn with World records on 50 and 100br. Pip Williams came back with a Silver and Bronze, also Becky O'Brien collected a Bronze. Then Amanda even took a Silver in the 3K open water event at the nearby Lido di Ostia. As if to prove it was no fluke, she medalled again in the SER Open Water event!

More mundane matters took over in early September when our County Open MASTERS event was held at the new 10-lane Braywick Leisure Centre, Maidenhead. With good support from Maidenhead club personnel and head coach Paul Lloyd the event ran well and I see no reason to move from this location in the future. To their credit the 'stars' mentioned in this report all took part in support of this local event. The top swimmers overall were Dave Milburn (1st), Georgina Heyn, Teddington (2nd) and Amanda Heath (3rd). It was good to see Ian Daniell swimming well, particularly in the 50 fly. Should he not have done the 200 fly as well?? The top club was Wycombe (401 points), 2nd Kidlington (215), 3rd Teddington (196) and 4th Bracknell (187).

The SER SC event ran over 2 sessions at K2 in early October - as always providing a good lead-in to the SC Nationals later in the month. At least 18 competitors from B&SB took individual Gold medals, reinforcing the inherent strength in MASTERS swimming in our district. Almost inevitably amongst the highlights were the 2 new British/European times set by Amanda Heath in 200br and 200im to put alongside the 3 British records set with her Spencer relay team. Unfortunately, with the stepping-back of a key volunteer recording the MASTERS meets times on a national basis, it is becoming difficult at present to establish with certainty what is and what is not a British/Euro/World record time. Another highlight of the meet was a young Jennifer Holland (30 - Wycombe) who grasped 4 Gold medals. At the other end of the spectrum came Claire Moore (67 - Bracknell) with 2 wins. Relays were grouped into a third session as an experiment and feedback was generally positive on this trial. Overall top club was Teddington on 101 points. Our 2 main contenders Wycombe and Bracknell came 6th equal on 59 points.

The SC Nationals were held over 3 days in Sheffield at the end of October. In addition to the usual suspects of Amanda Heath (65) with 6 individual Golds and 3 Brit/Euro records as well as Becky O'Brien (33) with 5 Golds and Dave Milburn (60) with 3 Golds, there were successes for Duncan McCreadie (77) with 3 wins, Samuel Tucker (18), Jeanne Petit (52), Daniel John (35) and Kellyn Caldwell (33) with 2 wins each and Pip Williams (60) with 1 win. Becky (now Mrs Gray) had held over her honeymoon from the Summer and flew away to Mexico the day after the event concluded.

There is now a short lull in proceedings until the SER leg of the MASTERS National Inter-County SC competition on Sunday 20th November. This year the event is being hosted by Kent at the iconic Olympic pool at Stratford so there will assuredly be no shortage of competitors clamouring to be in the team!

Bob Odell
06.11.2022