



YORK CITY BATHS CLUB

Incorporating

York City Swimming Club (Founded 1882)

York Baths Club (Founded 1937)

Amalgamated 1951



YCBC Annual Report for the year ending 31st December 2020

Introduction

This report illustrates the performance of York City Baths Club during 2020. The following individuals have contributed to the content of this report:

- Steve Creighton – Chairman
- Alison Pickup – Honorary Secretary
- David Jordan – Honorary Treasurer
- Josh Spencer – Head Coach
- Chris Turner – Teaching Co-ordinator

The report provides information to support the Club's Annual General Meeting, which this year will be held on Sunday 28th February via Zoom (due to Covid-19 social distancing restrictions).

In addition to detailing the performance of the Club during 2020 the report highlights the Executive Committee focus areas for 2021.

Covid-19

Coronavirus has blighted all our lives throughout 2020 and unfortunately continues to do so in the early part of 2021. No doubt we are all thoroughly fed up with the virus and the impact it continues to have on our lives but it would be remiss not to reflect on how it has affected the Club throughout 2020. It has dominated the year and undoubtedly presented one of the largest challenges our Club has had to face.

In summary:

- We suspended swimming lessons on the 18th March and held our last training session (before the commencement of the 1st national lockdown) on the 20th March.
- Training squads did not return to the pool until 30th July
- Teaching sessions did not resume until the 26th October
- A 2nd national lockdown imposed on the 5th November led to another suspension of all swimming activities
- We returned to the pool on the 2nd December only to be hit with a 3rd national lockdown on the 4th January 2021

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In addition to the suspension of lessons, training and competitions we were forced to cancel the trip to Switzerland which would have seen swimmers from our National, Regional and Club Squads compete in the 28th Meeting du Lac in Vevey on the 27th and 28th June. So much work had gone into the organisation of this trip and no doubt it would have been an enormous success and a fantastic experience for all.

Covid-19 has disrupted so much that we previously took for granted. It has devastated the swimming community and placed enormous pressures on many Clubs. We should be enormously proud of how York City Baths Club has responded to these pressures and tremendously grateful to all those involved in the Club (committee members, service providers, parents, volunteers) for the hard work, commitment, dedication, creativity and generosity illustrated during our 'fight back against Covid-19' campaign. The YCBC Crowdfunder initiative that we ran during July was a notable highlight and both Josh Spencer and Caroline Garratt deserve enormous praise and credit for the considerable part they played in making this the huge success that it was.

As a result of several factors (see Financial Performance below), the Club weathered the financial impact of Covid-19 during 2020 exceptionally well. However, Covid-19 continues to present significant challenges in 2021, which will make it a very difficult year and it is unlikely we will be able to mitigate the impact the same way we did in 2020.

Membership Matters

At the end of 2020 we had 144 active swimmers across our six competitive squads, and a further 17 active swimmers in our Masters section. Within our teaching section, we had 82 active swimmers across the four highest hat groups. In comparison, at the end of 2019 the numbers for training and teaching were 159 and 235 (of which 144 were in the top four hat groups), respectively.

Despite the lockdowns, it was great to see that our swimmer's enthusiasm for their sport continued and that almost all swimmers in our Training Section returned to their squads. We were able to resume sessions for our competitive squads from the end of July, and sessions for Masters resumed a couple of weeks later. We hope to be able to get our squad swimmers back to sessions as soon as the current restrictions on swimming pools are eased.

For our Teaching Section, the resumption of swimming lessons after the first lockdown took longer due to pool availability, and sessions for swimmers in our Red/Blue/Dark Green and Light Green hats resumed from late October. Covid-19 secure procedures reduced the capacity per lane, and limited pool availability meant that the lessons offered were limited to these groups and were often not at the same time, or the same venue, as the swimmer's usual lesson time. Understandably, some parents chose to defer their swimmer's return to lessons. As a result, we have a significant number of swimmers waiting to re-start their lessons, and a much-reduced number renewing their Swim England membership at this stage for 2021. Once restrictions have been lifted and teaching pool space is available to us, we will be looking to get as many children back to their swimming lessons as possible.

