

## Hampshire and The Channel Islands

### Masters Report 2023/2024

The 23/24 season has seen unprecedented success from the Hampshire and Channel Islands Masters swimmers, the apex being the Inter-County Championship success in November 23, defending both our Regional title and for the first time in seven years, achieving the coveted [National Swim England Title](#) over regular rivals Warwickshire and 2022 winners Devon. Much of this success came from our combined relay strength, a testament to the quality of both training and coaching across the County/Islands/Armed Forces...especially when pool time proves increasingly difficult to obtain for the discipline, and leisure centres hiking up their hire prices.

On this subject, I am delighted that the Hampshire Committee agreed to a two-day County Masters event in 2024 – appreciate getting officials / judges / volunteers, combined with securing pools for the afternoons is challenging, but the athletes do really appreciate it. Our first day will be 11<sup>th</sup> May 24 at the Aquadrome in Basingstoke (which will offer long distance races for the first time – 800m and 400m events), with the 22<sup>nd</sup> June at Hart Leisure Centre being our traditional County Meet slot. Given the attention our County now receives from across the Masters Swimming Community, it does make sense that we offer a broad range of events to allow swimmers to clock required Regional and National times, again, with other neighbouring Counties now struggling to book multiple weekends. We will of course keep our Championships provincial first and foremost, but in the future, may look for support in opening up the events to our nearest neighbours in support – in return, ensuring a solid profit.

Concerning income, I believe Masters was the only discipline to make money over the 2023 period, something I am keen to maintain. Whilst we are being ambitious with our two-day County events, such is the drive within the Community to participate at entry-level events, I do believe we can continue to make a strong profit – driven in part by the fact that qualifying times for Regionals and Nationals are only getting steeper, and not every Masters swimmer can commit to a full three-day weekend away in Scotland, Wales or Northern England! In connection, it remains a slight frustration (as I know to be the case across all aquatics disciplines) that pool hire within our County is limited...Mountbatten Centre, Portsmouth waning on its electronic equipment and WiFi, Winchester Leisure Centre protective of their weekends (and demanding ludicrous costs) and The Quays in Southampton in desperate need of renovation. Whilst Basingstoke and Hart have stepped up, poolside space and seating for athletes / spectators remains an issue, and location not ideal for Channel Island representatives – and let's be honest, we should also be looking at a Long Course Hampshire Masters event in the near future (again, limited options!)

At a Club Level, credit must be given to Basingstoke Bluefins and their phenomenal success at the [World Masters Championships in Doha](#) back in February 24 – Fleur Turner (45-49yrs) claiming her first World Title and their formidable Relay Teams noting up several more podium places. Chris Jones (40-44yrs) of Portsmouth Northsea replicating Turner's achievements over his favoured 100m Breaststroke event...as well as success in 2023's mirrored [Championships hosted in Kyushu](#), Japan (everything still a little out of kilter post COVID!) There was also a healthy contingent of Hampshire Masters at the inaugural [European Short Course Championships](#) in Madeira, Portugal – Winchester's Cathy Munro (55-59yrs) a multiple medallist, together with Alistair Garmendia (40-44yrs) of Wildern Waves.

To finish, the annual British Masters Championships have just come to an end in Swansea – and not only did Basingstoke Bluefins again dominant across the Relays with more British, European and World Records, stalwart Jo Corben (50-54yrs) finally claimed the World Record for the Age-Division over the 200m Backstroke...in her final year before moving up! More challenges for World titles across the County to come in 2024/2025 I'm sure.

**James MacTavish**

**Hampshire/Channel Islands/Armed Forces Masters + City of Southampton SC.**