

OWASC Chairs' Report

2025

Welcome to all the new members and their families who have joined us this year.

This year marks the 50th Anniversary of Artistic Swimming in Witney.

This started as the Langel Swimmers the first display only having 6 swimmers. Then progressed to Witney & District Synchronised Swimming Club as a subsection of the Swimming Club. The Synchro Club then decided that it was time to become a club in it's own right and became an affiliated Synchronised Swimming Club approximately 20 years ago. Often known as Witney Synchro all Synchronised Swimming Clubs had to change to incorporate the new term of Artistic Swimming Club. So, Oxford and Witney Artistic Swimming Club was born during lock down.

Our coaches ran 2 new starter sessions throughout end of 2023/early 2024, which resulted in ten new members (3x 12U and 7x 13+) joining the club. Unfortunately, we had ten swimmers leave throughout the year including two of the new members.

Our adult sessions continue to be well attended, currently with a total of 6 regular swimmers joining us at Witney and Summertown each week. (Over the course of 2024 we had a total of 15 adults try our sessions including 2 parents and 2 male swimmers).

Over the past year, our athletes have attended numerous grade days in Reading and Sevenoaks, with 46 passes (detailed below) – a very impressive 96% pass rate. Many congratulations to all, and special mention to Abi, Isabel, Isabella and Megan T who each completed their final grade during 2024. We would like to extend enormous thanks to our coaches for all their hard work in preparing our athletes for grading. There have been some updates to the figures and elements included in the 2025 grades and we thank the coaches for all the effort that goes into understanding these changes and wish all our athletes good luck in mastering them.

2024 saw our athletes compete in several competitions, culminating in numerous gold, silver and bronze medals (all results listed below). Congratulations to all the swimmers who represented OWASC at the Kent Competition, British Masters Championships, and the South East Regional Figure Competition. Well done especially to Megan Thomas who attended her first Masters Championships in Sheffield where she swam her first free solo in the very competitive 18–24 years section. Megan opened the whole Championships with start number 1 and held her nerve for a well swum routine.

Competitions in 2025 will be run under the full range of newly introduced FINA changes. Coaches and Judges have again attended several upgrading seminars. The introduction of numerical deductions for synchronisation errors in routines have emphasised the need for precision in the synchronisation of all movements from all athletes throughout routines.

During 2024, Coach Louise was again selected as a coach for the South East Regional Squad for the Regional Games, which sees squads compete in land routines, speed swimming and figures Louise was unable to attend the games competition as it took place in Bristol the day before her wedding! The South East squad came equal 1st with the Midlands but was awarded 2nd on count back of figure results.

Unfortunately, we lost our deep-water pool (and land session) when Brookes University sadly closed the Harcourt Hill Pool in August 2024. After many emails and enquiries to different pools around the area, we were able to negotiate a new pool session at Marston Ferry Pool in Summertown on Sunday afternoons. There have been a few problems with the settling-in period, but we have been fortunate to be able to still

have water to use. Many thanks to Coach Mandy for all her efforts to secure us a new pool space in Oxford. Rising fuel costs continue to have an impact on pool hire costs and this will be closely monitored by the committee throughout the year.

The changes to our Sunday morning session have been successful. Increasing numbers now attend the slightly later session, and the shared pool space has enabled us to work more closely with Witney Swimming Club. The downsides are that the water is sometimes a little choppy for figures, and we do have to limit numbers in this session due to space.

For Children in Need, OWASC athletes were again invited to “wear their socks in the pool” which was met with enthusiasm – £62 was raised.

In January 2025, OWASC held a Winter Showcase. It was a lovely opportunity for everyone to gel their hair, wear headdresses and perform their routines for family and friends. The raffle raised £106. Unfortunately, due to the availability of the pool, many athletes had not returned from Christmas holidays and so were unable to take part. We will endeavour to make the timing of this year’s event more accessible for all, depending on pool availability.

Swim England stopped the SwimMark (previously Swim 21) governance kitemark for Clubs and all clubs must now undergo a new system – Club Affiliation which is based on SwimMark but not as extensive. SwimEngland are currently deciding on a new future kitemark system which clubs will be asked to adopt. For now, we can continue using SwimMark logos and bursaries and we will be submitting our first Club Affiliation evidence this month.

Newly introduced safeguarding guidelines have brought about a need for a large increase in the number of team managers required for all Aquatic Clubs. The changes mean that for any “event” away from Club such as grade days, or competitions, the availability of trained team managers may govern whether or not the club can attend. We would like to extend a huge thanks to all team managers and volunteers who helped make it possible for us to attend events throughout 2024. If anyone is interested in helping out at future events by becoming a team manager or judge, please do let us know.

We would like to close by personally thanking Mandy, Steve, Kathryn, Louise and Katie, our poolside helpers, and our whole committee for the commitment and time they dedicate to OWASC. Without each of you, none of this would be possible. We are looking forward to an exciting year ahead celebrating 50 years of OWASC!

Charlotte Thomas and Catriona Turnbull (Co-Chairs, OWASC)

Grades Achieved 2024

Figure 1: Abby R, Freya, Megan D, Rubyann, Sasha, Vivien

Figure 2: Kamilla (silver), Meredith

Figure 3: Kamilla, Meredith

Figure 4: Abi, Anna, Isabella, Megan T

Figure 5: Abi, Isabel, Isabella, Megan T

Routine 1: Elizabeth, Emily C (silver), Evie, Fleur, Kadence, Cassandra, Lin, Phoebe, Rebecca, Yasmin,

Routine 2: Abby R, Freya, Megan D, Rubyann, Rosie, Sasha, Rosie

Routine 3: Kamilla (silver), Meredith, Vivien

Routine 4: Abi, Anna, Dara, Flora, Isabel (silver), Isabella (silver), Megan T

Routine 5: Abi, Isabel (silver), Isabella, Megan T

2024 Competition Results

Kent Competition

Novice

13–18 years: 1st Emily C, 3rd Evie, 5th Elizabeth

Grade 0

12 & under: 4th Cassandra

13–18 years: 1st Sasha, 2nd Abby R, 5th Rubyann

Grade 2

13–18 years: 10th Meredith

Grade 3

13–18 years: 10th Kamilla

Grade 4

13–18 years: 1st Isabella

British Masters Championships

Solo

18–24 years: 20th Megan T

South East Regional Figure Competition

Grade 0

12 & under: 3rd Lin, 12th Rebecca

13–15 years: 1st Evie, 2nd Emily C, 3rd Elizabeth,

Grade 1

13–15 years: 3rd Abby R, 5th Rubyann

Grade 2

13–15 years: 1st Meredith

Grade 3

15 over: 5th Kamilla