

THE  
HISTORY  
OF  
BECKENHAM  
SWIMMING CLUB.



(Affiliated to S.C.A.S.A., K.C.A.S.A & R.L.S.S.)  
Founder : Raymond V. Brown - 1893.



BY  
Prof. J. M. Cameron, Past-President.



*Beckenham, 1993.*

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*Published in 1993 by Brooklyn Press.  
for Beckenham Swimming Club.*

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*FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION ONLY*

To  
*The President,  
Past Presidents and Members*  
of  
**BECKENHAM SWIMMING CLUB.**

*This volume is respectfully dedicated.*

*The best thing we get from History is the enthusiasm  
it arouses \_\_\_\_\_ GOETHE.*

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*"And He shall spread forth His hands in the midst of them, as he that swimmeth spreadeth forth his hands to swim. " -----Isaiah, 25.11.*

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## INTRODUCTION.

"He is ignorant indeed who knows neither how to read nor to swim." ---- Old Roman Proverb.

It is with great pleasure that I give you the History of the Beckenham Swimming Clubs. A cursory study of the histories of Clubs, Districts, etc., shows that they are written for very different purposes and from very different standpoints. Some are scarcely more than a precis of Club or District minutes - possessing, it is true, the advantage of legibility, but lacking the character inherent in the original handwriting of the past. Others are mere records of names and honours which reveal to future generations no more of the spirit and character of a Club or District than a list of headmasters/headmistresses might mean to a new boy/girl seeking to understand the tradition of the school he/she has entered. The writer is going to attempt the ambitious task of introducing both the informed and the uninitiated to the first century of Beckenham Swimming Club. Although by no means comprehensive, it is hoped that the text will not offend nor detract from the writer's intended interpretation.

The first known book on Swimming appears to have been written in 1528, by one Nicolas Winmann, a Professor of Languages, at the University of Ingolstadt, in Bavaria (Herbert, 1932). One of the translators of this rare book, written in old Latin, strikes a very human note in his concluding remarks: "However much things have altered in three and a half centuries, one custom at least remains the same. Having given Erotes his swimming lesson, Pampirus asks his young friend to accompany him home, in order that they may get an 'inward wet'. In other words, "have a drink"! Wisdom in excelsis! This sounds like the "old" Beckenham SC.

Sea and river swimming were popular activities with groups of young men and boys for most of the nineteenth century, particularly during the 1860's, during the summer months when it became a popular recreation through the availability of cheap excursions to sea-side resorts. To begin with swimming was a simple recreational activity with no formal competitive events. It was as popular then, as it is today, because no specialist equipment was required and it was relatively free from financial restraint. In addition it was, and is, an extremely refreshing experience to swim in a clear river with a sandy bed, or in the sea on a hot summer's day. By the third quarter of the nineteenth century various local groups of swimmers had gathered together and formalised their activities by establishing Clubs either by district, religious groups, or sporting activities. Historical records on swimming in Beckenham are hazy, particularly as to the exact date of the founding of Beckenham SC.

This History, of the first hundred years of the Beckenham Swimming Club, will attempt to tell the story of the Club against the background of our times. One of the most important features of a "village" such as Beckenham is its own history. In the Domesday Book, the the name appears as "Bacheham", and in Textus Roffensis - a collection of ancient charters, compiled by Bishop Ernulphus - it is "Becceham", or the 'town of beeches'. Bacheham was once held by a Saxon, Ansgotus, under Odo, the Bishop of Bayeux (Wagstaff and Pullen, 1984). Suffice it to say, the village population by the Census Year, 1891, was 29,707. Prior to 1864 there was only one church in the village, the Parish Church of St George, and whilst a number of other churches were built subsequently, it was not until 1891 that the first Roman Catholic Church (now

demolished) was built in Overbury Avenue.

Two hundred and fifty years after the birth of Issac Newton, Beckenham Swimming Club was established, in 1893, according to all the available records, and Raymond V. Brown was its accredited Founder. Unfortunately the Minute Books up to 1913 are not available, having been destroyed during the "Blitz", in the Second World War, however, the Handicap Book does go back to 1900, and it is known that the Club was affiliated to the Southern Counties as from January 1st., 1900, having been proposed by H. Benjamin and seconded by G.W.E. Bull. In the "Beckenham Journal" of 22nd., April, 1893, there is a report of a meeting of the Beckenham YMCA, Gymnastic Club, when, in the interval, Mr. Raymond V. Brown, the Honorary General Secretary, announced that a Swimming Club was about to be formed and that the party would be instructed by Sergt. J. Parker, of Abbey School, at the South Norwood Baths. A caustic Editorial in the same issue noted that the announcement had been made at the same time as the Local Board had allowed the Baths movement gently slide. Another early member of the Club, Mr. T.W. Thornton, and Editor of the "Journal" went on to record that the members of "the Club will either have to ride or walk to South Norwood and make use of the Baths provided by a neighbouring authority". A fortnight later Raymond Brown and Edwin Kick wrote a letter to the "Journal" urging a petition to the Local Board in favour of Public Baths, and intimated that about 40 young men had joined the Swimming Club.

Any Club that can flourish for a Century, must have been well served by its officers and Beckenham Swimming Club (BSC) is no exception. Fixtures and events do not just happen. People have to devote time, talent and energy to such an achievement; one must offer appreciation to anyone who has contributed in any part to the well-being of the Club. It does no-one any harm to reflect on the endeavours and tribulations of one's forebears and to consider the radical changes that the Sport has undergone, particularly in recent years.

The events recorded in this History, are not only those shown in the Minute Books, but also some items of interest which have come to the knowledge of the writer and which may be impossible for a future historian to "dig out" from numerous papers, files etc., which have accumulated over the years. While it has taken months of reading, writing, rewriting, and two-finger typing on a computer, it has been a labour of love, even when the computer programme aborted, which it did on several occasions. One is reminded of an old saying, that "he who writes for perpetuity, must not write in haste", and when one volunteered to compile the History the magnitude of the task involved, and the time it would take had not been appreciated.

The writer is greatly indebted to Kate Bridges (née Stedman), Margery Coffin, Ena Jewry (née Compton), Joan Paine (née Wright), Olive Hale (née Fell), and Eileen Toms (BLSC); the late Douglas Gray & Norman Beadle, together with Eric Stratton, George Goldfinch, Reg. Mardon, "Bobbie" Hale, "Bill" Rushton, Bob Beasley and Derek Camp in particular, (BSC) for all their help and encouragement, and to Joan Paine for allowing the writer to quote liberally from her previous research and for showing ever so tactfully (!) the errors or omissions he had made, or was about to make. To Eileen Toms, one is further indebted for reading and re-reading the drafts of the text. The writer gratefully acknowledges the photographic expertise of Mr. Raymond F. Ruddick for the illustration; for assistance from the Local Studies Depts., of Beckenham & Bromley public libraries and to Mr. John Taylor of Brooklyn Press for his forbearance, understanding, and techni-

cal assistance in the production.

One's gratitude is given to all those who helped in the background, the list of which is too long to print here, and finally to my wife, Prim, the current Honorary General Secretary of BSC, for her patience and understanding at all times; to my daughter, Maureen, for encouraging and helping me when there was a computer problem.

The writer trusts that this History will prove of interest, not only to the present members, but to those who come after us, and my earnest hope is that if this mere "History" can help the Club go from strength to strength and, with the passing years, lose none of the lustre given to it by its founders and early members, my labour will not have been in vain.

Long may Beckenham Swimming Club prosper.

April, 1993.



## CHAPTER 1.

### *The Early Years. (1893-1920)*

"those who wish to learn the art (of swimming) to keep some frogs in a tub of water constantly beside them, and to imitate their motions." Encyclopaedia Britannica (1771 Edition)

Until 1859, swimming in London Baths was exclusively for men, and it was not until 1899, that the ASA settled the vexed question of a swimming costume for women, nor was it until 1901, that a Ladies Championship was allowed to be held in public. The first Gala to which women were even admitted took place at Lambeth Baths on 4th., November, 1861, and was organised by the Ilex Swimming Club. All this thirty two years before the formation of Beckenham Swimming Club.

As members became increasingly proficient, they began to organise swimming and diving competitions. In the best tradition of Victorian philanthropy, prizes (trophies or medals, never money) were paid for by local businessmen or the Club's generous patrons. A variety of other activities were also introduced to sustain interest and enthusiasm. These included diving for objects; plunging for distance; ornamental (synchronised) swimming, together with mock drownings and life-saving/rescue displays.

In the mid-1860's, Clubs had begun to organise "All Comers" events to encourage contact between "racers" from other Clubs and within the next decade, open races were very popular with the best Club swimmers. River swimming lost much of its appeal in the last quarter of the last century due to the fact that with industrial expansion, most good river bank sites were acquired by a variety of industrial companies and its associated pollution.

During the early seventies attempts were made in England by various Clubs to arrange some kind of ball game in the water and a game termed "water base-ball" was created where the sides consisted of no more than three players. By 1876, one or two south coast Clubs started to play a game called "aquatic hand-ball" but compared to the modern game these initial contests were simple rough and tough scrambles from one end of the bath to the other. Enthusiasts recognised that the game had potential and if properly developed would provide a useful addition to Club activities and entertainments. Further changes included the introduction of goal posts, similar to those in football, and standing on the pool bottom became an offence. By 1883, a few Clubs in England began to play a crude style of Water Polo but progress was restricted as each club had made up rules of its own - uniformity not being achieved until 1885 when the "Swimming Association of Great Britain" produced and circulated an agreed set of rules. Water polo was popular, since it shared many of the qualities found in Association Football and required little equipment, and, could be learned easily by the average swimmer. In addition, it was a useful supplement to racing, by improving both speed and stamina apart from becoming increasingly popular with spectators due to it being exciting to watch, and even today, easy to comprehend. The warm, comfortable (?), atmosphere of a swimming pool was particularly conducive to sustained spectator interest.

The set of aquatic activities which emerged by the 1890's formed the basis for all

Club swimming programmes up till the start of the Second World War. The main features, which had evolved to meet the tastes of both swimmers and spectators, consisted of Inter-Club events, one or two open contests, a display of 'scientific swimming', a novelty item and a game of Water Polo. Beckenham SC issued fixture cards and an annual swimming season was established beginning in April and continuing until early October. Although swimming was the principal activity of the majority of members, Beckenham SC was also the focal point for numerous other pastimes. Dances, dinners, smoking concerts and conversaciones were popular during the winter months. They were a useful way of raising money and they also provided opportunities for conviviality outside the home or the workplace. Organised rambles were also popular because they allowed members to spend relatively long periods of time together at weekends and holidays, taking part in a variety of sporting, intellectual and social events.

Until the 1850's, Beckenham had been a village or small town surrounded by farmland; open countryside stood between Beckenham and Bromley, Beckenham and Penge, and other neighbouring towns. In 1857, the railway came to Beckenham and some thirty years later "city gentlemen" and their families were beginning to settle in the area. During the 1880's, cornfields were being marked out into building plots, and on these plots, villa-type residencies were built. As these more affluent families settled, opportunities for trade increased, and the High Street expanded as business grew. The men who owned and developed the local shops and services were obviously versatile and energetic citizens for their names appear in reports in "The Beckenham Journal" in many different capacities - as local businessmen and tradesmen, as members or officers of local organisations of all kinds, and as members of Beckenham Swimming Club (Paine, 1984). T.W.Thornton, of the stationers and book shop at the bottom of Church Hill, (still trading under the same name today) was one such person; whose row of shops formed "Thornton's Corner" in Beckenham High Street/Church Hill. He was born in 1857, when the railway first came to Beckenham ! As a youth, it was reported (Blake,1985), that he started out each morning in all weathers to walk to the Beckenham stationers, where in those days he was but the junior. The return trek to Upper Norwood took up most of his evenings, which was "an example to today's youth", the papers said on his death in 1933. Young Thornton, having acquired the stationers and expanded into other trades, including travel and shipping agencies, was used in the 1920's, by BSC to arrange the hire of "charabancs", ( an open, wooden-benched coach of the 1920's, which were replaced in the 1930's by luxury motor coaches, but still called by the same name), in order to travel to River races. He was a great public worker and through his weekly newspaper, "The Beckenham Journal", of which he was the proprietor in 1881 (the "Journal" having been founded some five years earlier), he brought to the notice of the local inhabitants issues of the day. His youngest son, Victor, who worked for his father in the business, was a great amateur actor and comedian apart from being a water-polo player ! Victor's daughter, Valerie, became a well known swimmer with "The Ladies" in the 1960's, (and was a member of the Club; as was her son, Victor's grandson, Mark Sheldon, who became a Junior Internationalist whilst in the new amalgamated Club).

