

Clubs

Short Histories of some County Clubs

All Clubs were invited to submit short histories for inclusion in this County History. Several Clubs took advantage of this opportunity and their submissions - with some editing are included below:-

[Avon and Somerset Constabulary Swimming Club](#)

[Bath Dolphin Swimming Club](#)

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Avon and Somerset Constabulary Swimming Club

The Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 introduced the idea of professional police forces. Prior to that law and order was upheld in a variety of ways, including unpaid watchman, parish constables, and justices of the peace. The Somerset novelist Henry Fielding created a group of men in London in 1750 who became known as the Bow Street Runners. Somerset Constabulary was created in 1856, following the County and Borough Police Act, which made it obligatory for counties to establish police forces. Until 1888 the Somerset Constabulary was under the control of Quarter Sessions. In 1889 the administrative functions were taken over by Somerset County Council, and a Standing Joint Committee was appointed.

Upon the formation of Somerset Amateur Swimming Association in 1902 there were three Constabularies or Police Forces operating across the county. Bath City Constabulary, formed in 1836; Bridgwater Borough Police Force, with the position of two paid constables approved in 1839 that amalgamated with Somerset Constabulary in 1940 following unsuccessful attempts to do so in 1856 and 1922; and, Somerset Constabulary, formed in 1856 with a force of 260 and headquarters in Taunton.

In 1967 Somerset Constabulary and Bath City Constabulary combined to form Somerset and Bath Constabulary, which in 1974 joined with Avon to become the present day Avon and Somerset Constabulary.

The earliest reference of the Police being affiliated to Somerset ASA is to be found in the County accounts for 1915. Bath Police were a fully paid up member of the Association, however there is reference to Police Officer in earlier County minutes as on 14th November 1914 tributes were recorded to swimmers PC Hillier who had been killed, PC Jacques who had lost a leg and PC Howells who had been invalided home from the Great War.

In March 1928 Somerset County Police presented a trophy to Somerset Amateur Swimming Association for the 100 yards Police Championships. The trophy is now retained by the club's current secretary but was previously awarded to Somerset County Police

Officers:

1928 [PC E. Buckley](#)

1929 "

1930 "

1931 PC C.G. Burrows

1932 PC76 H.A. Wheeler

1933 "

1934 "

1935 PC R. Kemp

1936 PC34 K. James

1937 PC76 H.A. Wheeler

1938 PC G. Leach

1939 PC339 F.C. Gwynne

1940-44 (No race)

1945 PC76 H.A. Wheeler

1946 PC339 F.C. Gwynne

1947 "

1948 "

1949 PS76 H.A. Wheeler

1950 "

1951 "

1952 "

1953 "

Life Saving competition is mentioned as early as 1949 in the Number 7 District Police Athletic Association Annual General Meeting minutes, the then Competition Secretary being Superintendent T. Beale of Plymouth City Police, supported by Detective Sergeant D. Overy of Somerset from 1953. This followed a loss of £2.18s.11d. incurred from the competition held in 1952. The District Life Saving Competition was staged in Police duty time from 1955 by the Royal Life Saving Society, confirmed in the report of the AGM held on 3rd February that year in Saunton. Life saving events were generally held at either Exeter or Bristol between August and September during these years.

The first mention of the formation of a Swimming and Water Polo Section of the Number 7 District Police Athletic Association (PAA) was at the Annual General Meeting held on 6th February 1968 chaired by Assistant Chief Constable of Devon and Cornwall J.

Waddell. Officers of the new section were appointed as:

Chief Superintendent Hardwell (Devon and Cornwall)

Superintendent Taylor (Somerset and Bath)

Chief Inspector Callaghan (Bristol)

Inspector Floyd (Devon and Cornwall)

Sergeant Fenyhough (Dorset and Bournemouth)

Inspector Floyd was also a member of the PAA General Committee. In 1969 it was proposed that the Number 6 Region Police Athletic Association should continue to enter a Water Polo team in the National PAA Competition, and in preparation for this a few preparatory matches should be arranged. Sadly the team were eliminated in the early stages of the competition. The previous year saw the Water Polo section expend entry fees of £3.3/0 and further competition expenses of £9.9/0.

During the early 1970's Inspector J. Morgan (Bristol) became an officer of the Swimming and Water Polo Section. The accounts for 1971 show that a Swimming Team was entered in the National PAA competition costing £8.