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Despite the interruptions during 2020, we continued to receive enquiries for lessons in our Teaching section, although we were not able to progress them and they remain on our waiting list. Enquiries for our squads were referred to our Head Coach, although limited capacity at sessions meant that we have had very few, or no, available places during the last 12 months. Enquiries were also received for our Masters section and some new members have joined, although the earlier suspension of sessions for this group due to restrictions under the Tier System meant that not all could be progressed.

The annual YCBC Membership Fee for the period 1st March 2021 to the end of February 2022 will be set at the AGM, and payment for swimmers in our squads, and our Masters section, will be requested thereafter. (This fee is incorporated into the monthly swim fee for those in our Teaching section, and a separate payment is not required for swimmers in this section of the Club.)

In 2020 the Club was only able to host one in-person social event:

YCBC Annual Presentation Evening - Saturday 18th January 2020

The evening was another sell-out, and awards were presented to swimmers across our Teaching Section and Training Squads, recognising not only the results of the 2019 Club Championships, but also to acknowledge individual achievements throughout the year.

During the first lockdown, we were able to host a 'virtual' event for swimmers in our six squads:

Live Q&A with Chris Cooke, Team GB and Double Olympian – Sunday 19th July 2020

All swimmers in our training squads had the opportunity to attend a Q&A video call with Chris Cook. Chris has a wealth of experience in the sport, having spent nearly 10 years on the Great Britain team, and attending two Olympic Games (Athens 2004 and Beijing 2008). Chris also won two gold medals at the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne in the 50m and 100m Breaststroke events. After retiring Chris has continued to work in swimming and also as a motivational speaker.

Chris was happy to answer questions from the swimmers, and kindly offered to do the video calls for free in return for sharing a link for donations to the cancer charity for which he is a patron.

Financial Performance

2020 was a difficult year for the Club from a financial perspective due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Swimming activities were disrupted massively, which impacted both income and costs. Income was down because of the lack of swimming opportunities, with teaching bearing the brunt. Costs for pool hire for the sessions that ran were higher because of a limited choice of available pool time. However, remarkably the draft accounts show just a small loss of £51. This position can be primarily attributed to four factors:

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- two weeks before the 1st national lockdown the Club was able to hold a Spring open gala
- a grant secured from the Sport England Community Emergency Fund
- a hugely successful Crowdfunder event
- the generosity of parents donating excess fee payments to the Club

Together, the above contributed over £25,000 of income, without which the Club would be reporting its biggest loss in a long time, if not ever. A detailed financial analysis of 2020 appears in the Honorary Treasurer's Report (distributed separately).

Looking ahead to 2021, the pandemic still looms large and will no doubt continue to impact operations for some time to come. As of today, swimming remains suspended and the earliest re-commencement date (for some) looks likely to be mid April. The basic assumption is that when activities do resume, they will do so in a similar manner to the back end of 2020, with the outlook for teaching being the most uncertain. Until an unrestricted swimming programme can resume across a variety of pools, the Club will operate at a monthly loss. On a positive note, the Committee is hopeful the Club will be able to host a Winter open gala, but nevertheless, the baseline budget for 2021 shows a loss of around £30,000. Naturally, the Committee will be working extremely hard to mitigate this.

SwimMark

Swim England is the English national governing body of swimming. SwimMark is Swim England's quality mark for the development of effective, ethical and sustainable swimming clubs.

There is an annual reaccreditation process to achieve SwimMark essential club status. We are currently in the process of this year's full accreditation (involving the submission of evidence relating to all 16 modules) after successfully achieving the less onerous biennial 'health check' in March 2020. The Swim England National Panel will meet in March 2021 to determine our status.

Securing SwimMark accreditation enhances club management, strengthens structures, and unites clubs. It offers clubs a philosophy and programme to help ensure the best environment for swimmers. It also offers Sport England recognition that we are providing a quality service for all members, through its Clubmark status. We have successfully achieved SwimMark accreditation for a number of consecutive years now and remain committed to doing so.