In spite of the building development, the area was still largely rural, and the "Journal" of the early 1890's carried weekly farming advertisements, and a Mr.W.A.Padbury, a well-known blacksmith and farrier, also as a coach-builder, advertised for "a kitchen

gardener to manage all outside work, wife to attend poultry, 20 shillings per week, house, wood and vegetables" at Langley Park Gardens (Paine, 1984). This same Mr. Padbury was an early Club member, later a Vice-President, and at least four of his sons became Club members. The eldest, Percy, became an outstanding swimmer and water-polo player, as did his brother, Harold.

As has been written above, Beckenham Swimming Club was founded in 1893; and in the "Beckenham Journal" of 22nd. April, 1893, there is a report of a meeting of the Beckenham YMCA, Gymnastic Club, where, in the interval, Mr. Raymond V. Brown, the Honorary Secretary, announced that a Swimming Club was about to be formed and that the party would be instructed by Sergt. J. Parker, of Abbey School, at the South Norwood Baths. The members of the new Club continued to ride or walk to South Norwood to make use of the Baths for seven years until the Beckenham Baths were opened in 1901. Very few in those days had private transport, and it is unlikely that these young men did; yet thirty to forty swimmers were present each Thursday evening, in spite of their long working hours. Obviously at that time, there was no early morning swimming organised! Such indoor swimming was only available, in those days, from April to the end of September, as all Public Baths were emptied, boarded over, and let out as Public Halls during the winter for dances, whist drives and such things. For several years before the foundation of the Swimming Club, heavy pressure had been put upon the Local Board to build Public Baths at Beckenham.

The "Journal", with Mr. Thornton at the helm and Mr. Raymond V. Brown (the Founder of BSC), who was the General Secretary of the Young Mens' Christian Association, frequently wrote in the Correspondence Section, pointing out that the increase in the population was causing an increased demand for such amenities. This lack was made even more ironical by the fact that Bromley had its own Swimming and Slipper Baths on the site now occupied by the Churchill Theatre/Central Library complex. However, despite all efforts, the water continually leaked out leaving it empty! Bromley Council abandoned the Baths and eventually built the Central Library on the site, using the old Baths beneath as Archives!

During the latter part of the last century, the Beckenham YMCA had provided for the spiritual and sporting interest of its members, and well before the end of the century, the work was directed by Raymond Brown and other workers from Christ Church, Beckenham, and Mr. Brown also appears to have established a Cricket Club and a Football Club as well as the Swimming Club, which later became known as the Beckenham Swimming Club (Holman et al., 1987). The sporting fraternity of Beckenham, and especially Beckenham SC, has much to owe the Men's Institute of Christ Church, Beckenham, in general, and Raymond Brown in particular. The history of Christ Church, Beckenham, began in 1873, when a temporary iron Church was built in The Avenue, Beckenham, to relieve pressure on the accommodation offered by the Parish Church. The foundation stones for the Church in Fairfield Road were laid in 1875, and the Church consecrated the following year. The Church was severely damaged by a flying bomb in 1944 and, after re-building, was re-hallowed in 1950.

Among the early members, the writer has found the following names, apart from Raymond Brown, Robert Barrowman, T.W. Thornton and his son Victor, namely; George Harber, Beckenham's first goal keeper; Harry Grant, a former captain; Edwin Crease, and his sons, Jack and Gilbert Crease; Percy Curtis; Francis Hooper; Ernest Lawrence; Rev. John Rooker, vicar of Christ Church; Stanley Cross; Anthony Terry;

Dr.R.M.H.Randell; Dr.E.W.Roper; Charles Watts; Fred.King; Percy Padbury and his bothers, Jim and Harold; Harry Lovelock; and the brothers Grewcock. The first Annual Competition was held on 24th.,June,1893, at South Norwood Baths when the programme consisted of a 4 length swim for swimmers and a 2 length swim for that year's novices. It was reported in the "Journal" that R.Moore and G.Rogers competed in the former; whilst F.A.Terry, W.Horner and F.Rogers finished first, second and third, respectively, in the latter. Prizes were presented by Mr.Francis Hooper, who was reputed to have said that "The most correct form of swimming resembled very closely the movement of a frog, but the first thing necessary was confidence in the fact that water would support the body". The report of a Water Polo match drew the Editorial comment of, "Oh, that we might hear of Water Polo in Beckenham !" - "Et tu, Brute" Colin Kirkwood !!

The Clubs' first President was Cllr.John J.Wilks,and he together with Cllr.Francis Hooper, and founder-Secretary, Raymond Brown, kept continuous pressure on the Local Board, which in 1895 became the Urban District Council. The Beckenham Baths were officially opened on 20th.,April,1901 (see Fig.1). The use of the plural is deliberate as two baths were built - one covered (First Class Bath) which is now known as No1 Pool, and one open air bath (Second Class Bath), later to be covered, and which is known as No2 Pool.



Fig. 1 (A), A Composite photograph of the original Beckenham Road Baths, 1901 (Elevation to Beckenham Road)



Fig. 1, (B), The First Class Bath, note the reflection across the water



Fig. 1, (C), Beckenham Indoor Pool



Fig. 1, (C), Beckenham Outdoor Pool

Fig. 1, (C), T. C. Cole, J.P., R. M. H. Randell, M.D.  
R. Borrowman, W. H. Lendon

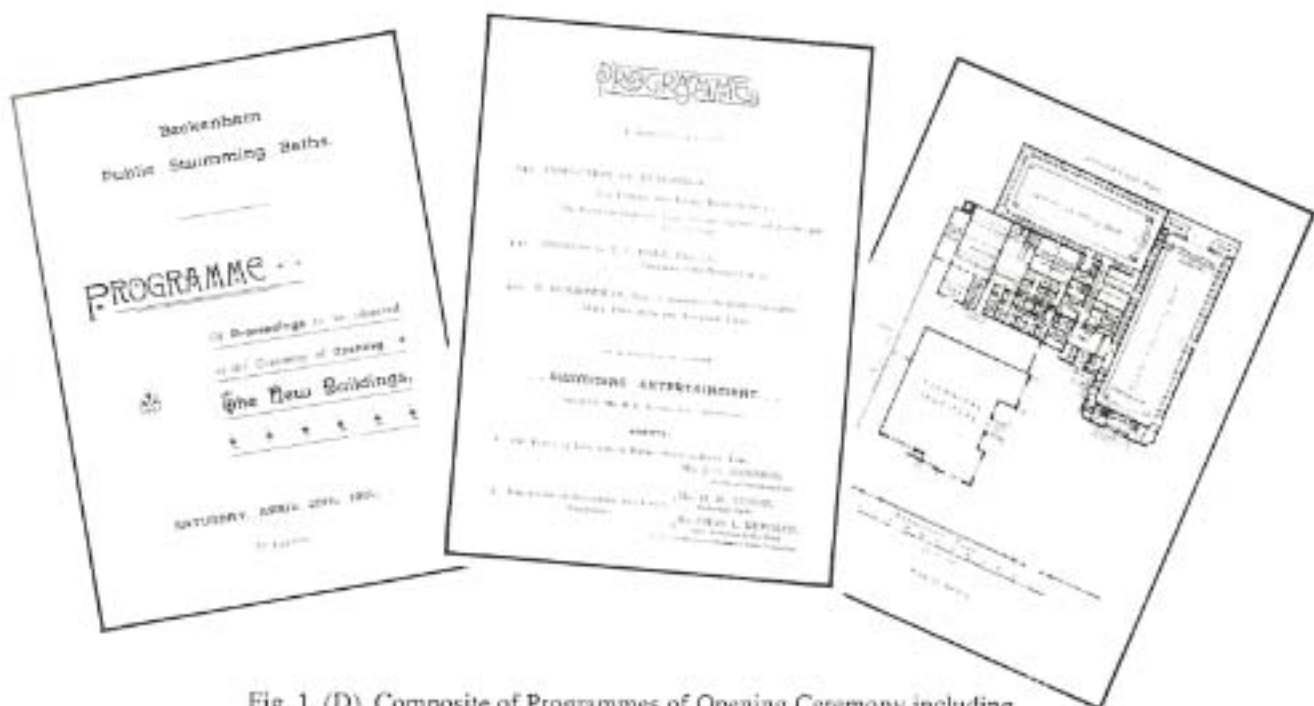


Fig. 1, (D), Composite of Programmes of Opening Ceremony including original plan of building.

No foundation stone for the Baths was laid, but on 25th., July, 1899, a joint foundation stone for both the Technical Institute and the Baths building, was laid by U.D.C. Chairman, Cllr. Willis, and can be seen at the base of the Institute building. The covered pool was 100ft. by 30ft. with a maximum depth of 6ft. 9ins. - remember this was long before the use of the metric system! Dressing accommodation as in all pools in those days, and in many until post-Second World War days, was in "boxes", or cubicles, around the side of the bath - 41 in all, and there were 2 anterooms at the deep end for the use of school children, clubs or (in winter) "artistes". Deep boring at the site of the Baths discovered artesian water and much of the water used to fill the pools was from this source, supplemented by water purchased from the Lambeth Water Company - all private enterprise in those days! The official opening in the afternoon of 20th., April, 1901, was performed by T.C. Cole, Esq., another early member of the Club, who was Chairman of the Urban District Council. Robert Barrowman, Esq., Chairman of the Baths Committee, made the first dive and swam two lengths, to "hearty cheers" ran the local newspaper report. Also in this race for members of BUDC were Drs. R.M.H. Randell and E.R. St. C. Corbin, the former for many years being a Vice-President of Beckenham SC. A short entertainment was arranged by Mr. T.C. Cole, in conjunction with, Harold R. Austin, the Superintendent of the new Baths, who took part in, and was assisted by Beckenham Baths Swimming Club and Beckenham Swimming Club to a full house. The list of names of members of Beckenham Urban District Council from 1901-1902 shows that the Vice-Chairman, Dr. R.M.H. Randell, the Baths Committee Chairman, its Vice-Chairman, and at least two Council members belonged to Beckenham SC. One of the Council members was a Mr. James Crease, who owned a Greengrocery shop in the High Street and other members of his family were to play prominent parts in the administration and activities of the Club in years to come. This close relationship with the Urban District Council, later the Borough Council of Beckenham, was one which was to endure for many years and it was a very special one too, for few Clubs can have enjoyed so much encouragement, aid and comfort from their Local Councils as did Beckenham SC and Beckenham Ladies' SC from 1901 until 1965 when Beckenham became part of the London Borough of Bromley. There were other Clubs for the new Council to consider and no longer were we "the only pebbles on the beach". Special consideration like reduced bath hire fees ceased, inflation hit us all; things have never been quite the same since, but the London Borough of Bromley adopted many of the policies of the old Borough of Beckenham regarding swimming matters - for instance swimming scholarships and Borough recognition of outstanding swimmers - and for this we are grateful.

