

Karori Pirates – Annual Report 2012-13

It's been a busy year for the club - which is in as good heart in the pool as I've seen it during the 10 years I've been swimming next to the kids. We've had some astonishing achievements at the top end of the club and there are some very exciting newcomers budding through at the bottom end. Next year promises to be even more entertaining.

In no particular order, my scrapbook for the year contains:

Top End

We spend a lot of time celebrating our senior swimmers' achievements and rightly so – they are great role models for our younger members and I am repeatedly delighted by the easy companionship they share with the wider club – from Pirates only meets to regular poolside banter. Some highlights were Ted Taylor's selection to represent NZ at the Sydney Youth Olympics in January and both Devlin Forsyth and Jacob Farr winning their national age group XLR8 awards from Swimming NZ.

Ted became a media star with his own [profile in the Dom Post College Sport supplement](#) - with a [fine photo](#) of him in his Pirates swim cap.



Bottom end

We've made a real effort with Pirates-only meets this year – running meets at Karori Pool at the end of each. These have been short, sharp and fun but competitive and a great opportunity for newer swimmers to learn about swim meets in a friendly environment at our own pool and for their parents to learn the ropes of some swimming jobs with friendly training from more experienced

parents. It's also been a great opportunity for our older swimmers to share some of their experience with the new generation. Particular thanks to Greg and Jacqui Forsyth who have repeatedly put themselves out to ensure the times recorded at these meets comply with Swimming NZ policy for national qualification.

A regular fixture in the winter calendar is the highly imaginative Swimming Wellington Club League – 4 meets at minor pools over the quiet months where eligibility of nationally-placed swimmers is restricted to give our newer members a chance to race as teams in a competitive league. It's equally a great environment for parents to learn new skills as officials.



This year we had 3 teams – a record for any club in the history of the League and I'm sure we made more noise in the relays than any competitive sports team in history.

Swim Camps

The Christmas holidays saw swim camps from the juniors at Marton and the seniors in New Plymouth. Plenty of photos and camp reports on our [Facebook](#) page but a great time was had by all. However much fun, the camps are a lot of work – thanks as ever to Fleur Nicholas and her team and to Brigitte and Shayne Plunkett for their immaculate preparation and easy control of both camps.



Wellington Champs

The camps are a build up for the Wellington Summer Champs – yet more work for parents taking on official duties and swimmers racing in up to 15 events (often with heats and finals) over 4 days. Congratulations to all those who qualified and raced and particular thanks to the parents who gave up their time as volunteers – without this major commitment, swim meets like this simply wouldn't happen.

Overall we were 3rd club behind the much larger Capital and Swim Zone (Lower Hutt) clubs – this is a fantastic achievement and is down to the great combination of a core group of senior swimmers competing at a high level and a new wave of younger swimmers – both our Seahawks and senior Electric Eels starting to stamp their authority on their age groups and some great performances from first and second-time Championship swimmers in the Electric Eels and Stingrays. Strength in depth is very hard to beat!

Nearly half the Competitive membership of the club swam - this is something to be really proud of whether on or off the podium. To qualify for your regional championships is a big deal. Our 12-14 year olds swim in age groups with particularly large numbers of swimmers across the region, for them, even getting a top 20 is a great achievement. Some swimmers in these age groups particular got agonisingly close to winning a ribbon, only to miss by a whisker.

National Champs

10 swimmers qualified for the National Junior Champs in February and 12 more for the National Age Group Champs 2 weeks later – a huge meet with 10 sessions over 5 days. It's been an enormous commitment for parents to fill the various roles we have for team management, officials and club duties – without volunteers....



Not only did we have the best teams and they had the best time but also we had by far the best uniforms of any club in the country (thanks Diana).

The guns then went to Auckland for the Opens, with a few people getting TV time in the daily coverage on Sky.