Training & Competence

During 2020 the Club supported 4 new assistant teachers (3 of whom were able to complete both the theory and practical elements and complete the qualification) and 3 swimming teachers (2 of whom completed the theory element, with none of them being able to access a practical course). Only 2 individuals were able to complete a NRASTC course.

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One coach was able to complete their swimming coach qualification.

Before the 1st national lockdown, 10 people completed the online theory element of the Swim England swimming official's Judge 1 course and most were able to get some practical elements signed off too. Many thanks to Karen Fothergill for her organisation and support of this group. It is worth noting that Swim England gala regulations now require significant numbers of J1's to run a Level 3 gala. Thus, future investment in officials will be key for the Club if it is to be able to host such events, which provide vital income, in the future.

Swimming Matters

Teaching:

Just prior to the 1st national lockdown the Teaching section finished on a high with some excellent performances and times achieved in the last race night. These race nights are extremely popular and we very much hope that we will be able to re-establish them, with spectators, during the latter part of 2021.

The teaching section has undoubtedly been hit the hardest by Covid-19 and the implications of this on the wider Club are significant. The Mount pool remained closed to external lets during 2020 following the 1st national lockdown and we were grateful to be offered the pool time that we were at St Peters. This allowed us to get Red, Blue, Dark Green and Light Green hats back in the water towards the end of 2020. A plan to re-introduce Orange hats was agreed at the end of the year but was not able to be implemented due to the further lockdown restrictions. We would not have been able to run our teaching sessions at all without the support of those acting as Covid Liaison Officers and we are very thankful for the support provided.

We are training new teachers to replace those that we will say goodbye to at the end of this academic year when they head off to University etc. However, like everything else training courses have been disrupted by Covid-19 (specifically practical elements) and the process of gaining the required qualifications and certification has become protracted and frustrating. This has the potential to become a major challenge for us.

As always we would like to take this opportunity to express our thanks and appreciation to all in our volunteer workforce for their adaptability, dedication and commitment in supporting the teaching section. We would also like to acknowledge the years of service that Ken Benson has provided to the Club and wish him a very happy 'retirement'.

Training:

From the time of reporting the many achievements and successes of 2019 in the annual report presented at the last AGM in February 2020 we have had a total of 6 months without any access to swimming pools and there have been no swimming competitions held (excluding the Swim England Level X Racing event) since March 2020.

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Prior to the 1st national lockdown in March, we had a busy start to 2020 with a number of competitions and events. In February, the swimmers competed in the Spring Yorkshire Championships and came away with 23 medals in total. Our very first Spring open gala took place in Leeds in early March and, like our annual Winter open gala, proved to be a popular and well organised event. The National Squad swimmers also competed at their first national qualifying event of the season in Liverpool and produced some very promising performances. During the February half term, the National Squad had a week away in Fuerteventura on a training camp which was very productive and enjoyable.

Following the closure of the swimming pools in March, the swimmers had to adapt to new methods of training in order to maintain and develop their fitness. It was really pleasing to see that many of our swimmers remained so dedicated and motivated during this difficult time.

Before returning back to the swimming pool following the first lockdown, there was a tremendous amount of planning done during the months of June and July. The Executive Committee and the coaching team worked exceptionally hard to prepare and implement the necessary guidance and Covid-19 procedures that allowed swimmers to safely return to training.

One of the most significant challenges on our return to swimming from a coaching perspective was the limited number of pool hours available to the Club. Some of our regular training facilities remained closed and the capacity within those pools we were able to access had to be reduced in order to maintain social distancing. Despite this challenge we were able to deliver a timetable to the training squads which was fair, balanced and provided the swimmers with an opportunity to continue with their development in the water.

There have been a number of changes to the structure and procedures of the training sessions in order to keep the swimmers safe and socially distanced at all times. Our swimmers are to be commended for their efforts at every training session to follow these procedures and help the coaches to deliver their session plans in an efficient manner. It is also appropriate that we thank the volunteers who have supported the training sessions by acting as the Covid Liaison Officers to help ensure the safety of both the swimmers and the coaches.