As has been said, the Minutes of the early days of Beckenham SC were destroyed by bombs in World War II, the earliest to survive being those beginning on Friday, 4th., April, 1913. The only record available was an Annual Account for 1896! (see Fig. 2) With some luck and good fortune, one has been able to collate some early history of Beckenham SC., which was principally Water Polo-playing orientated, with minimal "speed" swimming, that is to say, the Club was Water Polo dominated. The Club was granted exclusive use of the Bath for one hour, on Monday evenings, after closing time, ie. 9pm-10pm at a charge of ten shillings per night, with an extra five shillings for every fifteen minutes in excess of this one hour.

Fig. 2.

<i>Swimming Club.</i>			<i>Balance Sheet. 1896</i>		
<i>To</i> Members Subscriptions	2	114	<i>By</i> Club Balance	1	16
<i>•</i> Sale of Club Colours	1	11	Prizes	3	2 6
<i>Special prize for best of year.</i>		10	Printing etc		11 6
Entrance fees	1		<i>Gratuity to Cantalator</i>		5
	5	8		5	8

A Copy of the Annual Accounts of the Club in 1896. Not dissimilar of that today!

Fig. 3.

Some of the Earliest Programmes of the Period, following the opening of the Baths, including a notice of the 1904 River Race.





A popular annual event was the River Race, this being mentioned in the Handicapper's Book in 1903, was over a distance of half a mile, for the Atkinson Cup, being won by Percy Padbury in a time of 7 minutes 5 seconds. The Club Handicapper wrote at the bottom of the page, "A fast race swum in a good stream.....All finished, the field closing in rapidly and the last man being timed at 9 minutes 17 seconds". He did not say where it took place, but in 1912, the venue was given as "below Sunbury Lock", which is of course on the Thames. Before you laugh at the time, remember that in 1903 the front crawl did not exist (!), and there was a considerable "drag" in men's swimming costumes (not trunks ! ) of yesteryear. In 1909, a one mile race was added to the programme, the Roper Cup being donated in 1910 as the trophy for this event. Both the half and one mile races were swum as both scratch and handicap races.

It was at an Executive Committee meeting of Kent County on 8th. February, 1905, within Deacon's Hotel, that the affiliation of Beckenham SC, proposed by E.C.Milham (Beckenham Baths SC), seconded by W.R.George (Goldsmiths Institute SC), the then President-Elect, was agreed. Also at the 16th. AGM, again within Deacon's Hotel on 27th. February, 1907, Edward C.Lendon Esq., became the first President of Kent County from Beckenham SC. (see Appendix 4).

During those early years there was no such thing as training as we know it today, although no doubt, some club members went to the Baths to "practise", and some were just naturally better than others anyway - a fact cheerfully accepted by all. So much for the competitive spirit of today, for how many of our top swimmers now would be prepared to give 48 seconds as a start to the slowest fellow competitor in a Handicap 66 $\frac{2}{3}$  yard race ? At the beginning of the century close finishes were fine entertainment enjoyed by participants and spectators alike. By the 1920's, Open Handicap events, with really good prizes to be won, were the fashion, especially in the Business Houses' Swimming Leagues - a form of early sponsorship ! This frequently led to a battle of wits between the Competitors and the Handicappers - and it wasn't merely limited to swimming, for it happened in Athletics and other Sports.

BECKENHAM SWIMMING CLUB.

THE TENTH ANNUAL

Costume Entertainment

BECKENHAM PUBLIC BATHS, ...  
ON MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 15th, 1902.

LADIES SPECIALLY INVITED.



TWO-LENGTHS OPEN HANDBAL CAP (BOYS) ...

GRAND DISPLAY OF CHAQUELLE DIVING ...

MEMBER and FRIENDS SWIMMING CLUBS ...

TWO-LENGTHS HANDBAL CAP ...  
HIGH DIVE IN FLAMES.

BECKENHAM SWIMMING CLUB,

FROM SWIMMERS ARRIVAL

Costume Entertainment

BECKENHAM PUBLIC BATHS,  
ON MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 21st, 1903.

LADIES SPECIALLY INVITED.

BECKENHAM SWIMMING CLUB,

THIRD TWENTY ARRIVAL

Costume Entertainment

BECKENHAM PUBLIC BATHS,  
ON MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 12th, 1904.

LADIES SPECIALLY INVITED

100 YARDS INVITATION SCRATCH RACE

TWO-LENGTHS HANDBAL CAP FOR BOYS UNDER 13.

Ornamental Swimming Feats by Mr. A. A. GREEN.

ORIGINAL DRAMATIC WATER SKETCH

Water Polo Match - BECKENHAM BATHS CUP & CRISPE PAPER C.S.S.

Beckenham Swimming Club.

THE NEWBORN WATER ARRIVAL

COSTUME ENTERTAINMENT

BECKENHAM PUBLIC BATHS,  
ON MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 20th, 1909.

LADIES SPECIALLY INVITED

PROGRAMME

Fig. 4.

Examples of other Programmes

On 28th.,April,1913, to celebrate Beckenham SC's "Coming of Age", an evening's entertainment attracted a large audience and there was a one-length race for Original Members - a Handicap event, of course, with the following result, but no times were recorded:-

1st.	F.Anthony Terry	Scratch
2nd.	Francis Hooper	8 secs. start
3rd.	Harry T.Grant	Scratch
4th.	Raymond V.Brown	15 secs. start.

There was a display of Ornamental Swimming and Diving by Messrs.F.Park and S.J.Parker, pupils of Mr.Harold R.Austin, who also did his bit by performing various tricks such as imitating a porpoise, a crab, a seal and a torpedo, as well as somersaults, marching and handsprings. An Extra-ordinary Meeting was called on 22nd.,October,1913, to hear a complaint of turning the Swimming Club into a Water Polo Club. It would appear that Water Polo did seem to dominate Swimming in those days ! A composite illustration of some of the earlier Beckenham Water Polo teams are seen in Fig. 5..



Fig. 5, (A), Some of the early Water polo Teams of Beckenham Swimming Club. Water Polo Team of 1903, note the dog in the front row! (? Doggy paddle !) From Left to Right, Back Row F.W. King, D.H. Harris, G.J. Harber, F.A. Terry, H.R. Austin, From Left to Right, Front Row T. Cox, H.T. Grant (Captain), and A.W. Morse



Fig. 5, (B), Water Polo Team 1930's From Left to Right, Back Row, B.L. "Bunny" Cripps, Harry R. Austin, S.G. "Waggy" Waghorn. From Left to Right Front Row, "Mac" McRae, Eric Cox, S.G. "Waggy" Waghorn and B.L. "Bunny" Cripps



Fig. 5, (C) Kent Water Polo Championships 1933 From Left to right, Back Row Harry R. Austin, Eric Cox (Polo Capt.), Reg Mardon, S.G. "Waggy" Waghorn (Club Capt.) From Left to Right, Front Row Jimmy Logan, B.L. "Bunny" Cripps, "Mac" McRae, Lionel "Apple" Gray and R. Montague



Fig. 5, (D), Water Polo Team 1930's From Left to Right, Back Row, Arthur "Nobby" Clark, Reg Mardon, "Mac" McRae, Eric Cox. From Left to Right, Front Row, B.L. "Bunny" Cripps, Harry R. Austin, S.G. "Waggy" Waghorn and Lionel "Apple" Grey.

A Committee Meeting on 24th., August, 1914, briefly cancelled all further fixtures. World War I had begun; all the Water Polo team's members had "joined the Colours" and it was impossible to forecast future events. In retrospect, it is now known, that Britain became embroiled in the most terrible war yet known to man, and that almost the whole of one generation of young men were to lose their lives or to be injured either physically or mentally. The social repercussions were to be far reaching, especially for women. From 1914-1919, Beckenham SC was to be confined to a very limited role with only a small number of boys and older men, and Beckenham War Memorial bears witness to the sacrifices made by many Club members. Conversely, the Ladies' Section was able to go from strength to strength, keeping things going, helping the War effort through the Sport of Swimming. Let us turn back therefore in time.

On Wednesday, 8th., April, 1908, a meeting was held at 8pm at Beckenham Baths, attended by prominent members of Beckenham SC. The President, Dr. Percy J. Curtis was in the Chair, supported by Mr. & Mrs Francis Hooper (see Founders' Race above); Miss Spring, Miss Lake and about 40 others together with Misses T. Hedley and C Thornton, Messrs. H.R. Austin, T.G. Cooper, and R.V. Brown. Raymond Brown, the Honorary Treasurer of Beckenham SC, briefly explained the object of the meeting by stating that "the Committee of the Club (Beckenham SC), having regard to the advantages and benefits derived by the members from the Club, it was desired to extend the same privileges to Ladies, and so form a Ladies Branch of the Club, and accordingly arrangements had been made with B.U.D. (Beckenham Urban District) Council for instruction in Swimming to be given to Ladies of the Club on Thursday evenings after 7pm., that being the night set apart for Ladies". After a small discussion, it was resolved on a motion of Miss Thornton, seconded by Miss Syme, and carried unanimously "That these Ladies present, together with those who are not present, but have signified their assent, hereby constitute themselves the 'Ladies Branch of the Beckenham Swimming Club' ". They drew up a list of officers and a set of rules. The first Honorary Secretary was a Miss Gertrude Nottle, the daughter of a well known local photographer; and the first Honorary Treasurer was a Miss H. Levens, who was entirely responsible to the Beckenham SC Treasurer (Raymond Brown), and she was required to hand in monthly accounts. Also unanimously elected were the President, Miss Mary Lea-Wilson, and the following Vice-Presidents - Mrs. Percy Curtis, Mrs. Francis Hooper, Miss Spring and Miss Lake. The Committee of eight ladies was bolstered by the addition of Mr. H.R. Austin (Baths Superintendent), Mr. T.G. Cooper and Mr. R. V. Brown.

None of these were to know that they had been instrumental in forming the first, very tentative beginning of what was to become one of the greatest Ladies Swimming Clubs our country has ever had. One of the most unlikely rules in a Ladies Club was Rule 2, namely, "Ladies, who must not be less than 12 years of age, must be proposed and seconded as members by Lady members of the Club, and balloted for by the Ladies' Committee - 3 black balls to exclude". It is reported on 2nd., July, 1903, that a ballot box had in fact been purchased, and by August, the "rush" for membership being over, the meetings were less frequent - monthly proving sufficient having at first been weekly.

It was decided that Club costumes should be blue and white, the badge to be similar to that of Beckenham SC, "but smaller". Bearing in mind that most members would have been unable to swim at the time of joining, at the first Annual Race competition held on 22nd., October, 1903, there was only a 1 length, a 2 widths and a 1 length

Handicap race. At their first AGM on 18th.,February,1904, the accounts of the Branch showed a balance in hand of £2-14s-1d. A new Secretary and Treasurer were elected. Messrs. Brown and Austin were very much in control in the first few years, and it was not until 25th.,May,1905, that they had exclusive use of the Bath from 9-10pm.. At the 1906 AGM, yet again there was a new Secretary/Treasurer, the third since the Inauguration, the previous incumbents having held office for two years, yet there were only three Committee meetings during the 1906 season.

