

## A Short History of 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	1939	PC339 F.C. Gwynne
1929	"	1940-44	(No race)
1930	"	1945	PC76 H.A. Wheeler
1931	PC C.G. Burrows	1946	PC339 F.C. Gwynne
1932	PC76 H.A. Wheeler	1947	"
1933	"	1948	"
1934	"	1949	PS76 H.A. Wheeler
1935	PC R. Kemp	1950	"
1936	PC34 K. James	1951	"
1937	PC76 H.A. Wheeler	1952	"
1938	PC G. Leach	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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 Police 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.