In 1980 [Eric Buckley](#), a swimmer and water polo player, who in 1928 had been the very first recipient of the Somerset ASA 100 yards Police Championship Trophy, became President of Weston Super Mare Swimming Club in that club's centenary year.

Inter-Divisional Swimming Championships were held during the later part of the 20th Century between Bristol North and Bristol South, enjoyed in particular by the club secretary during that time, Chief Superintendent Graham Cutting QPM, who also managed the Great Britain Swimming Team for a number of years until his retirement. He along with three other serving Police Officers have represented the aquatic community across Somerset as President of the Association:

1959 Superintendent C.S. Ford

1964 Chief Superintendent H.K. James

1977 Chief Superintendent G. Cutting QPM

2006 Detective Inspector B.G.W. Batley

Although the number of current club members is small, quality is retained throughout with in recent years:

Hannah Paull attending the World Masters Games during October 2009 at Sydney Aquatic Centre, Australia winning a gold medal in the 100m Butterfly, Silver in the 100m Freestyle and Bronze in the 50m Butterfly. Hannah has also won a number of national masters titles in record breaking times.

Kirstin Robertson (nee Thys) attending the World Police & Fire Games during February 2007 at the Adelaide Aquatic Centre, Australia winning 9 gold medals over 200/400/800m Freestyle, 200m Individual Medley, 100m Butterfly and as a member of the Great Britain Police 200m Freestyle and Medley Relay Teams.

Neil Hudghton swimming at the GB Masters Long Course Swimming Championships held in Cardiff during June 2009 where he took the national championship in the men's 40-44 years age group over 100m and 200m Breaststroke, setting a new British Record in the 200m event.

Ben Batley, Secretary of the [Avon and Somerset Constabulary Swimming Club](#) since 2003 and Somerset County Secretary since 2002, representing Great Britain as an International Technical Official (Starter) at the FINA World Short Course Championships held in Manchester in 2008 and Dubai in 2010.

Club members enter annually the Police Sport UK National Swimming Championships to qualify for selection to the Great Britain Police Swimming Team along with a number of open Masters events.

Bath Dolphin Swimming Club

The Club was started in 1899 and was a foundation member Club in the County Association formed in 1902. Its activities included swimming and water polo. A Ladies Club (section) was formed in 1901 which was self governing with its own Hon Secretary and Treasurer and other officers. Later they appointed their own Presidents.

The Club first swam in the Royal Baths and open-air Cleveland Baths until 1923 when new baths opened in Beau Street. In the 1970's the new Leisure Centre became the home of the Club.

In 1957 the mens and ladies clubs combined. The Club has strong links with Alkmaar Swimming Club in Holland which is 'twinned' with the City of Bath.

Bridgwater Amateur Swimming Club

The Club was formed in May 1894, its objectives being to encourage swimming by the organisation of races, the playing of water polo the practice of life saving drill and resuscitation of the apparently drowned. In July the Club kept its word and an exhibition took place at the open-air baths on a chilly evening. Two and four length heats and finals were followed by the Chairman of the Baths Committee diving from the spring board to swim a length of the pool in a 'picturesque' costume. Life saving and rescue were also demonstrated. The evening was completed to the rapture of the crowd, with Messrs Belsher and Simons giving a demonstration of ornamental' swimming.

Not to be out done in 1939 Miss Snelgrove gave an exhibition of fancy swimming - breaststroke, crawlstroke, propelling with hands, waltzing, spinning like a top, swimming like a duck, also like a waterwheel and with feet and hands tied. Was this the first demonstration of what became synchronised swimming? River swimming was also popular in the River Parrot - five miles from Dunball to the town. This is a Club with great traditions!

The Club lapsed in 1938 but was revived in 1948, its season being confined to June July and August, still in the open-air pool. The Club closed again in 1955 when the old pool made way for a new dual carriage way but reformed when the new Broadway Lido was opened in 1960. In 1975 for the first time in its history, the Club had access to an indoor pool at Burnham and finally in 1991 its members were able to swim in a 25 metre pool in Bridgwater.

Chard and District Swimming Club

The Club was formed in 1976 with the first training session being attended by 32 swimmers. The Club affiliated to Somerset ASA in the same year. In 1977 two of the Clubs swimmers took part in the County Age Group and Championship competitions for the first time. The club has now grown to more than 200 swimmers and training sessions are held in Chard, Axminster and Crewkerne.