On 13th.,June,1907, Mrs.Gertrude Ebdon (? formerly Miss Gertrude Nottle - the first Hon.Sec..) retired from the position of Honorary Secretary/ Treasurer and Mrs.A.M.Austin was unanimously elected. This was to be a landmark in the History of Beckenham Ladies SC, as it was to become, for this was the end of the Ladies Section and the beginning of a separate Club, in spirit if not in name. At the 6th.AGM on 19th.,February,1908, Mrs.Austin became joint Honorary Secretary/Treasurer. The Annual Races on 24th.,September,1908, were more ambitious, there being two Handicap races of 1 length and 2 lengths, a Back race, Invitation events including a Team race for three Elementary Schools (see 1870, Education Act for definition of "Elementary School") and a 2 lengths Handicap for girls over 12 years resident in Beckenham. Remember, of course, that no Gala was complete in those days without some kind of novelty event, and that year it was a boat race, in costume. The boats were lent by Mr.Austin who donated "one prize for the prettiest costume". Spectators were women and girls only, 3d each, in the gallery. The season of 1909 showed steady progress, Back and Life-Saving races together with Diving were added to the competitions taking place throughout the season. 1910 saw further progress, the Diving Competition being more ambitious, the races more varied with three strokes being mentioned - side-stroke, breaststroke and backstroke - while monthly Handicaps were held as before. There was a "Throwing the Water Polo Ball" competition and also, a new event for which a Silver Medal was to be given to anyone who could swim half a mile in less than 30 minutes. If you think the mens' costumes caused "drag", it was not half as bad as the ladies' costumes ! So we see that a Branch, which had started almost as a social dabble in the water, was developing into a real Club, providing its members with incentives to improve their stamina, strokes, and all-round fitness. A momentous unanimous decision was made at an "informal meeting of Club members", held on 7th.,July,1910, namely, that male relations and friends of members could be admitted to the gallery for the Annual Races !! Also the sale of tickets was to be in the hands of Club members - Front row 1/- (5p); Back row 2½d. (2.5p today money).

By 1911, the Annual Competition was even more ambitious - there was a 3 lengths (100 yds.) race on the third Thursday of each month from May to September inclusive, and 2 lengths and 1 length races on the first Thursday of each month. A Life-Saving Class was formed, a Water Polo team and a Fancy Swimming (ie. fore-runner of Synchronised Swimming) Class, "if demand justified their formation". For a short while, nearer the present day, there was a Synchronised Swimming Section, and there is once again an active Womens' Water Polo team in the Club. For the first time, an Annual Gala was held in 1911, the following is an extract from the minutes of a meeting held on 27th.,July,1911, referring to the sale of tickets :-

"Any member desiring to bring a male friend on that occasion should obtain a special ticket, bearing his name, from the Hon.Sec., who is the only member empowered to sell such tickets".

Centralised County Galas such as we have today are comparatively new, County Championships would be "put out to tender"; Clubs would be invited to tender for the County Championships, and the highest bidder would be granted the privilege of staging the Championship of its choice at the Club's Annual Gala, thus providing an added attraction for spectators. The Ladies Section Committee decided to "buy" the Ladies Championship of Kent for their Annual Gala. The Gala programme was the most ambitious yet, being a mixture of 'serious' events and 'fun' events which included an "Illuminated Water Maze" and a Boat Race, with a prize for the most original costume. Admission charges may interest readers, viz:-

Tank Level	1/6d	(7.5p)
Gallery Front Row	1/-	(5p)
Gallery Back Row	6d	(2.5p)
Boxes for 2	2/-	(10p)

The Gala made a profit, apparently of £4-7s-9d (something in excess of £100 in today's money!).

In 1912, the Annual Gala staged the Final of the Southern Counties ASA Ladies' Team Championship (bought by tender), and a Water Polo match between London Ladies Water Polo Club and Leicester Ladies was played. Beckenham agreed to pay expenses up to 2, seat prices were increased by 25% and the profit increased. At the end of that year it was decided to purchase a Cup for the two lengths (66 2/3 yards) Handicap Competition at a sum not exceeding £5, which, "By the gracious permission of Miss Lea-Wilson, it is to be called the 'Lea-Wilson Cup, or Bowl". This beautiful, and now valuable, trophy is still in the Club's possession, and is given to the Ladies Open Freestyle Champion, but its design makes it a nightmare to clean! In 1913 it was decided that the Club should enter an Open Club Team Championship promoted by South Norwood Ladies' SC. It was also agreed that male friends "specially vouched for by a lady member, might be admitted to the Gallery on Club Night".

In 1914, hostilities began with scenes of jubilation in the streets. It was almost as if people were rejoicing at the prospect of war. However, the gap between its popular acclaim and the realities of trench warfare were unbridgeable. Throughout the First World War there was a daily average of 1,500 British casualties. It was inappropriate to promote sport at a time of such National Emergency and consequently, like most National Governing Bodies, the KCWP/SA called a halt to proceedings, but the Ladies Branch continued throughout the war years, thanks to Mrs. Austin and her followers. By 1914, the Committee meetings were increasingly chaired by ladies, even when Messrs. Austin and Brown were present. The Minutes of this period, and throughout the First World War read so calmly, that one wonders at times! "The War has made our Men's Club practically nonexistent, but we hope to hold together and keep the Sport on a high level until times are once more normal, and the men return to find we have 'carried on' during their absence". At the AGM on 18th., February, 1915, for the first time a printed report was pasted into the Minutes, and records a rise in membership by 40 to 108, and the hope was expressed that this would be maintained "if not to increase during the coming season, notwithstanding the War and its demands which overshadows all things". Membership did in fact increase by a further 17 to 125 that year, and a Miss P.L. Tett was the first Captain of the Branch. Later that year, it was decided that all members under 16 years of age before 1st., May, would be regarded as Juniors for the season, the first definition of a Junior. It was also interesting to read in this



report, about a display of "Ornamental Swimming" - the fore-runner of synchronised swimming - see Figs. 6 & 7. This activity had a place at most Beckenham Swimming Galas until the 1960's, when competitive swimming all but obliterated other disciplines of aquatic activity.

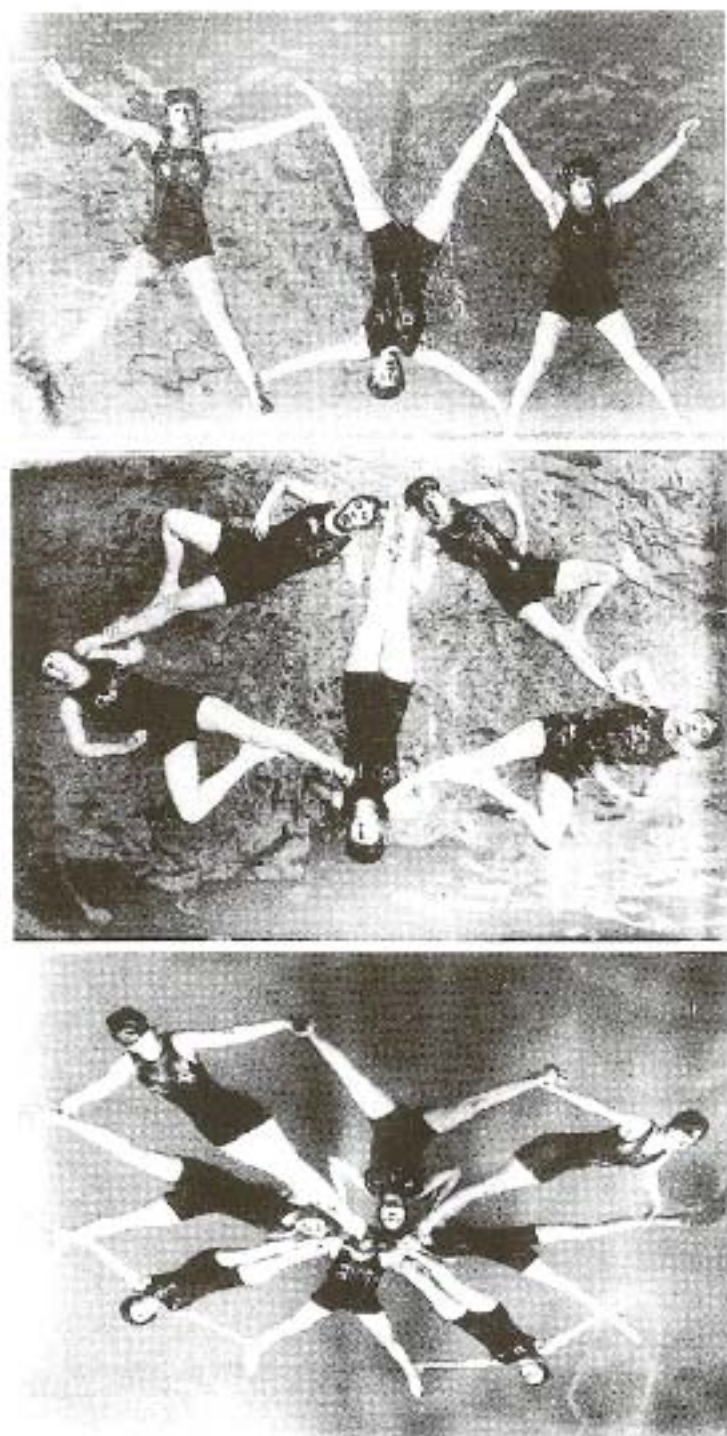


Fig. 6, Photographs of the early Beckenham Ladies' Ornamental Swimming/Floatation Display Team

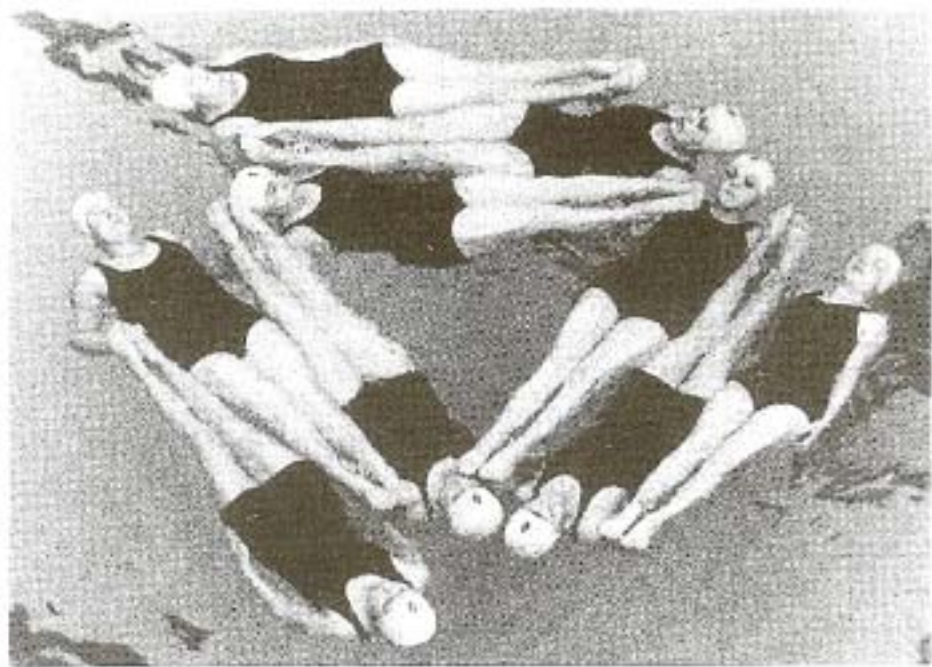


Fig. 7. Two photographs of a later Beckenham Ladies' Ornamental Swimming Team, note the under-Water Photograph.

By 1916 a blackout was imposed, and, as in World War II, it affected the Club Gala arrangements - it was decided to "inquire of the police the latest time for exposed lighting and fix the Gala accordingly". All profits went, once again, to the local hospitals. At the end of this season, membership had increased to 152, and it was decided to hold the next AGM on a "moonlit evening in March, owing to the restricted lighting and danger of getting from place to place earlier in the year" ! It was held on 8th., March, but no mention was made of the weather conditions ! The Baths were closed in the summer of 1917, and in order to keep the Club together tennis was organised. In 1918, the Baths were still closed, yet the Section affiliated to the Southern Counties ASA for 6s-0d.. A Gymnastic Class had been of some success, with some 35 members each evening !

