

**ALBATROSS DIVING CLUB ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**The Abbey School Tuesday 6 September 2022 6:45-8:00pm**

**In Attendance:**

Bridget Gibson, Emma West, Malcolm Green, Lisa Clark, Steve Foster, Tracy Gillespie, Jane Jolly, Sam King, Clive Finlay. David Saunders, Anne Green Jessel, Richard Jessel, Leilani Mullen, Chris Beal, Agata Peche, Gemma Springer, Karen Cullen, Tracy Ashdown, Catherine Weaver, Ben Colton, Wendy Oxlade, Claire Petter, Amanda Fox, Trevor Lawrence, Vivien Gregg

1. **Welcome**

The meeting was opened by Bridget Gibson as Chair who welcomed those attetnding. There were no further apologies for absence.

1. **Chairperson’s Report**

Bridget proceeded to present the Chair report to the meeting.

Good evening and thank you all for coming. The first thing I would like to say is how immensely proud I am of this club. We have all had a couple of very difficult years, however the coaches, back room staff, club members and parents all went above and beyond to ensure that when lock down ended our divers were still in condition and ready to compete at the highest level even without a pool! They are all to be commended in the highest terms!

Without volunteers there would be no Albatross diving club and no access for our children to dive in Reading. Our children would not have the opportunity to meet their goals, attend competitions or enjoy diving. We are incredibly fortunate that we have some of the best coaches in the country here and we command huge respect within GB diving which is a massive achievement for a voluntary club. Our coaches and divers attend and judge at the highest level competitions in the UK and beyond, no mean feat for a voluntary club. Be assured this club holds its own on a professional stage with the ‘big boys’ of diving and we are hugely respected.

We have good and strong relationships with our operator partners, Abbey school, GLL Rivermead, Everyone Active Hemel Hempstead and Active Nation Southampton. Hopefully this will continue into the future. With our new pool opening next year (very exciting!) this will have a huge impact on the club going forward. Having our own pool will allow for expansion and the ability for more children in the Reading area to have access to try diving, we look forward to extending our learn to dive programme and provide capability for children in the Reading area (and beyond) to gain a love of the sport and enjoy diving as our children have.

Our learn to dive programme is already flourishing with 30 new enquiries following on from the success of GB divers at the Commonwealth Games and Senior Europeans in Rome. We look forward to welcoming these new divers and some will no doubt join our Right Track Team. Our existing Right Track provision is expanding with the introduction of new sessions following on from the out-reach programmes into the community which Malcom and James started at the beginning of the new year. We hope this will continue and expand with the extra capacity from the new pool coming on-line in 2023.

With this expansion we will require more coaches and I can strongly recommend coaching training to our older divers and any interested parents. A number of our previous and current coaches started as ‘interested parents’. My own daughter has found coaching a very positive experience and learnt a lot on her journey. Coaching and volunteering is looked upon very positively by prospective employers and is a good thing to have on your CV as you enter the workplace. Coaching qualifications can also be extremely useful at university and a coaching qualification is a good transferable skill to have. Coaching is also very rewarding watching the divers progressing and achieving under your charge.

One note on volunteers WE NEED YOU!! Without them this club does not run. If you wish your child to have a successful and enjoyable diving journey it doesn’t just happen. If you don’t feel like being a coach is for you there are numerous other roles we need filled. We need organisational and IT skills, chaperones and helpers. We are all busy and it can feel like a big commitment but there are numerous roles, some are less onerous than others, some only need a small commitment for a month or two a year. Please please help if you possibly can!

I have to finish with a huge thank you to Emma and Malcolm without whom this club would not have made it through Covid! We did, and exited lockdown in a strong position and they are to be hugely commended! Emma has put in many hours each week as Club Secretary organising sessions, pool bookings and dealing with a whole host of other issues behind the scenes. Many many thanks for all your hard work! We do appreciate you!!!

I am stepping down as chairperson this year. I have held the position for a number of years as my daughter progressed through from diver to coach and it is now time for me to hand the baton on.

Albatross Diving Club leaves lockdown in a positive strong position with many possibilities for the future hopefully going from strength to strength with a new pool and wonderful coaches, however I re-iterate we need you to volunteer and help us and your children on their and the clubs journey to the future.

Many thanks

1. **Head Coach Report**

Bridget then introduced Malcolm Green, Albatross Head Coach, who presemted his report to the meeting.

In March 2020 a worldwide pandemic struck causing upheaval to everybody in some form or another. For all sports, all leisure facilities were closed and a 4 month break from diving began. This was followed by a short return and then another 3 month break followed around Christmas. All competitions and training camps were cancelled, and only supervised sessions allowed in between closures. Online Zoom sessions took place for specific dry programs twice a week over these breaks with many of our Age Group & Elite divers attending. We also held separate zoom sessions for our Skills & LTD divers.