Clevedon Amateur Swimming Club

The Club was formed in 1929 to promote swimming, to organise galas and to become responsible for organising the long sea swim which had previously been organised by Clevedon Aquatic Sports. The Club affiliated to Somerset ASA in the same year.

The swimming headquarters for the Club was the marine lake. Galas were held and a water polo team formed which played games against teams from Somerset and Bristol clubs. In time, the lake became unpopular with visiting clubs and in due course water polo was discontinued.

In the early 1950s, strenuous efforts were made by the Club to improve the lake in cooperation with the District Council. These measures included pumping the water out through sluices and clearing the mud to improve water conditions. An old wooden pavilion was demolished and replaced by a new pavilion with proper changing facilities which was opened in 1953.

The Club continued to organise the 'long swim', and to improve the spectacle for the general public - the race was swum from Church Hill to the Pier, the Ladies starting from the pump house and the swimmers wore numbered polo caps and commentary was broadcast over a tannoy system. The best view of the race is still from the pier itself. This tradition for sea swimming has continued and in recent times a Club member - Steve Price brought honour to the Club having swum the English Channel, swum from Clevedon to Penarth and back across the Bristol Channel and also swum across the Irish Sea.

The Club now has its headquarters at the indoor pool in the Strode Sports Centre at Clevedon and its strong membership enables it to take part in League Competition, County and District Age Group and Championships and to play a full part in the affairs of the County Association.

Frome Swimming Club

The Club was founded in 1877 initially as a men only club swimming in the River Frome. At a later stage it transferred to the Victoria Pool in town which was only open between April and September. At this stage the men trained on Tuesday evenings and when the Ladies section was formed they swam on Mondays. To join the Club — applicants had to be able to swim one length of Breaststroke, Backstroke and Crawl properly - the Club only became a teaching Club shortly before moving to the new pool in the Sports Centre in 1970.

The Club always had a strong Water Polo section which was successful in Bristol, County and District competitions. At the Sports

Centre the Club purchased window nets and goals so that this tradition could continue.

Now in its 125th year the Club has more than 450 members of which 275 are involved in graded teaching lessons and 80 are in the competitive squad. The club runs Life Saving classes and has qualified life guards to man the pool on Club nights. In addition adults support the club as swimming officials, poolside helpers, teachers coaches and committee members.

Keynsham Amateur Swimming Club

There are no records of the date, pre-the 1939 - 45 war in which the original Club was formed. Enthusiasts gathered together once the war was over and the Club was affiliated to the County in 1950. It was still a family affair, swimming in the 'pea soup' at the old Beau Street pool in Bath. Bath Ladies SC helped with important things like Club championships and great help was derived from a Helen Elkington Teachers Certificate course in 1968.

The Club prepared for the opening of new swimming pool in Keynsham with courses for the Club Instructors Certificate and a recruitment drive which had to be limited to the first 200 applicants. Training for competition gradually increased, Junior and Senior Squads introduced and the Club began to achieve honours at County and District level.

A water polo team was formed in 1984 which was very successful but sadly the high costs lead to closure in the early 1990's. A synchronised swimming group was also formed but after a few years this also closed due to cost and the shortage of teachers for this very specialised discipline in swimming. More recently a 'Masters' section has been formed to allow swimmers to continue to enjoy competitive swimming in to maturity.

The Club has survived all of these trials and tribulations to be a successful Club and looks to its future with confidence.

Portishead Swimming Club

The first record of the Club's existence was a newspaper report dated 23 August 1924. This reported a match organised by Portishead SC for '8 club members to swim from Battery Point to the Sugar Loaf beach, a distance of between 1½ and 1¾ miles'. From the beginning the Club operated from this beach on the Severn Estuary and the long swim was a regular event. In 1961 an open air pool and was used by the Club from April to September what ever the weather. It was not unusual to see the bathside

teacher in a wet suit or carrying a golfing umbrella.

When Backwell pool opened the Club swam there in the winter months but switched to Shirehampton pool, operating as a family club in which parents joined their children in the pool at the end of teaching sessions. This was a fruitful base to recruit volunteers.