Things did gradually return to normal after the hostilities had ended, and in March, 1919, Mrs. Austin was appointed to represent the South on the ASA's Education Committee - the first step in a remarkable career in the swimming world. By 23rd., June, the Branch had 241 members and £46-11s-8d in hand. The Ladies section had discovered that they could manage very well on their own, and in their Honorary Secretary/Treasurer they had a very able and already experienced leader. It, therefore, wasn't long before they decided to make the separation into a divorce which was to last for more than 50 years, for it was decided and reported in the Minutes of 21st., October, 1919, that the Section was to affiliate as a separate Club to Southern Counties ASA and to adopt the name of Beckenham Ladies' Swimming Club.

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## CHAPTER 2. *THE MIDDLE YEARS (1921-1945)*

"One of the pleasures of middle age is to find out that one WAS right, and that one was much righter than one knew at say 17 or 23" Ezra Pound (1885 - 1972).

The Men's Club, battered but unbowed after the War, did not realise, at first, the change that four years of independence had wrought in the Ladies Section. When the Club re-convened, many male members were missing, and there were vacant places on the Committee, which could not be filled, but it did not, it seems, occur to them to invite the ladies to fill these places. They chose, instead, to struggle on alone and it was many years before Beckenham SC recovered.

In 1908-1910, Beckenham SC had won the Senior Championship of Kent, and had also been in the semi-final with Brunswick SC in the London Water Polo League. The War of course, broke up the Swimming Club, and many gallant members fell on the field of battle, and so it was a number of years before a similar Water Polo team was seen. The Club had to start virtually afresh, but under the able leadership of "Bob" Peacock, a genial secretary, its usefulness and popularity increased, the junior section, in particular, showing much promise. Gilbert Crease was Water Polo Captain from 1921/22, and in 1922, Harold G.Padbury, to be followed in 1923 by Gilbert Heath, and Derek Strike in 1925. It was reported at the AGM in February, 1924, that in 1923, 13% of the receipts were from donations to the Club, and the members were asked to think of methods of increasing revenue or decreasing expenditure, particularly in water polo !

In 1926, the outdoor baths (Second Class Bath) was converted to an indoor bath to meet the increasing demand for swimming tuition by the Local Education Authority. Further alteration and conversion took place in 1926, when a dance floor was fitted to the well of the First Class Swimming Bath, and a stage and Annexe built to convert the Baths into a Grand Hall during the winter months. It was the largest hall in the district, seating 750 persons with dancing floor space for some 425; which during winter months was busily utilised for Stage Shows, Exhibitions, Boxing and Wrestling shows, Dances, Dinners and many other purposes.

Bernard L. ("Bunny") Cripps took over the Secretaryship in 1926, when the Club was at one of its lowest ebb. Starting with only 2s-9d in the kitty he set to work and pulled the Club together, and was helped by the officers who had returned to the Club after the war. Their efforts were to produce such swimmers as Eric Stratton, Charlie Drapper and the Clubs' first Olympian, Romund Gabrielsen. During the winter months the covered baths were floored over for badminton courts, which did nothing to improve Water Polo ! By now Mrs. Austin was on the Executive of the ASA, and Charles Watts was Honorary Treasurer of the Southern Counties ASA. On 14th., November, 1928, the first official Club Supper was held in "The Crooked Billet", Penge, at a cost of 4 shillings per head, and in the next year there are a number of new members from "P" Division of the Metropolitan Police, with the membership being recorded as 220 in July, 1929. Eric Stratton (who had joined the Club in 1924), won the County Breaststroke Championship in 1929, and so together with John Davies, Lewisham SC, Kent was able to claim two of the best breaststrokers in the Country, at that time (Beadle, 1962). Charlie Drapper, although not a National success in freestyle, won

most of the Kent County Championships for many years (Beadle, 1962), and probably helped to pave the way for his successor Romund Gabrielsen, who, in 1934, won the National 100 yard Free Style Championship and definitely put the Beckenham Club on the swimming map. "Rom" Gabrielsen (Fig. 8) represented England and Great Britain many



Fig. 8, Romund Gabrielsen, the Beckenham SC's first Olympian. Selected for the 100 yds. and 4 x 200 yds. Relay Team in the Berlin Games

times and achieved Olympic selection for the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games. Other outstanding swimmers at that time were Ron Stedman, and Eric Cox, incidentally the first member of the Club to break 60secs. for the 100 yds. Freestyle, and who played soccer as an amateur for Arsenal Football Club. The Beckenham Water Polo team was very strong and included a Czech Internationalist forward, John Folder, who became a member of Beckenham SC in March, 1939. Eric Cox was made a Life Member in recognition of a feat never recorded before by a swimmer in the history of Kent County, namely first in the 100, 220, 440, 880 yards Mens Championships of Kent and second in the Long Distance Championship. In addition, he succeeded Sidney "Waggy" Waghorn as Water Polo Captain ! (Fig.9.)



Fig. 9, (A), Composite of Beckenham SC's Water Polo teams A) Water Polo Team, 1937. From Left to Right, Back row, Raymond Brown, Bill Gillam, "Buster" Beaton, Eddie Davis, Victor "Peddler" Palmer. From Left to Right, Front Row, Jack Luckhurst, Cyril Baxter, George Goldfinch, (Captain), Lionel "Apple" Grey and Eric Stratton.



Fig. 9, (B), Beckenham SC team, Black Rock, Brighton, 1950 From Left to Right, Derek Camp, Jack Nurse, "Buster" Beeton, "Ginger" Rowlinson, "Rom" Gabrielsen, Reg Mardon, Jack Dunford, "Bobbie" Hale, Tony Kimber and Ted Hooker

On the 15th.,April,1930, it was reported that the new Water Polo rules had been printed by "Bovril Ltd.", (? sponsorship) ; and that two members had been arrested and fined for stealing and being in possession of a car. From 1932 till shortly before the war, there was a "Winter Activities Committee" of BSC, with "Bunny" Cripps as Chairman, (Fig. 10), Douglas Gray as Secretary; and initially the Committee members were Messrs Austin, Waghorn, Cox and Water; when Eric Cox left for Persia, his place was filled by the Secretary's brother, Lionel "Apple" Gray.

One of the most interesting remarks recorded in the minutes of this Committee was "No outsiders or 'galleryites' allowed into dances". In 1933 there were five dances in all, together with a Dance at the Regal, the proceeds of which went to Kent County WP/SA.. By 1934, Stanley Dodman had succeeded Sidney Waghorn; and in 1936 the names noted included Derek Blakeley, Eric Stratton, Jack Chenery, and Jack Luckhurst; and in 1937, Reg.Cook, George Goldfinch and Leslie Howes.

In a weekend in July,1937, Beckenham SC took a team to Leamington Spa, to return a visit by the Leamington Spa team during the Coronation Celebrations ("Peddler" Palmer, had worked for many years in Leamington Spa, prior to going to Nottingham for a short while, before coming south to Beckenham - hence the contact !). They had a great reception - a most successful series of contests and a glorious time altogether. In the party was Club member, Frank E.Clements, a keen photographer and a member of the Beckenham Photographic Society, who took the group photograph (Fig. 11) in Jephson Gardens; born 86 years ago, he gave the writer permission to publish same. In the party were among others, Charlie Drapper; Eric Stratton; "Rom" Gabrielsen; Sid.Baxter; Jack Luckhurst; Jack Chenery; "Peddler" Palmer and Frank Clements.

The "new", or rather, modified Beckenham Swimming Baths were opened on 18th.,June,1938, by the Mayor of Beckenham, Dr.R.P.S.Edden. The Public had an opportunity of joining in the Opening Celebrations on the Monday following the Ceremony, namely, the 20th.,June, when Beckenham (Men's) Swimming Club held a Swimming Gala. The First Class Bath, had not been substantially altered; apart from the removal of the old dressing boxes, and the provision of a new diving stage. The Second Class Bath, which had started life in 1901 as an open-air Bath, and which had been covered in, 10 years previously (80ft. by 30ft.), was to be reserved on alternate days for Ladies and Gentlemen respectively, for those who did not, or could not, afford mixed bathing in the First Class (No.1) Bath, the overall length of which had been shortened by 5ft, to accommodate the link corridor. The changing accommodation in that Bath had been modernised on similar lines to those in the First Class Bath. At the end of this corridor, away from the First and Second Class Baths, a new Teaching Bath, (Fig.12) was built, and is now known as No.3 Pool. This pool (70ft. by 25ft.) was designed with two shallow ends (3ft. deep), and a centre diving dish, 6ft. in depth, (see Fig.13) complete with a "stepped" diving platform (removed in the mid 1960's) to offer maximum teaching space. It is of interest to record that the population of Beckenham in 1938 was estimated as 71,500 persons, compared with a population (Census figure) in 1901 of 26,330 persons, and the number of bathers had trebled in the same period



## BECKENHAM SWIMMING CLUB

CHAMPIONS: DIV. II--LONDON WATER POLO LEAGUE, 1954  
DIV. II KENT COUNTY WATER POLO LEAGUE, 1953

RUNNERS UP: REFEREE'S CUP LONDON  
WATER POLO LEAGUE, 1954

C



C) Water Polo Team, 1954. From Left to Right, Back Row, L.N.A. Perry, K. Withers, Norman R. Beadle, J.D. Crowe, Jack C. Dunford, From Left to Right, Front Row, E.R. Ransome, "Bobbie" R. Hale, L.J. Scott.

D



D) Water Polo Team 1964. From Left to Right, Back Row Graham Jupp, Roger Burrell, Alan Pearse, John Crowe, Geoff Gillies, Bruce Jupp, From Left to Right, Front Row, Chris Walkden, Mike Clark, Colin Kirkwood (Captain), Len Scott and Terry Anthony



Fig. 10, Club Dinner in the Tudor Barn, apparently outside was covered in snow - what a lot of useless information one gets when one asks questions! For the observant, however "Bunny" Cripps and his mother are on table 2, and on the Top Table one can see, young Eric Stratton, Mr. & Mrs. O. G. Gray, "Mrs. A." and Harry Austin.



Fig. 11, Photograph taken of members of Beckenham Swimming Club by Frank Clements on Sunday 18th July, 1937 in Jepson Gardens, Leamington Spa.