A novelty this year was that the Div. 2 championships were held in Invercargill. More successes and more TV time (Cue TV – not Sky this time ☺). Particular thanks to team manager Annie Hindle-Daniels for pulling this together in addition to continuing to manage our Tuesday night non-competitive programme.

10 year review

The club was incorporated in November 2002 when the council put a roof on the pool (though there was a club of sorts before then too). It's grown spectacularly, which is a credit to the work of the parents, swimmers and coaches who have helped it on its way.

We surveyed members to see what they thought: more of the same was the resounding feedback! The only nuance was that what people like about the club is its community and maybe that's something we need to put more focus on next year.

Signature Meet

Our biggest meet of the year is the “Signature Meet” at Kilbirnie in August. Swimming Wellington prescribe certain events but we have the chance to stamp our own style on it – this was a *Skull and Sword* meet with fiercely competitive kick, underwater streamline and freestyle fins events cunningly designed by Steve to ensure that our club took away the sack of gold for the combined result of these races. Nice work.

Again Fleur Nicholas and her team plus 45 (!) parent helpers were the invisible magic that turned an empty pool booking into a fun and competitive evening. Notable too that our Signature meet finished within 3 mins of the Swim Wellington standard – some of the others this year have overrun by up to 2 hours!

Parents

Parents are the invisible magic that not only pay for everything but also give up prodigious amounts of their free time for their and others’ kids. I’m always conscious that memos like this are endless catalogues of thanks - but then swimming is a voluntary sport and it simply doesn’t happen without parent help.

Some of our parents have also been spotted getting wet themselves - competing in various bits of the Taupo Half Ironman as “Karori for Glory”, the Capital Classic Ocean Swim and, most importantly dominating the parent vs. swimmer relay at the junior swim camp.



Out of the pool, Greg Forsythe (Devlin and Georgiana’s dad) was been shortlisted as a finalist for the Swimming New Zealand [Technical Official of the Year](#). This is a real distinction – the other two finalists went to the Olympic Games!

Social

Spurred by the feedback that people actually want to spend time together out of the pool, we've started an ad hoc social programme: Chan Dassanayake, who was a doctor in the NZ Olympic team, a Pirate parent and a mean swimmer himself gave us a talk about his experience at the Beijing Olympics. Mid-winter, we filled the Lighthouse Cinema to watch the new movie Gatsby. Thanks to Janine Neal for organising this and selling the tickets. It's a lot of work (like everything else related to swimming) but there are rumblings that we might do it again this year ...

Operations

Tony Dawbin has filled our core back office roles as race and membership secretary against deadlines and bureaucratic challenges with infectious positivity. Equally Jo Stevens has continued to ensure we have the tidiest books in the business despite the fact that her son stopped swimming with us over 2 years ago.

Both Tony and Jo have been fundamental to the successful operation of the club in the last year, as we've seen a new generation of parents transition into various club roles. I'm enormously grateful to them for the flexibility and constructiveness with which they have followed our internal changes.

We've recently established a set of operations teams covering race, membership & bookkeeping, website, communications, events & fundraising, governance and non-competitive swimming. We're all on a steep learning curve but many thanks to the team leaders and their members for what has already made a noticeably positive change in club activities.

It goes without saying that my fellow committee members have been great – thanks to all of you for your hard work and relentless cheerfulness!

Looking forward

The kids who swim with our club are fantastic company. Their high spirits and successes great and small are what really makes being involved worthwhile – my thanks to all of them for the hours they spend for the seconds they lose, to Steve and the coaches for their constantly fresh guidance of what happens in the pool and of course to the parents for the ridiculous amount of time they spend making it all happen.



Swimming is a funny sport – sharing over 50% of the Olympic medal count with Athletics but with ancient processes and technologies and a bureaucracy that would make the Raj proud. The changes that Swimming NZ has implemented over the last year are promising and NZ's recent successes at the World Championships bode excitingly. I can't wait to see similar changes at the grass roots to allow us to spend less time administrating and more time in the water.

Thanks again to everyone for their contribution and see you in the pool.

John