

The History of Huntingdon Piranhas Swimming Club

By Natasha Skeels



The club was founded in 1958 but was unable to function during the winter season as there was no indoor or heated pool, the council was unable to provide one but the council did launch an appeal for one in 1957. While the club waited for a pool in Huntingdon to be constructed they had to rely on swimming in the river. By 1963 all the 150 members had to travel by coach to St Neots and Cambridge to swim but on Tuesday evenings they had to swim in the public sessions.

Finally in 1964 construction started on the pool but it would take 50 weeks to complete. On completion the pool was handed over to the contractors, to be filled by the fire brigade in September 1965, but unfortunately things went wrong and there was a headline in the Hunts Post calling it "Pool a Swamp" reporting that the pool would not be opening after all as it was just a sea of mud.

Nine years after the appeal first started Huntingdon's swimming pool was opened on the 5th May 1966 in Bushey Close, the pool was outside and it was a 55yds by 42 yds in size. The official opening in June was performed by the Olympic swimmer Jackie Enfield. Despite the pool being unheated, the water temperature being 57°F (13°C), there was 2,525 members of the public paying to use it within the first 10 days of opening.

The outside 50metre pool was unsuitable for swimming during the winter months, so the club still had to travel to St Ives to train, but training did resume during the summer. Plans were drawn up to turn the pool to an indoor facility, however the surrounding substrate was unstable and could not support the proposed structure, sadly the pool was demolished and is now part of a housing estate.

In 1978 a sports complex was constructed and opened in St Peters road, behind St Peters School, and included a 25meter pool with 4 lanes. The current complex, the One Leisure Centre stands behind St Peters School and is owned by the local council. The club swims in the pool from Tuesday to Saturday.

The two oldest Trophies that are still handed out today are to the Open Male and the Open Female and both are handed out for 100meter freestyle.

The 100meter Freestyle Open Male trophy was first presented in 1920, originally presented to the champion boy freestyle swimmer when the boys schools were competing.

The Trophy is called the George Trophy.



Male Open Trophy



Female Open Trophy

The club has become more competitive over the years completing in many different galas and in a variety of leagues. The

competitions the club have taken part in over the years are;

- ÿ Junior Fenland League
- ÿ Club Championships
- ÿ Spring Shield
- ÿ Novice Gala
- ÿ East Regional
- ÿ National Youth Champs
- ÿ Autumn Shield
- ÿ The Teaspoon Gala
- ÿ Senior Fenland League
- ÿ The Piranha Challenge
- ÿ East Regions Winter Champs

The club has some promising swimmers, some are already competing nationally and doing well for the club while others are still finding their way. Senior competing swimmers are;

- « Ryan Skeels - has already competed in many competitions for the club and is currently a National standard swimmer. He has competed in the Counties, Regional and the Nationals in both Welsh and in the English. He has received the Boy of the year three times in a row due to his outstanding performances, he is currently the 50m Freestyle Welsh Summer National record holder.
- « Tamara Richards - has already competed in many competitions for the club including, the Counties and Regional and the Welsh Nationals. She is the current female Swimmer of the Year.

Some of the younger swimmers that are showing real potential are;

- « Daniel Parekh-Hill
- « William Davies
- « Adam Dennis
- « George Mansfield
- « Connor Thacker
- « William Steel
- « Emma Leslie
- « Jessica Mansfield
- « Jasmine Kelly
- « Chloe Phillips
- « Mia Leech

The club has come a long way since it started back in 1958 as it has become a more competitive club, and has changed under the different Head Coaches that have all lead the club in their own ways. The Head Coaches that the club has had are;

- ÿ Gordon Byatt 1978-1981
- ÿ Steve Sibbald 1981-2002
- ÿ Steve Russell 2002-2003
- ÿ Jayne Phillips 2003-2005
- ÿ Ashley Morris 2005-2007
- ÿ John Richards 2007-Present

The club has had Club Captains to help the coaches competitions and act as role models to the younger swimmers. Previous captains include

The Boys Captains

- Daniel Green 1991 - 1998
- Ben Sibbald 1999 - 2000
- Steve White 2001 - 2002
- Iain Collins 2003 - 2004
- Steve Brooks 2005 - 2006
- Daniel Courton 2007 - 2008
- Michael Blundell 2009

Kristen Chadband 2010 - Present

The Girls Captains

Jenny Button 1991 - 1998

Lucy Boyles 1999 - 2000

Hayley Green 2001 - 2002

Katherine Stanworth 2003 - 2004

Claire Thwaites 2005 - 2006

Katie Read 2007

Natasha Skeels 2008

Alex Youngs 2009 - Present