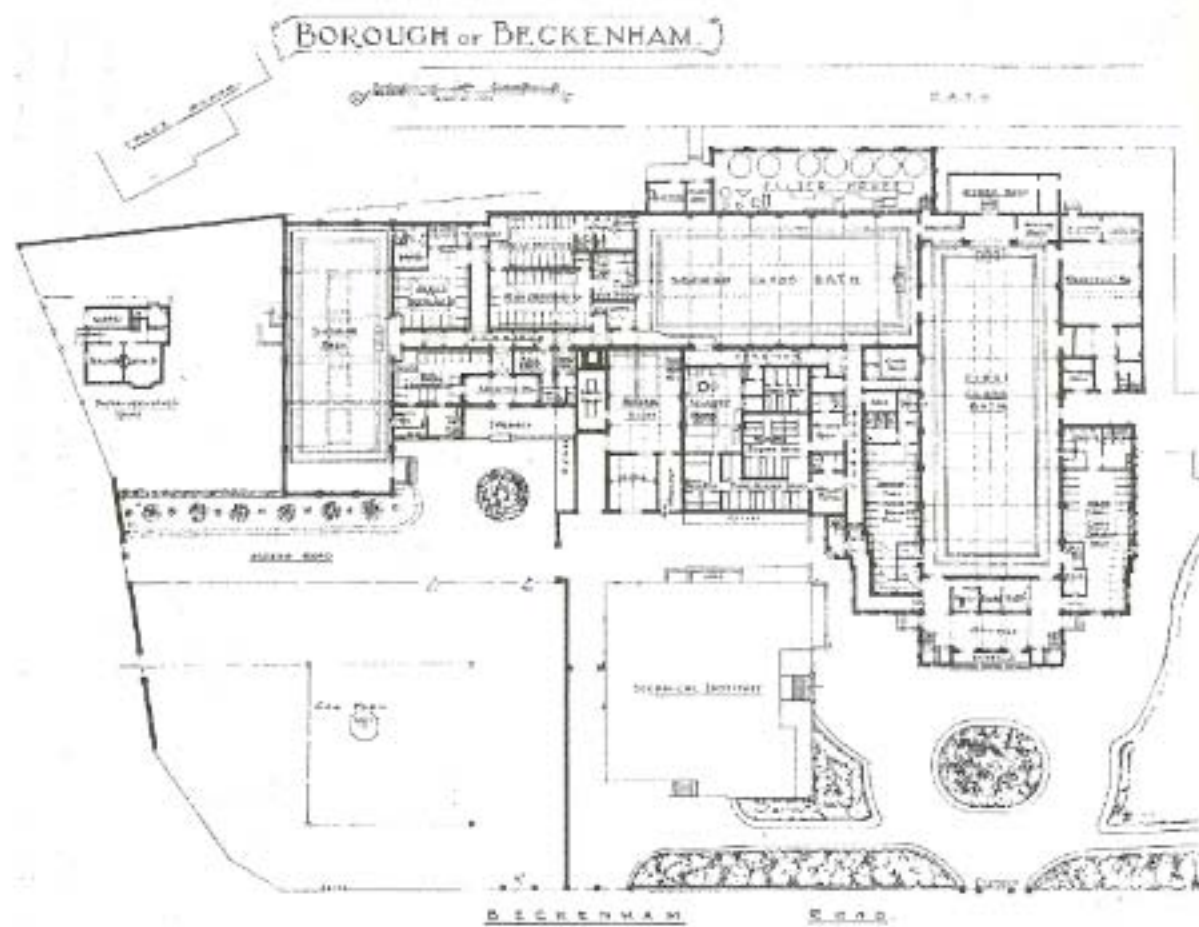
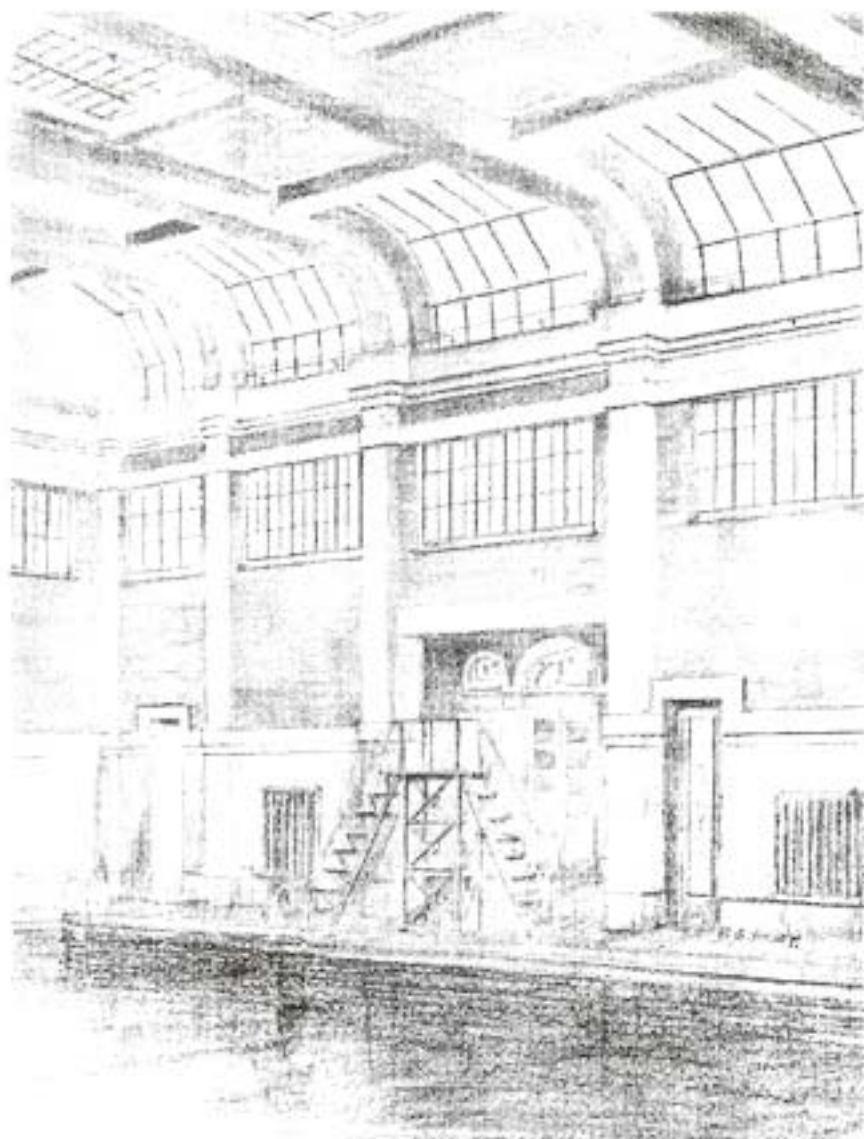


Fig. 12, Plan of the Beckenham Road Baths showing the new teaching Bath.



The interior of the new Teaching Bath, now known as No. 3 Pool.  
Note the diving platform.

Osbourne George Gray, who died in 1952, was Honorary Treasurer of the Club for some 11 odd years from 1939; his son Lionel, known as "Apple" because of his rosy cheeks, and who died in 1978, was a very fine Diver and Water Polo goalkeeper, playing for Kent on many occasions. The other son, was Douglas G.Gray, who was not much of a swimmer, but, had been an active Club member from 1927, and who died in 1991, did serve on the Club's Committee and was responsible for organising dances in the Baths' Hall in the winter. After being Kent Water Polo Secretary for many years from 1939, he became President of Kent County ASA in 1947, the year in which he was the only Kent Official appointed as a Judge at the European Games in Monte Carlo. He also officiated, along with Ernest Keighley, in the 1948 Olympic Games in Wembley, and at both these events the two Clubs each had a swimmer competing for Great Britain, namely Margaret Wellington and Ron.E.Stedman. Doug.Gray, who was married in 1941, in Christ Church, Beckenham, and was the first Trophies' Secretary for Southern Counties, a position which he held up until the outbreak of War in 1939.

On the 28th.,January,1939, Raymond Brown was again stirring things at the AGM by deploring the lack of a proper Club Room in which to entertain visiting players - still Water Polo orientated ! When War came on Sunday, 3rd.,September,1939, like many, the writer was in Church on that warm, sunny Sabbath, when the Churches on that day had unusually larger congregations, all praying for peace, which was not to be. At the end of October,1939, it was decided that all Club trophies were to be collected in, and that, "the affairs of Beckenham Swimming Club be temporarily suspended until a nominated Emergency Committee deems fit to resume activities" (Stanley B.Dodman being Chairman). In April.1940, it was recommended to grant Honorary membership to all those members of 1939 serving in HM Forces. By mid-1941, membership had fallen by approximately 50%, largely due to evacuation and conscription. Despite many difficulties, the Annual River Race had been held, and despite a loss, the Treasurer reported in 1940, that the Club had shown an income, of £5-13s-8d in excess over expenditure, with cash in the bank as at 31st.,December,1940, equal to £30-9s-3d. The Accounts were adopted even though they could not be audited, but it was felt that that was purely a matter of little import. In April,1942, the accounts showed an excess of income over expenditure of £ 4-2s-10d. J.Lawson Wrathall resigned, but the Trophies remained in his cellar at 55,Beckenham Road, Beckenham, when it was decided not to insure them for War risk. Victor "Peddler" Palmer, the Baths Superintendent, became Club Honorary Secretary, and Ron E.Stedman, Junior Captain. By the end of 1942, membership was 139 (Juniors - 118; Seniors - 21). It was recommended on 3rd.,May,1943,to commemorate the Jubilee of the Club with a Jubilee Gala. A Sub-Committee was formed consisting of Sid."Waggy" Waghorn, Victor "Pedler" Palmer, Eric Stratton, Derek Camp and Ken.Hurst. It was further decided that Mr Ernest Keighley would be starter and that the cost of tickets would be as follows:-

Front row tank side and front row gallery	1s3d,
Back row tankside and back row gallery	6d.

The dances arranged and organised by Doug.Gray were always a success, and by mid-1944, there was £97-17s-8d in hand. Most of the monies raised at galas went to the local hospitals, to such an extent that Stanley B.Dodman was appointed Life Governor of the Hospital in recognition of the efforts of Beckenham SC. Mid-1945, Club Colours were awarded to Ronnie Stedman; Peter Wellington; Derek Camp; Ken.Hurst; Roy Glendenning; Arthur Frazer; William Edge; and Alan Mead.

Meanwhile, as far as Beckenham Ladies' SC was concerned, on 10th. March, 1920, at a meeting of Kent County Executive Committee, in the Roebuck Hotel, Lewisham, Chairman G.W.Davies (Brabys SC) proposed, and John S.Crease,(Beckenham SC), Secretary-Elect of Kent County, seconded the motion to affiliate Beckenham Ladies' SC to the County. At the 25th AGM,1921, of Kent County probably a memorable event occurred in that, Mrs A.M.Austin was elected to the Executive Committee and so KCWP/SA had its first "lady" member of the Executive. Beckenham Ladies' SC. had, in 1921, to delay the start to the season because of the General Coal Strike until 1st.,June. It is recorded that three members had acquired the RLSS diploma (Miss Gertrude Jenkins being the second member of the Club to have been awarded a diploma, having received her's the previous year); and the success of "Figure Floating" - an item which was to delight most swimming audiences for many years. They also affiliated to the Amateur Diving Association (ADA), having been previously affiliated to the London Diving Association (LDA). There was a continuous bombardment with invitations for the members of the "Floation Team" to perform displays at various galas, and this was appreciated. 1923 saw the first issue of a Calendar, which is still a feature of the "new" Club; and also the disbanding of the Tennis and Dancing sections, which had been opened-up during the War period. The membership which had been 299 in 1920, 292 in 1921, had fallen to 182 in 1922, and even further in 1923 to 156, largely as a result of seniors retiring, and bad weather at the beginning of the season, together with the unavailability of the Baths during the winter months.

At the AGM on 15th.,February,1923, Mrs.Margery Coffin, of the Beckenham Baths Club, was invited to be a Vice-President, in recognition of the support given by the Club of which she was such a leading member. It was reported at this AGM that the team of Olive Sherlock, Kate Stedman, Joan Harvey, and Margaret Stewart had won the Kent County 1922 Ladies' Team Championship at Gillingham on 15th.,July,1925, with Miss Stewart being second in the Kent County 100 yds. Championship. In the 1923 County Championships, (Fig. 14 A/B.), Beckenham Ladies' SC were again Ladies' Team Champions with the team of Eileen Wilson, Margaret Stewart, Ena Jones, and Winifred Morris; Morris and Stewart being 1st. and 2nd. respectively in the Ladies' 100 yds. Kent Championship.

