

History of Tyldesley Swimming and Water Polo Club



Jack Whittaker

In 1965, Jack Whittaker left the district to take up a new appointment in Northampton. Jack had been club captain for fifteen years, and as a mark of respect and appreciation of his services to the club for almost twenty years, two trophies were purchased and suitably engraved the "Jack Whittaker Testimonial Trophy". These trophies are presented to the winners of the Girls and Boys fifty metres freestyle events at the Annual Club Championships.

The list of his achievements and exploits during time as an active member of the Club is too lengthy to mention and his dedication to the sport was unrivalled, in fact he cut short his honeymoon so that he could play water polo for Lancashire County, which he captained for seven years.

Long Distance Swimming

In spite of the water polo successes at this time, the later part of the 1960's must be regarded as the long distance swimming era.

The British Long Distance Swimming Association was formed in 1956, and soon after they had settled in the new baths, Tyldesley Swimming Club members began to compete in the various championship events organised by that body through their affiliated club.

In 1965, Jimmy Grimshaw won the ten mile Morecambe bay swim, and became the first of many Tyldesley Swimming Club members to gain honours in major distance events.

The 1966 season saw Mary Reilly finish second in the two junior events, the three mile Bala Lake, and the two mile Fairhaven. Paul Beadlestone and Stuart Hopkins also competed in the two events, and shared first and second places on each occasion. Paul won the Windermere junior race in the same year.



ATV Relay Challenge Team

Back row: Yvonne Beadlestone, Keith Grimshaw, Dammion Charlson, Mayoress and Mayor of Tyldesley
Front row: Barbara Reilly, Carole Griffiths, Alan Parry, Duncan Cleworth, Paul Hayley and Ian Worthington
Not on photograph Alan Meakin

In 1967, Paul Beadlestone was again successful in winning both the Bala and Windermere events, whilst his sister Yvonne, was one of the ten young members of the club who broke the record when winning ATV's Relay Challenge Trophy in November of the same year.

In answer to a challenge on the Junior Sportsweek programme, the ten members of the team, all of them under twelve, had to compete two half mile swims, each in relay order. Tyldesley Swimming Clubs time for the ten miles was five hours six minutes.

Paul Hayley went to the ATV studios to receive the trophy on behalf of the club.

Bolton and District Junior Males Squadron Championship

Tyldesley won the Bolton and District Junior Males Squadron Championship in 1965, and headed the Bolton Age Group competition in the same year.

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Channel Swim

For many people, the highlight of the club's history, was the successful Channel relay swim in September 1967.

The team, all of them teenagers, who had put in many months of rigorous training under the guidance of the two coaches, Tony Trussell and Jim Grimshaw, was Tommy Holland, Stuart Hopkins, Chris Hopkins, Mary Reilly, Dennis Topping and Jeff Webster. The reserves were Lester Lowe and Graham Butler.

They covered a gruelling thirty one miles from Dover to Wissant Beach just outside Calais, in eleven hours thirty seven minutes - sixteen minutes outside the record.

Up to that time, 240 teams had attempted to swim the channel, either from France to England or from England to France.

Only four teams had been successful on the England to France Swim and Tyldesley Swimming Club had the second best time.

The team accompanied by a party of supporters, arrived at Dover at 6 pm on Saturday 9th September, and at 5 pm on Sunday 10th September, Tommy Holland, the team captain took the plunge from Shakespeare Beach.

The decision to stage the swim had been made only two hours earlier, when the pilot boat captain reported that conditions would be suitable for a crossing from England to France. Tyldesley Swimming Club officials had originally planned on crossing in the other direction, which for tidal reasons, can be accomplished in shorter time.

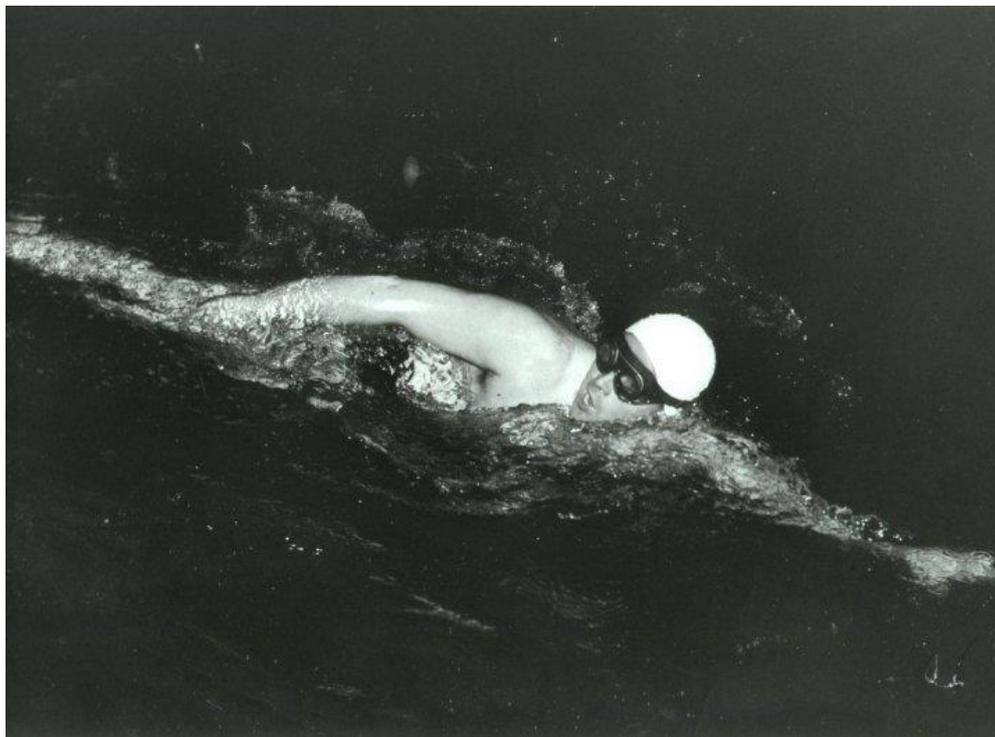
During the hurried start, official British Long Distance Swimming Association observer Nt. Tommy Cook, of Hackney, was left behind, and the forty foot pilot boat "Envictor", had to return to collect him.