In 1981 the Club was asked to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the open-air pool with a Junior Gala involving Pontypool, Bristol North, Backwell, Weston and Portishead. A Water Polo match between Weston and Bristol Central was also held which was won by Bristol Central.

In 1996 a new pool was opened at Parish Wharf and the Club have a three hour session every week throughout the year. With 150 members and a waiting list the Club continues to be a non-competitive club, its aim being to encourage swimmers to enjoy all facets of the sport.

Street and District Swimming Club

In March 1957 a meeting of more than 100 people decided to establish this new Club. A series of meetings were held with Mendip Council concerning the opportunity to hire the swimming pool. The Council was only willing for the Club to operate on one evening from 6.30pm but agreed to reduce the charge from £15 to £10 per hour to promote swimming. The first AGM was held on 14th May 1957 with Mr R Clark as President, Mr N Cook as Chairman and Mrs M.Miles- Hook as Hon Secretary. Mr Paddy Garratt was elected as Coach and Advisor. At the AGM in 1975 Mr B Harvey was elected Chief Coach.

Taunton Swimming Club

In 1883 a small committee was formed to organise swimming competitions at French Weir on the River Tone and this Committee became the foundation of Taunton Swimming Club. Swimming continued in the river with improved facilities such as a bathing station in 1894 and part of the river bed was concreted in 1896. The Club was a founder member of the County Association in 1902. Pollution became a problem in time and the Council responded by the provision of a new in-door pool at St. James Street in the centre of the town. To the credit of the builders and those who have worked for its preservation, the pool is still in use today.

The 1930s saw the Club develop successfully and great efforts were made to maintain this momentum during the war years 1939 to

1945. In 1946 the Club had 500 members paying fees of 5 shillings a week for adults and 2 shillings and sixpence for children.

Success was marked by Philip Penny swimming breaststroke for Great Britain in 1946.

In 1948 a Chief Coach, Alex Smith was appointed who organised training sessions and promoted courses for volunteers to qualify as teachers and coaches. The results in County and District events showed the benefit of the developments he introduced, two other members Janet Franklin and David Hembrow were selected to swim for England.

In 1976 a new 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ metre pool was opened but as a recreational pool it was not fully suitable for club use except when the St James Street pool was renovated after proposals to demolish it were defeated. In 1978 a Synchro section was formed but the Water Polo section was closed because rule changes for this game made the pool unsuitable.

In 1983 the Club celebrated its Centenary year with many events including a church service ,dance and dinner, as well as a swimmer, suitably protected from the water, swimming down the River Tone.

In 1986 a serious dispute in the Club concerned with the training schedule promoted by a part time professional coach lead to a split in members and a second Club being formed in the Town called Deane Dolphin. Both Clubs, existed side by side in the same pool and achieved considerable success in County and District competitions.

By 1996 it became clear that as with all swimming clubs the number of volunteers available to become teachers, coaches, officials and committee members together with the limitations on water time available for swimmers to train to their satisfaction became a factor in Taunton. Discussions between the Clubs which also involved Taunton Deane District Council and Taunton Leisure lead to a decision that the Clubs should merge, the coaching to be lead by an L A Swimming Development Office of Part Time Chief Club coach for a 'new' Club called Taunton Deane Swimming

The Club continues to thrive with swimming and synchro sections and looks to its future with confidence.

Yeovil and District Swimming Club

The year in which a swimming Club was formed in Yeovil is uncertain. From County records it is known that the Water Polo club was a member of the County Water Polo Association in 1901 as its team was drawn against Weston super Mare in the Junior Championship in that year. However Mr AJ Wright was elected to the County Executive in 1904.

The first record of Yeovil Ladies Club being affiliated to the County is at the County AGM in 1920 when this Club was shown to have paid the affiliation fee of 12 shillings and 6 pence. In 1974 the inaugural meeting of Yeovil and District Swimming Club was held at which the men's and ladies' Clubs became one.

On 13th October 1962 the Club celebrated the opening of the new pool with a Grand Gala involving an Inter County swimming contest, the Somerset county Diving Championships and a Junior Inter County Water Polo competition between Somerset and Dorset.



**The focus of Club swimming in 1906
Water Polo - Weston super Mare team
with a swimming legend as captain - Paul Radmilovic**

[Top](#)

<http://www.somersetasa.org/sasa/en/about-us/History/Clubs?pdfview=1>