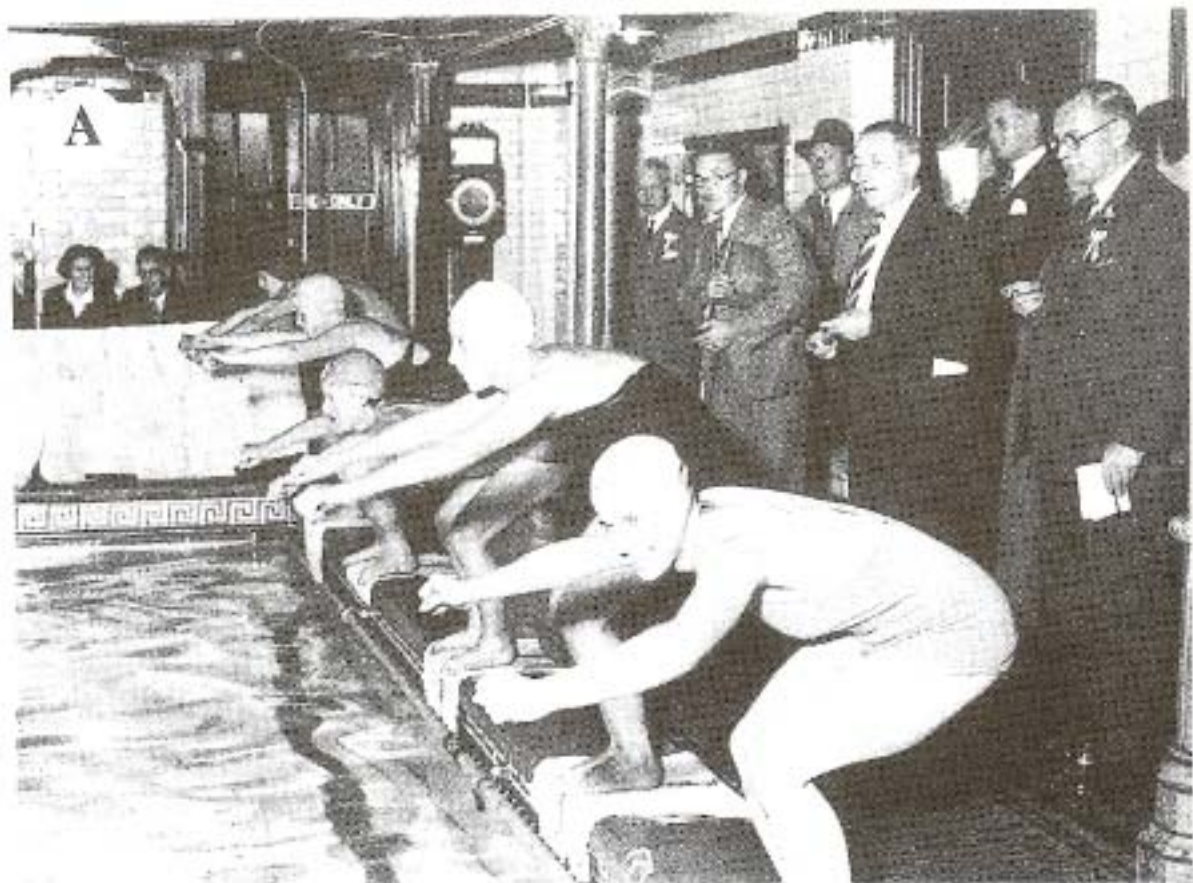


Fig. 14 (A) Possibly a Kent Championship event in Beckenham Ladies' SC Gala in the 1920's.  
 From left to right, Back row, B.L. "Bunny" Cripps, Sidney "Waggy" Waghorne and Stanley Dodman.  
 From left to right Front row, GOK!



Fig 11. (B). "Snap" Photograph of the Beckenham Ladies' SC, Water polo Team at the Annual River Race in the 1930's Included in the "Snap" are Misses Sims, Sands, D.Champ, Cranfield, Ena Compton (later Mrs. Jewry) and Winnie White.



The "Floatation Party" was in even greater demand. 1925 saw a temporary rise in membership to 169, during which year apart from winning the Ladies' County Team trophy again, there was a clean sweep in the ladies' 100 yds.' Championship, Ena Jones, Dorothy Coppard, and Winifred Morris, taking the medal places; and Eileen Wilson won the Southern Counties' Breaststroke title on 17th., July, 1925 at Hampstead. With removals from the district of older members, and the General Strike of 1926 saw a fall of 27 to a membership of 142. One of the older stalwarts to depart at this time was Kate Stedman, who had married, but it was hoped she would still serve on the Committee as Mrs. Kate Bridges. She had been one of the best all-round swimmers of the previous few years, and had been particularly devoted to "Floating and fancy Swimming" - the writer is extremely grateful to her for allowing the use of photographs of this early Synchronised Swimming (Fig.15). Misses Dorothy Coppard and R. Payne were allowed to join Perserverance SC for water polo only. This Club had originally been founded by Mr. Austin for those girls who were not able to join either the Baths' Club or Beckenham SC

Figs. 15.



Fig. 15, Portriat of Miss K.I. Stedman, at the time she was doing Ornamental Swimming.  
The writer is greatly indebted to the aunt of  
Ron Stedman (Beckenham's second Olympian). Mrs. K.I. Bridges, as she is now whilst living  
in the area, was a great stalwart of Brckenham Ladies' SC and of KCASA.

because the Ladies Section of these two clubs met during working hours, so that when this Section of Beckenham SC, opened its doors to all, in the sense that it met in the evenings, Mr.Austin gladly closed the Perserverence Club and encouraged the members to join Beckenham Ladies' SC - (see p.62/63 for Mr.Austin's version !). 1927 saw the Club retain, for the sixth year in succession, the Kent County Team Shield, the team on that occasion being Dorothy Coppard, Ida Mitchell, Phyllis Stratton and Irene Howes. Dorothy Coppard broke the County record in winning the 100 yds.' Championship (77.(2,5) secs.), with Ida Mitchell second and also beating the earlier record.

In 1929, Beckenham Baths Club wound up its affairs, whilst Beckenham Ladies' SC formed their own Water Polo team with coaching from a Mr.A.J.Francis, Surrey County Association; and yet again won the County Team Championship shield. Miss Coppard won the Kent Ladies 100 yds. and one mile Championships. The Minute Book for the next 15 years, was missing, presumed lost by fire, during the "Blitz" in the Second World War following the AGM on 3rd., February,1931, at which meeting Mrs.Austin resigned from the Hon. Secretaryship of the Club. This was the meeting at which the 27th.,Annual Report was presented, and recorded that in the County Championships, there had been a clean sweep in the 100 yds. Ladies (Misses D.Coppard; V.Dawson; and M.Dunn); and in the 150 yds. Backstroke (Misses D.Coppard; P.Sutton; and V.Dawson); and that Beckenham Ladies had been first in the Team Championship.

During the 1920's, groups of American and Canadian women in particular developed aspects of life-saving and graceful swimming with artistic activities. Such activities were readily applied to the floatation and sculling skills included in the Royal Life-Saving Society programme and in those of the more ornamental aspects of graceful swimming competitions - the figures and strokes of which were arranged into routines and performances given at shows and galas, as had been arranged by Mr.Austin for Beckenham Ladies' SC. Initially there was no music, but this was added as an accompaniment in the early 1930's; in 1933, one of the first attempts to present aquatic movement synchronised to the beat of music took place in the Lagoon Theatre, Chicago, by the Tarpon Club - thus marking the birth of Synchronised Swimming as is known today. Initially, it consisted principally of compulsory figures and strokes together with a solo routine performed to music. Displays of various strokes and selected aquatic skills by teams of female swimmers was given at Club Galas, from the late nineteenth century; in the case of Beckenham SC, from 1903, but it was not until the 1960's that solo, duet, or team routines, using the recognised figures synchronised to music, were introduced. "Floatation" or "formation" displays had been given by teams of women during the 1920's either moving up and down the pool or forming a circle to make kaleidoscopic patterns changing the shapes of the pattern each time the bath-master blew his whistle. In Beckenham Baths, their success was apparently largely due to a steel-tipped walking stick, which Miss Gertrude Jenkins tapped on the side of the pool, so that her "girls" could hear and keep time (this fact is even confirmed by Mrs.Pam.Taylor, who admits being more into "Floatation" than "Swimming" in the 1950's !). Such displays became more sophisticated in the 1930's, but after World War 11, "formation swimming" lost the impetus, as speed swimming increased again in popularity.

By 1939 official attitudes towards Sport had changed substantially. Both the Government and Local Authorities encouraged Sport as long as it did not interfere with the War effort. It offered enjoyment at an otherwise depressing time. However, the pressures

on sport were considerable and swimming was no exception. Most Baths were closed, Galas had to be cancelled, travelling around the country was extremely difficult and Clubs lost a lot of members because most healthy men were drafted into the Armed Forces. Nevertheless, Beckenham SC and Beckenham Ladies' SC adapted themselves to the peculiar conditions of wartime. The two Clubs coped as best they could. They had to suspend activities occasionally because the local Baths had various problems. The Clubs arranged a variety of Swimming and Water Polo contests and invited swimmers from neighbouring clubs and troops stationed locally to join in. They also organised special Galas to raise money for Wartime Charities.

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### CHAPTER 3. *THE POST WAR PERIOD. (1946-1976)*

"Apparent rari nantes in gurgite vasto." (Odd figures swimming were glimpsed in the waste of waters) Virgil (70 - 19 BC)

The Clubs' swimming activities were resumed as from 18th., March, 1946 and in April of that year, a new form of membership, Associate, was introduced at a fee of 2s-6d per head, per annum. Alan Mead resigned in 1946 as he was entering Bristol University; and John "Ginger" Rowlinson became a member of the Executive through his involvement with the Dance Committee, to become Assistant Secretary in January, 1947. On 25th., June, 1947, it was reported that Ron E. Stedman had been chosen for his first International for England against the other Home Countries, and in September of that year Colin Kirkwood became a new member of the Club, to be followed the following month by "Bobbie" Hale. In 1948, having won the 100 yds. Freestyle Championship in the Nationals, Ronnie Stedman, along with Margaret Wellington of "The Ladies" was picked to represent GB in the Olympics in Wembley, and later that year Stedman equalled the British Native Record of 53 secs. for the 100 yds..

On 18th., February, 1949, John "Ginger" Rowlinson became Honorary Secretary, with "Jack" Nurse as his Assistant. At this stage of the Club's history, Jack C. Dunford joined the Club from the Royal Navy, and the Water Polo ( Fig. 16.) team commenced to climb to become one of the best club combinations in



Fig. 16 (A), Water Polo Team, 1949, From left to right, Back row, A.J. Kimber, R.E.P. Dare, Ron E. Steadman, Derek R.J. Camp and "Ginger" Rowlinson, From left to right Front row, Jack Dunford, Reg Mardon, "Buster" Beeton and R. Gardner.