In October 2021 the British Junior Elites took place in Plymouth, no spectators, mask wearing at all times for all volunteers including coaches, split training sessions and a strict poolside etiquette. This was all put in place to help keep down the transmitting of covid between divers, coaches and volunteers. The conditions of the event were altered to 2020 age group requirements. Albatross sent 3 divers with Quinn and James both making the top 6 1m final and Quinn making the 3m final. Although this was a difficult event for all clubs with lack of training, this was a remarkable achievement for us as a club given our facilities situation. Not long after, things slowly started to return back to normal and the British Junior Elites again returned 6 months later in April 2022 with Lauren making all 3 finals and taking a Silver Medal on both 1m and 3m springboard, another superb achievement.

The English National Age groups were cancelled completely in 2020 and 2021 and returned again in June 2022. With a 3 year break from the event, divers all of a sudden found themselves all in a higher age category meaning additional dives were needed to be able to compete. This meant some intense training and new dives to learn in a relatively short time. Albatross sent all our proposed Elite and Age Group divers to the Armada Cup in February 2022 before the national events as a first competition back to see where they lay amongst the rest of their British competitors. Some good results all round gave us confidence that we were still up with the rest of the clubs from around the country despite the difficult 2 years of the pandemic. 4 months later In June, Albatross sent 8 divers to the National Age groups and returned with 3 gold, 4 silver and 1 bronze medal, again a superb performance from our divers with Harry & Hernan taking all 3 of the top spots in the Boys Group A 1m, 3m, and platform events between them.

Like the National Age Groups, the National Skills were also cancelled in 2020 and 2021. Perhaps for our Skills divers, this was more tricky for some as having to move from Group C to Group B was a massive jump with having to learn a large amount of dives in a short time as the requirements are very different. The rules of National Skills state that you must reach a qualifying standard to be able to enter the finals and this is done through a series of qualifying events around the country. A diver can qualify at any one of them or use as a practice event. So, in April this begun with intense competing at Regional Qualifying events in Southend, Tunbridge Wells and Plymouth. A further one at the London Aquatic centre was cancelled at short notice meaning a visit to Sheffield for the last regional event. All 7 of our divers successfully qualified and went on to the National finals in July with both Evie & Ryan gaining 4th & 5th place respectively. Great results in qualifying from all our skills divers, just getting there was an achievement.

With divers moving from Skills to Age Groups and from Age Groups to Elite level ready for 2023, we foresaw this at the start of the year and so in January created a new ‘Right track’ squad from our Learn to dive program with the purpose of these divers moving into a new skills squad later in the year to keep the flow of divers up through the competing categories. This has created more divers in our top 2 categories therefore meaning additional pool time and a change of squads were needed. This comes into effect from next week and all squad divers and parents will know of this.

Our Learn to Dive program remains strong with many enquiries following the British team’s results and TV coverage of the Commonwealth games in Birmingham and European Championships in Budapest. About 30 taster sessions have been arranged during this month.

Over the last couple of years, we have been able to have additional Assistant Diving Coach and Judge 1 course’s made available to us which some of our divers have attended. Coaches are one of the most important roles in the club and without them the club could not exist. We always welcome more, and invite all divers of 14 and over to put their own diving skills into practice and become Poolside Assistants and when they are 16 take an Assistant Coach course and to put what they have learnt into practice in our learn to dive and skills programme under our Level 2 Dive Coaches.

It has been 4 and a half years since, in January 2018, Central Pool closed and a new era began at Abbey School and Rivermead, travelling to Hemel and Southampton for additional training and weekend trips to other pool. In spring next year the new pool opens. It is adjacent to Rivermead and both wet and dry training will take place within the same building. It will be a new start for the club in one form or another so arrangements will be taking place toward the end of the year and into 2023. We will be looking to train more coaches to gain a larger group of coaches within our club. There are also Judge 1 & 2 courses available as well. Moving into another new era, it is also vitally important that we have a full committee in place and we welcome new committee members in the coming weeks.

I would like to finish by thanking our coaches, Chris, Matt, Lizzy, Charlotte, Edward, Ethan, Lani, Bernie and James for their enthusiasm and commitment, at times it has been difficult but without them, our successes would not have been possible. I would also like to thank Emma for doing, and covering so many jobs over the last 2 years that it has become a full time unpaid job, to name just a few… secretary, treasurer, club shop, SwimMark, learn to dive, taster sessions, pool bookings, Covid organisation and communication to all parents on every level, and more, without her all this work we could not have survived as a club. As I have mentioned earlier, it is vital that we need a new committee with new members to keep the club going into a new era moving into new facilities with a new program.

1. **Treasurer’s Report**

Bridget introduced Emma who presented the Treasurer’s report. The annual financial results and signed Independent Examiners Report had been circulated to all members with the AGM Agenda and were made available to the AGM meeting room for comment or question, but no explanation had been requested.

Due to the pandemic an AGM was not held in either 2020 or 2021 and, as many of you will be aware, we mourned the death of our Treasurer, Sheila Kirrane, in November 2020 and so, in this interim time, the Treasurers role has been undertaken dually by Malcolm and myself to give transparency and delegation of responsibility to the payment of expenses.