The swim got off to a flying start, when Tommy Holland, aided by an outgoing tide, completed six and a half miles during the first hour.



Tommy Holland starts the swim

Each of the team members swam for one hour each, and next to swim was Stuart Hopkins, who was followed by his brother Chris, Mary Reilly, Dennis Topping and Jeff Webster - in that order, all of them covered in grease to protect their bodies from cold.



Dennis Topping - half-way there

(Photograph by Wigan Evening Post)



Club Channel Relay Team's Tour of Triumph

(Photograph by Leigh Journal)

With three-quarters of the swim completed the team were well ahead of the time required for a record.

Tommy Holland had just completed his second stint, and Stuart Hopkins started his, when the tide changed - twenty minutes too soon. At that time they were only three and a half miles from the French shore, and two and a half hours inside the record.

Chris Hopkins, Mary Reilly and Dennis Topping covered only one and a half miles in the next three hours against a very strong tide, and the last man in, Jeff Webster, had completed thirty seven minutes of his second spell, when he landed on the French shore. After walking on the beach, he had to turn round and swim back to the pilot boat.

The team arrived back at Dover at about 7 am, after a very arduous but exciting night. When returning home, the party stopped at Maidstone, Kent, where the team were presented with their badges by Miss Kelam Smith, secretary of the Channel Swimming Association.

On Wednesday 13th September, the team did a tour of triumph along the main streets of Tyldesley in an open topped Land Rover. They then went on to Wigan, with a stop outside the baths, and visited Hindley Grammar School, where Tommy Holland was back at school.

During the same year Tommy Holland entered his first championships. He was second in the ten mile Morecambe Bay swim, third in the Trentham, and finished well up the field in the Bala Lake two-way and ASA five mile championships.

Tommy became the clubs foremost marathon swimmer, completing both the one and two way Windermere swims, distances of ten and a quarter and twenty and a half miles respectively.

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In 1971, he broke the record for the three lakes swim in the same day. He swam Windermere: ten and a quarter miles, Ullswater: seven and a half miles, and Coniston: five and a quarter miles, in a total of twelve hours fourteen minutes. Two years later, after he had left the district to take up a teaching appointment in Blackpool, Tommy attempted the English Channel and made a successful England to France crossing in twelve hours forty minutes.

Paul Beadlestone



Keith Chappell (Salford), Paul Beadlestone (Tyldesley), Mike Watson (Stockport)

Returning to the shorter distances - Paul Beadlestone won the Northern Counties 100 metres Boys Freestyle Championship three years in succession from 1967 to 1969. He also won the Manchester and District 100 yards freestyle in 1967 and the 100 yards butterfly in 1968.

Duncan Hopkins



1969 Duncan Hopkins National Age Group bronze medallist

At the National Age Group Championships in 1968 Duncan Hopkins won two bronze medals: 100 metres freestyle and 200 metres Individual Medley. He reached the National Age Group finals again in 1969, winning a bronze medal in the 100 metres freestyle. Duncan Cleworth won a bronze medal at the same championships in the twelve year olds 100 metre freestyle event.



Duncan Hopkins ESSA Schools Divisional Champion

In 1970 Duncan was the English Schools Division 3 14-16yrs freestyle Divisional Champion.



1971 Duncan Hopkins with his trophies

In 1971 Duncan Hopkins won the Northern Counties, Lancashire County, Manchester and District and Bolton and District, Boys or Junior Gents Sprint Championships. He also won a gold medal in the same season when playing for the Lancashire junior water polo team which won the County Championship of England.

Duncan was in the Lancashire team which won the championship once again in 1972 and reached the final in 1973.

Lancashire Counties U18s Water Polo Championship

Tyldesley won the Lancashire Counties U18s Water Polo Championship in 1969.

John Cleworth

John Cleworth who was elected President of the Club in 1971 was another member of the Tyldesley Swimming Club to gain administrative honours in the sport.

He was secretary of the Lancashire County ASA in 1950-51. President of that body in 1960-61, and President of the Bolton and District Swimming and Water Polo Association in 1954-55. He was a member of the Northern Counties Executive Committee from 1950 until 1954.

He was connected with the club for many years. He was an active swimmer and polo player in the mid-twenties, and became a member of the committee in 1933. He held office of secretary in the early post war years and was a Vice President from 1949 until 1971, when he was elected President of the club.

He became a life member in 1973.

Mini Gala

With a view to encouraging the younger members of the club a "Mini" Gala was organised in 1972. It was decided that there should be four groups: Girls eight years and under, Boys eight years and under, Girls ten years and under and Boys ten years and under, and that the swimmers with most points in each group would receive a trophy to be held for twelve months.

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The toy boys and girls at the first mini gala were:

Boys 8 years and under (Dandy Trophy): Tony Trafford

Girls 8 years and under (Townsend Trophy): Kay Townsend

Boys 10 years and under (Hopkins Trophy): Paul Breeze Breeze

Girls 10 years and under (Ladies Committee Trophy): Christine Lyhcoe

The gala was a huge success and has since become a very popular annual event.