

President's Report 2016

For me the honour of being Norfolk ASA President has been a huge one. As many of you know both my parents have held the office and I am really proud to have followed in their footsteps.

The year kicked off almost immediately in Thetford with the inaugural County Qualifying Gala. In January, my husband Shaun and I attended Great Yarmouth Swimming Club's annual dinner dance and presentation night. I handed out the awards, sharing the workload with the town's deputy mayor and really enjoyed celebrating the successes of the swimmers away from the poolside for a change.

At the County Championships in February and March, I split my time between officiating on poolside and presidential duties, playing host to East Region President Kay McGuire who joined us for one of these days. It was great competition with most Norfolk clubs well represented in finals and in gaining podium places. This year's County Championships were tinged with sadness as we lost our dear friend and President Elect, Warwick Thompson. Many of the swimmers chose to dedicate their racing successes in Warwick's memory. It is fitting that the County have decided to hold a new development meet in 2017 that will bear his name.

For the first time in its history, the "Three Counties Gala" was held long course at the Sportspark. It was Norfolk's turn to host, so I welcomed Kaye and the Presidents from Norfolk and Cambridgeshire to a pre-gala reception. Some exciting racing followed and we all agreed that it would be beneficial to keep the event within the national qualifying window and at the Sportspark if possible.

The Norfolk Junior league is always a highlight as I believe the combination of a team gala and our youngest competitors can't be beaten! At the final in Wymondham, the Dick Copeman Cup was presented to the City of Norwich swimming Club by Dick's son David and daughter Sandra Tovee.

May was incredibly busy! The East Region Championships began with the Youths competing in Norwich at the beginning of the month followed by the age groups in Luton at the end. At one point all six of our region's county presidents and the ER President were in attendance at the same time, which I am reliably told is an extremely rare occurrence! In spite of an initial lack of officials (I had to don my whites for this one), the Norfolk Masters Open Meet was a huge success. The highlight had to be my old friend Jane Asher setting a new world masters record in 85-89 years age-group. With the popularity of masters swimming still growing, I am sure the future of this meet in its new format, is secure.

Having dabbled a little with synchronised swimming myself in the past, I thought I knew what to expect when I was invited to attend Norwich Synchro's annual display and presentation in June. I was really impressed with the agility, skill, enthusiasm and sheer stamina exhibited by this talented group of young ladies.

As always County Colours and the County Championship awards for top girl and boy in each age group were presented at the Relay Gala at the Sportspark. This year the gala was held in July and the presentations took place on poolside enabling all the spectators to celebrate the swimmers' achievements, which I think worked well. I enjoyed hosting the reception and chatting to some of our past presidents.

The East Region Inter-County Competition returned to Norwich this year. A very strong Cambridgeshire team won the event but there were some creditable performances by the Norfolk squad.

Fair skies dawned on the morning of the East Region Open water held at Whitlingham and we all heaved a huge sigh of relief! From my officiating position on the pontoon or boat, I could just about identify our Norfolk swimmers. It was gratifying to see a good proportion of them qualify for the Nationals and a testament to the success of our open water programme.

In September the Bedfordshire Junior Inter County Gala was a new addition to our competition calendar, giving younger swimmers the chance to earn a county "cap." As well as the usual East Region counties, we competed against Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire.

In October I travelled with the team to Sheffield for the biggest event of the year, the ASA National Inter-County Team Championships. During the weekend I enjoyed a game of ten-pin bowling, meals shared with the team, the good company of our team manager, coaches and officials, more handshaking with numerous presidents and of course the highly charged atmosphere of this not-to-be-missed gala. Norfolk improved on their previous ranking for the second year running to come twelfth in Division Two. I must congratulate the swimmers both on the team's performance and the way they conducted themselves as ambassadors for our county.

Last weekend saw the County Conference with swimmers, officials and club members converging on Easton College to take part in various workshops and courses. I enjoyed the Team Manager 2 course, the motivational talk by two former GB Olympians and the strength and conditioning workshop. The next morning I was off to Newmarket for the East Region Inter County Seniors and Masters Competition. Expectation was high and I'm pleased to say we retained the trophy!

I have had a fabulous year and I would like to thank all the clubs, swimmers, officials, coaches and volunteers who have contributed so whole-heartedly to the County's successes and who have made my year as Norfolk ASA President an unforgettable experience. I hope that Jean enjoys her year of office as much as I have.

Karen Woodhouse