We have had some changes to the coaching team during 2020. Anna Nicholson stepped down from her role as the Regional Squad coach in August and we would like to thank Anna for her commitment to the club over the last 15 years. Josh Spencer has stepped in to fill the role of the Regional Squad Coach (alongside his Head Coach role) and will continue to do so for the short to medium term.

As outlined under Membership Matters, the vast majority of our training membership have remained with the Club and have continued to train despite the three lockdowns and absence of swimming competitions. This demonstrates the appetite and desire that our swimmers have for the sport and the enjoyment they receive from been part of our Club environment.

One of the few highlights post the onset of Covid-19 was the Level X swimming competition held at St Peter's School in October. There were some great performances across the squads and there was a fantastic atmosphere created by the swimmers who were cheering their team mates on in every race. The feedback from the Level X was overwhelmingly positive, so Josh and the coaching team will endeavour to provide more 'in-house' racing opportunities once we return back to the pool.

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Masters:

Masters swimmers have endured a hugely frustrating year. In addition to the national lockdowns they have had the tier system to contend with, which differentiated between over and under 18 year-olds and therefore placed additional restrictions on this group.

Fundraising & Publicity

'Traditional' fundraising opportunities during 2020 were obviously very limited but the raffle and tombola offering at our Spring open gala at the John Charles Centre for Sport in Leeds was both spectacular and hugely successful. The extra time and effort spent by our 'fundraising ladies' in presenting the prizes so beautifully resulted in the highest number of raffle tickets sold at any of our gala's. Thank you to Suzy and the team and to all those who kindly donated prizes.

As previously mentioned earlier in this report we were able to secure a grant from the Sport England Community Emergency Fund and we also ran a hugely successful Crowdfunder campaign. Our thanks go to all those who procured and/or donated such fantastic prizes in support of this campaign and of course to those who pledged their support.

We were also very fortunate to benefit from the enormous generosity of the many parents who kindly donated excess fee payments to the Club.

During the 1st national lockdown both Josh Spencer and Steve Creighton separately featured on BBC Radio York. Josh was interviewed on the 8th July and was able to heavily promote the Crowdfunder campaign and Steve was interviewed on the 10th July in a feature that focused primarily on the impact of lockdown.

Facilities

2020 saw us predominately operate from Yearsley, Energise, St Peters and New Earswick swimming pools. The Mount swimming pool remained unavailable to external lets after the 1st national lockdown.

During 2020 we were given confirmation that we had secured pool time at the new York Leisure Centre. However, the continued delays to the opening of the facility, compounded by capacity restrictions brought about by social distancing requirements, meant that the pool time we had initially secured could not actually be provided. Revisiting our discussions with GLL and exploring opportunities to secure pool time at the York Leisure Centre will be a priority for the Committee during 2021, as will re-engaging with The Mount to understand their intentions.

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Focus for 2021

As outlined in the introduction to this report and within the financial performance section, Covid-19 is set to make 2021 a very challenging year from a financial perspective. The primary focus and efforts of the Committee during 2021 will therefore revolve around mitigating the impact of Covid-19 as much as is reasonably possible, whilst pursuing as rapid a return to 'business as usual' as Government, Swim England and pool providers permit.

Particular attention will need to be paid to membership numbers in general and squad/hat group numbers in particular. Pool time will need to be utilised as effectively as possible as the pools we will be initially reliant on, i.e. Yearsley and Energise, are the most expensive to hire.

An additional focus area will be training and competence. The disruption caused by Covid-19 has had a significant impact. Training courses have been restricted and certain qualifications have not been able to be obtained or renewed during 2020 as a result.

It is really pleasing to see that several new nominations for Committee roles have been received. Assuming all nominations are approved at the AGM, the current serving Committee members staying 'in-post' look forward to welcoming the new members. Our thanks and sincere appreciation go to those serving Committee members who have chosen not to stand for re-election in 2021.

Finally, your Executive Officers (Steve Creighton, Alison Pickup and David Jordan) would like to take this opportunity to give advance notice that 2021 will be the last year that they will stand for re-election to the Committee. Identifying a new Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer must therefore be a focus for the Club during 2021.

Regards,

Steve Creighton
Chairman

For and on behalf of YCBC Executive Committee

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