

Surrey Masters Swimmers bring competitive swimming back to Guildford Lido

In days of yore, Guildford and other Lidos up and down the country have provided the venues for competitive swimming in Britain. With the advent of the new-fangled indoor pools, competitive swimming also moved indoors leaving the Lidos of Britain as a series of quaint pools, but not entirely sure of their future in days of diminishing budgets, encroaching health and safety, and facing a range of competing activities for the municipal exchequer.



76 years young and Guildford Lido is still considered one of the most beautiful Lidos in the land. Few can match the size of the pool with its landscaped surroundings. And this week saw the fury of competition restored to it as the Guildford Lido Legends hosted their inaugural outdoor relay event.

The “Guildford Lido Legends” is a group of “Masters”, that is “adult” or “veteran”, swimmers from Guildford, Godalming and surrounding areas who came together in 2005 for one of the fastest English Channel relay swims in the last 5 years. Since then they have continued to swim open water races and undertake challenging open water solo and relay swims, but the common

thread is their association with the Guildford Lido. The visionary approach of the Lido Management has ensured that even on days when all and sundry are cooling off in the pool there is adequate provision for lane swimming in the evenings or on Wednesday morning. And the Lido Legends are in there training most days.

Sunday 14th June saw an invitational Surrey Masters relay evening take place as what is hoped to be the first of a number of events that make use of this magnificent 10-lane, Olympic-sized, 50m pool. Swimmers from Dorking, Godalming, Croydon Amphibians, Kings Cormorants (Wimbledon), Guildford, Haslemere and South London (Tooting Bec Lido) Swimming Clubs took part in three relay events followed by a barbecue.

This gathering of Surrey swimmers combined quality with quantity. The 50 swimmers present included one multi World Record Holder, a European Champion, three World Masters’ Games Champions, seven English Channel Relay swimmers and two solo conquerors of the Channel. Many of the swimmers hadn’t swum at the Lido and all were particularly complimentary about the pool, its surroundings and most importantly the fact that, being heated to 25C, it is just as warm as any indoor pool. At precisely 50m long it offers swimmers a chance to set “long-course” times.



For the record, the events and results were:

Event 1: 16 x 50m Freestyle (Team of 4). 1st Dorking A, 2nd Guildford B, 3rd South London A

Event 2: 4 x 50m Medley. 1st Guildford B, 2nd Dorking A, 3rd South London A

Event 3 saw all swimmers drawn into 5 teams of 8, with the winning order being teams 1, 4, 3.



Legends’ organiser Jim Boucher said he was “delighted with the turnout and the fantastic atmosphere that the event generated. This wonderful pool is crying out for some competitive events and I am sure that the potential for wider participation is there to be tapped. I’d love to take credit for organising the fine weather too, but I think the spirits of yesteryear were smiling upon us today!”