The accounts for the three years ended have been independently reviewed by Steve Breach and were attached to the invitation email. You will have seen that at the close of the last financial year we were holding cash balances of around £23,000 having risen marginally over the previous 2 years. These reserves are used to fund expenditure outside of the daily operation of the club such as competitions and capital investment. During the pandemic we took the immediate decision to halt fees for the benefit of all our members. As an entirely volunteer run organisation we do not incur wage costs and, additionally, our pool operators did not charge us pool hire during the periods of lockdown. As Bridget has said we are fortunate to enjoy a strong relationship with those third parties with which we have hire arrangements.

Going forward, however, along with the rest of the country, our operators are seeing an exponential rise in their utility costs. Abbey has reported that their utility costs have doubled and, as we are all aware, this is only likely to go one way.

For the first time since leaving Central Pool we have, therefore, decided to raise our fees by 50p per session or less. We are fortunate that, alongside the rise in costs, we are also enjoying a healthy number of new enquiries which maintain the base level of lesson income which, like in any sports club, helps to support the competitive programme. Later in the agenda we will vote in the new fee structure which, again, was circulated with the agenda and invitation to this meeting for your consideration.

We record our thanks to Steve for his support in reviewing the accounts with no charge.

1. **Adoption of 2022 Constitution**

Changes to the Club Constitution have been made to comply with Swim England requirements. The revised Constitution had been circulated to all members with the AGM Agenda for comment and were made available to the AGM meeting room. No comments had been received. The AGM were invited to ask questions, but none were forthcoming, so the room was asked to adopt the Constitution as presented. Voting was unanimous and the 2022 Albatross Diving Club Constitution adopted.

1. **Adoption of 2022/23 Proposed Club Fee Structure**

The proposed new fee structure had been circulated to Club members with the AGM Agenda as follows:

**Squad Fees 2022/23**

Each year it is the responsibility of the Committee to review the financial sustainability of the Club considering committed expenditure and forthcoming operating costs. In addition to the investment in and maintenance of the clubs’ assets, costs are largely fixed in accordance with the timetable of sessions offered to members. Rising pool hire and travel costs and a need to expand the number of club sessions has made it a necessity to advise a proposed monthly increase to the current club members eligible to vote at the forthcoming AGM. Fees include annual Swim England Membership and Insurance at a rate pursuant to competitive level of the diver apart from new starters to the club who pay their insurance charge as a joining fee to cover their first years Swim England membership.

This is the first increase in fees since moving out of Central Pool.

Subject to ratification at the AGM from 1 October 2022 Monthly Training Fees will be as follows:

Learn to Dive half hour per week pool only £30

Learn to Dive Advanced/ Masters 1 hour per week pool only £55

Right Track and Skills Competition Squads 1 dry, 3 pool, 1 Southampton/month £95

Age Group/ Elite Competition Squads 2 dry, 4 pool, 2 Southampton/month £115

The proposed increase will be an agenda item at the AGM on Tuesday 6 September 2022, 6.45pm, when you will be welcome to comment and vote. As with most sports clubs the structure is pyramidal where the more sessions you dive (the higher the capability of diver), the cheaper the per session rate becomes to avoid penalising the competitive progression of our athletes.

The meeting was happy with the new fee structure as proposed and voted unanimously in its adoption from 1 October 2022. Emma will write out to all club members to arrange for new standing orders to be put in place and Bernie will inform all new members of the £30 Learn to Dive subscription fee. New Learn to Dive members will also be required to pay a joining fee of £15 to cover their first years insurance (through Swim England membership). Thereafter the insurance cost/membership fee is absorbed into the monthly subs.

Action: Emma/ Bernie

1. **Forthcoming Events**

Emma advised the AGM that the Annual Club Awards BBQ Social Afternoon will be on Saturday 10th September 2022 at 10 Maiden Erlegh Drive, Earley, Reading. All club members are invited.

1. **Resignation of Officers**

Bridget as Chair and Emma as Secretary and Acting Treasurer then stood down from their positions. In advance of the meeting nominations had been sought for the positions of Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. There were only 3 nominees:

Chair – David Saunders

Secretary – Tracy Ashdown

Treasurer – Emma West

The position of Head Coach is in the gift of the Coaches Meeting.

1. **Election of Officers**

In addition to the above Executive positions the AGM attendees were invited to declare at the end of the meeting if they wish to join the Committee or assist the Club in any role with the Committee structure having been circulated with the AGM papers. Copies of role descriptions were available to the meeting.

The following positions were voted upon and recorded as elected:

Secretary – Tracy Ashdown

Treasurer – Emma West

The position of Welfare Officer had been held by Virginia Saunders (wife of the new Chair). Lisa Clark agreed to take this role but with Virginia still undertaking the administration of DBS certification.

Catherine Weaver agreed to take the position of SwimMark Coordinator with thanks given to Brian Shaw for his hard work in previous years in this role.

Jane Jolly agreed to support the club in producing reports for the website and social media and Gemma Springer in pushing forward with the design and introduction of a new track suit in time for the 2023 National events.

1. **Any Other Business**

There was no further business and the meeting closed at 8pm.