



SURREY COUNTY ASA

1891-2019

Jim Boucher – Honorary Life Vice-President

Jim Boucher has his fingers in more aquatic pies than most in Surrey. While the majority of his counterparts tend to pursue just one discipline, the same cannot be said for the well-versed Irishman whose life-long passion for all things water boasts the many facets of swimming.

In the same way that Surrey borders with two Swim England regions – London and the South East – so do Jim’s club affiliations. When he is not competing as a master under Guildford City or for King’s Cormorants, swimming in the great outdoors of Mother Earth’s open water, or organising and running meets in or out of the county, you might find him administrating for Guildford Water Polo Club where he is club secretary, coaches and sometimes plays.

Having moved to leafy Surrey nearly twenty years ago, he later joined Surrey County Water Polo & Swimming Association (SCWP&SA) – initially as a representative for masters. Established in 1891, SCWP&SA was the historical amateur body overseeing aquatics in the county.

Fast-forward a few years and in the wake of regionalisation, Surrey went through a conundrum getting to grips with its new ‘split’ status. Tempers frayed in many quarters as emotions ran high and opinion was divided on a cohesive way forward.

But Jim together with others at the time took a pragmatic approach, playing an important part in the dialogue and process which ultimately led to SCWP&SA merging with the then relatively new kid on the block: Surrey ASA.



Joan Swain, then president of SCWP&SA, who had worked with him in helping to consolidate the administrations, said: “Jim has certainly contributed to the county through committee work, instigating the water polo team and running the electronics at Surrey and school meets. He is a very jolly guy, always willing to help out.”

In 2005 he took up the mantle of Surrey Masters Championships organiser, a role he has championed single-handedly since. Luminaries such as John Harrison, Jane Asher and Mike Hodgson are among the regulars off the starting blocks at Surrey Sports Park.

“Jim is passionate about everything he does,” says Hodgson, himself a multiple record-holder. “Whether that is for masters swimming locally, nationally or internationally, as a competitor or holding an official position. Even in his day job, I have discussed his space project with him a number of times and been to see his lab.”

The two of them first met at the county masters about a decade ago. “I had just started in masters swimming, having had 20 years out of the pool,” said Mike. “Surrey masters have gone on to win many world, European and British medals. We now have a number of world record-holders.”

In 2016 Jim was nominated for the Cherriman Award – an annual accolade recognising the efforts of masters the length and breadth of the country. He was later “highly



SURREY COUNTY ASA

1891-2019

commended” by the awarding panel for his volunteering, encouragement and dedication to the sport.

Michael Holden, Surrey County ASA’s incoming president, described him as “a stalwart” of county masters. “Without him I very much doubt that the masters’ championships would take place at all,” he said. “He is a very affable and reliable guy, always willing to give up his time and energy for the wider good of the swimming community. I am incredibly impressed by his open water swimming endeavours.”

Vociferous, proud, competitive and resolute to the nth degree are probably a nod to his Irish roots. “We’re an argumentative lot where I come from and not prone to accepting the status quo,” he told in an interview with Swim England last year.

“Jim’s contribution has been major,” says swimming referee Diane Gamble. “He oversaw open water for a few years and dabbles in the cold water swimming world. But mostly he has brought water polo back to rural Surrey with his efforts at Guildford, starting by opening up training for the juniors and then to getting a club up and running. He has kept the Surrey Masters Championships going for many years”.

“Jim has been around swimming as far back as I can remember,” recalls Woking SC’s Julie Burvill. “Over the years he has always been highly committed to swimming – not just competitive swimming but masters swimming and water polo.”

She added: “He was very supportive when I was a parent new to swimming and volunteering, and often used to mentor me while I learned the non-tech ropes. He is well liked and respected, knowledgeable with a good sense of humour, warm and incredibly active on the swimming front.”



Predominantly a short-distance breastroker as a youngster growing up in Ulster in the Seventies, he revisited swimming for a short stint in the 80s before returning to masters, in London, in the Nineties. He has several Northern Ireland masters records to boot, one which he claimed on the third attempt.

Add to that his open water escapades which include a 25km swim across a Greek gulf in 2014, two solo and a string of relay English Channel crossings – one in 2011 with the late Phil Sears – and he has clocked up more miles than a vintage DeLorean.

Carole Chaplin, of Surrey Schools’ Swimming Association, said he was “highly motivated”, adding: “I think he is very involved with swimming activities, especially with masters swimming and also with his commitment to youth water polo in the county. He has a great sense of humour and often speaks his mind. He has operated the electronics for our galas on many occasions.”

A county president for two consecutive years and secretary for three, he is currently treasurer. He has also served on the South East Region management board as well as its finance sub-group. Last year he was appointed as the Swim England representative to the Home Countries Swimming Management Group.

Jim the competitor, the meet organiser, coach and administrator – the consummate all-rounder! – we offer you our warmest congratulations on this your county award.