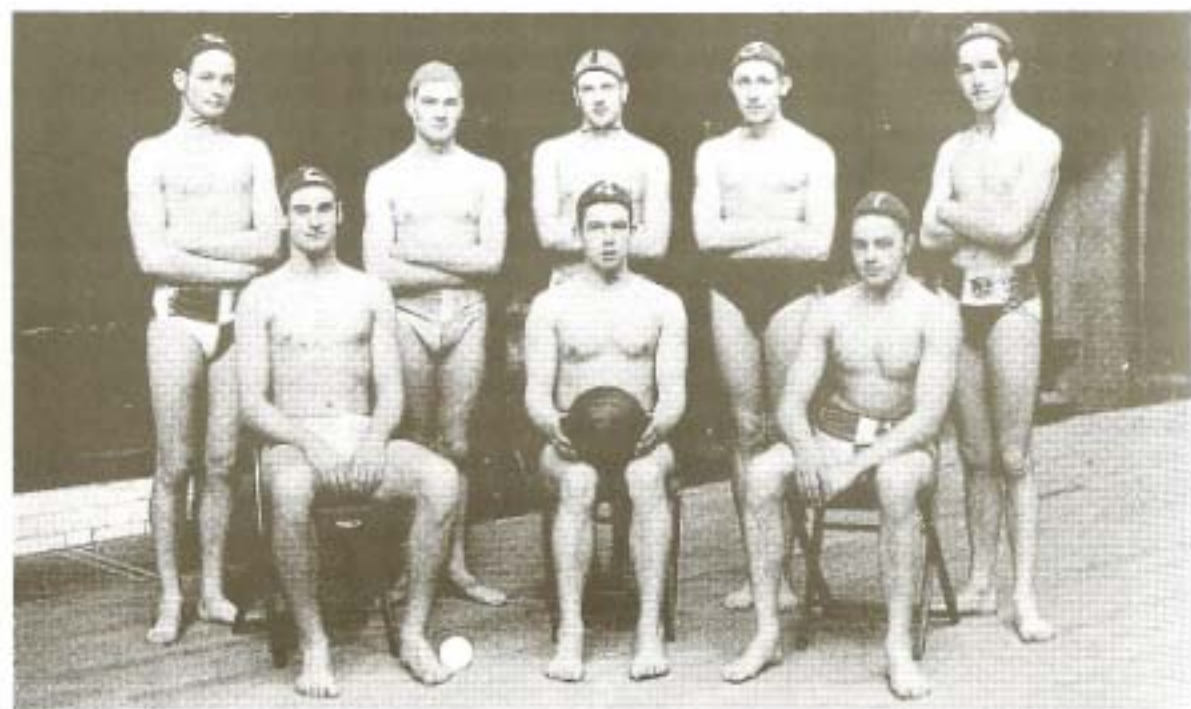


Fig. 16, (B), Early 1950's Junior Water Polo team. From left to right, Back row, V.J. Lohr, A. Hatchings, E.R. Ransome, D.W. Cuthbert, J.D. Crowe, From left to right Front row, D.W. Clarke, R.W. Gardner, and J. Hay.

the Country (Beadle,1964), and by winning its way through the Divisions of the London Water Polo League, was invited to join the Premier Division of the London League, which could then only be joined by invitation. Jack Dunford's handling and "Buster" Beeton's administration made Water Polo history in the County of Kent. In 1950, "Rom" Gabrielsen accepted Honorary Membership. After 14 years as President, Herbert J."Pops" Stratton, who had joined the Club as a willing non-swimming "official" in 1925, and who had succeeded Charlie Watts, on his death in 1937, died in the first quarter of 1951. Although in failing health for some time, he had attended regularly on Monday nights and other Club functions, being well remembered for his cheery smile and friendly word for everyone. At this time it was agreed that the Presidency should be for a maximum of two years.

In 1951, Beckenham Swimming Baths celebrated its Jubilee with a gala that "combined speed and power with grace and beauty". A "Rhythmic Swimming" (floating and ornamental swimming) display was given by members of Beckenham Ladies' SC and the Gala ended with "rockets exploding against the roof". One of the highlights of this "Jubilee Aquacade" was the 1 length freestyle Veterans' race, four in all, in order of finish, Jack Padbury, Harold Padbury, Ted.Cox and Harry Morris. Three high-diving Champions thrilled onlookers with a display of diving, to be followed by a frog-man's demonstration. The Gala provided plenty of fun, in particular, "The Angler's Dilemma", presented by Norman Beadle and Bill Gillam, and the "Beckenham Aquatic Grand National", when young children dressed as jockeys, "rode" the length of the bath on the backs of the "horses" - men with long flowing "tails" of straw. The Jubilee 100 yds.Freestyle was won by Terry Anthony, then still swimming for Bromley Town, and Beckenham's, Barbara Baker, was second in the Ladies' 100 yds. race. Beckenham Ladies' SC's Medley team (Olive Fell; Yvonne Dare (née Riley); and Barbara Baker) won the team race, as did their Freestyle team (Wright; Kendrick; Fell and Baker). An incident-packed Inter-Club Water Polo match provided plenty of excitement; Beckenham SC beating Otter SC by five goals to three.

On 9th.,September,1952, it was reported that Mr.O.George Gray had died in his 90th year. He had been the Club's Treasurer from 1940 to 1950; and was the father of Doug.Gray (b.04/05/05) and Lionel "Apple" Gray (b.12/01/09) of Water Polo fame. It was further reported that Beckenham SC should, but only on a 50:50 basis, amalgamate with Beckenham Ladies' SC regarding Social Sectional activities. In May,1953, Christopher Walkden, who was to become Beckenham SC's next Olympian, joined the Club. Also in 1953, Reg Mardon became the Club's swimming coach and swimming again commenced to come to its own, for very soon Chris Walkden began to come to the front, having been introduced by Sid Ford, (who had been a previous Club coach, associated with Beckenham Baths, and who became in 1973, the year before he died, a Vice-President). Handled by Eric Stratton and Reg Mardon, Chris, at the age of 17 years, gained his first International honour. He went on to win National Breaststroke titles and to be the third Olympian from the Mens' Club to represent GB in the Olympic Games (Sydney, 1956 and Rome, 1960); Empire Games (Melbourne) and European Championships and many Internationals.

In 1954, Presidential Medallions were instituted and it was reported in the Minutes of the AGM, on 18th.,February,1955, that "Mrs.A.", had retired, after 17 years as Hon. Treasurer of Southern Counties ASA. During 1956, Committee meetings were held in "The Greyhound". In 1957, a new name appeared on the Committee, T.W.S.Rushton,

Esq., some said, it was never to be the same again ! "Bill" is reputed to have answered the question of "Why was there such a poor attendance in the Gallery at Cheltenham?", by replying, "That's easy - because of the poor quality of the Water Polo ! ", - that was, is, and always will be, "Bill". Remarks about petty theft are always seen in Club minutes, and Beckenham is no exception, as was seen in the Minute book of 1958, when ash-trays were allegedly "misplaced" following a function at the Eden Park Hotel.

Derek Camp, on 9th.,June,1959, was nominated to be the Hon.Treasurer. During this time the Water Polo section had "Suppers" at the Blackheath Harriers HQ - and what a success they appeared to have been, according to "Bobbie" Hale, Bob.Beasley, and Derek Camp ! One of the highlights of these "Suppers" was, naturally, the singing, and in particular, from Water Polo player and Professional Singer, "Nobby" Clark, a baritone, whose Stage and Radio name, the writer was reliably informed, being "Bruce" Clark and who had been with ENSA during the War, and who subsequently regularly entertained his customers in the George Hotel, Ashford. It was in 1959, that the death of the founder, Raymond V.Brown, was recorded. Also at this time mention is made in the Minutes, of how much a drain on the finances, is the cost of pool hire ! In 1961, it was decided to re-allocate all Diving Cups/Trophies to Swimming, due to lack of facilities, apart from divers; also new safety rules and regulations had been instituted recently. During 1962-63, the Committee met at "The Clockhouse", and among the new members joining Beckenham were the Manning brothers; Nick Chapman, who became an Under-18 GB Water Polo player; and Andy Wilson, who apart from becoming a GB swimmer, later married Miss Judy Gegan of the Ladies Club. "Bob" Beasley appears officially on the Committee, being "Equipments Officer" as from September,1963, and at the same meeting, Colin Kirkwood was invited to be the new Water Polo Captain. In 1964, "Bob" Beasley became Competition Secretary, and the meeting place of the committee changed to "The Three Tuns", meeting there (and occasionally at West Wickham Baths) until 1969, when they changed to "The Foxgrove Club", although here were a few meetings, not always official, in the "bar" at "Bob" Beasley's home. A glass boot, presented to the Club, on 13th.,November,1968, was handed to "Bob" to keep, on view, in his private bar - the boot, to be handed over if, and when,required. "Bob" had in fact re-arranged the River Race in 1964 with great success (Fig.18 ). In December,1964, it was reported that the dearth of senior swimmers, was largely caused by the exodus of younger swimmers to Universities, etc., and by the fact that established swimmers had not been able to devote as much time to competitive swimming as in the past. Reg Mardon resigned on health grounds from being coach, and was succeeded by Chris.Walkden and "Ginger" Rowlinson.



Fig. 17



Fig. 17, Beckenham SC Dinner, Shirley Poppy, 11th, March, 1961. Ernest Keighley (President, SCASA),  
the Mayor of Beckenham Ald.H.T. Parkin, Harold Daws (President, KCASA),  
Mrs Margery Coffin (President, Beckenham Ladies SC), and Harry Smith (President, Beckenham SC).

Fig. 18.

Fig. 18, Start of 1951 River Race - Staines - in which 42 swimmers participated. Walking away is Irene Smith and her father.



In September, 1967 Mr Ken Chetwood, under the aegis of the Supporters' Section, began to issue a newsletter, "Splash"; Ken was to be shortly succeeded by George Hartshorn as Editor. The 1967 competitive swimming results were not as good as in 1966, but the Club was the winner of the Kent Men's Freestyle Team trophy and Terry Ludgrove had won, in record time, the 200 yds. title. It was also recorded that for two years the Club had been unable to stage the Annual River Race because of pollution in the River Thames, and as any improvement was unlikely, it was, therefore, decided, with the co-operation of Brighton SC., to hold the event in conjunction with the Brighton Open Pier-to-Pier Race; the Senior Cup was won by Andy Wilson, who had finished third overall and the Junior Cup was awarded to Mike Rushton, who had been 2nd., Junior to finish. Towards the end of 1968, having married in the November, Dr. Mike Clark left the district for Guildford, after having guided the Water Polo section as Captain and Secretary for many years, and, who earlier, had "flogged" himself (his words!) in back, crawl and 'fly events. In 1968, Beckenham SC won three out of four Kent Team Race Championships and the "Harold Daws" Tankard for the Kent Championships Points Competition; and for the second year running, Brighton's Pier-to-Pier Race was chosen as the alternative to the River Race - two coaches were hired, and 80 members, parents and friends attended. The highlight of the year was the Dinner Dance, on Saturday, 23rd., March, at the Shirley Poppy Hotel, to celebrate the Club's 75th. Anniversary - 156 members, supporters and friends joined in the evening's festivities. It was about this time that some members of Beckenham SC became fascinated with Club ties, blazers and car badges, and by 1972 there were Club hold-alls; the Supporters Section commenced having Fireworks Parties in the Cyphers Club ground in 1969/70/73, and in Beckenham Rugby Club's ground in 1972. As has been said, in 1969, the meetings were held in "The Foxgrove Club", and it is recorded that on the 4th., May, Derek and Penny Camp had set up a Sunday teaching group, 9-10am, in Pool 2, which was initially called the "Sea Urchins", which he, Derek, and his "elder" committee members found rather unsuitable, and recommended the group to be called "The Dolphins". During "Ginger" Rowlinson's years of Presidency (1970-1971), the standard of the Minutes, due to him not doing them, deteriorated considerably and with considerable variation. On Armistice Day, 1970, it is recorded that Messrs Camp and Rushton had to purchase a "Yard of Ale"; it is not recorded whether this was because, for the first time for many years, the Club had been beaten in the Kent's Championships Points Competition!

The death of the first Beckenham SC's Olympian, "Rom" Gabrielsen, was recorded in the Minutes of 10th., February, 1971; also recorded was the fact that David Hicks had been invited to be coach at £1 per hour, for 2 hours per week. This was to be increased by 25% in 1972 to £1.25 per hour. Dave Hicks resigned in October, 1973, when "Hammy" Smith was approached, but the Committee were not entirely happy to be rushed into a "Training Service". On the social side, for the second year running a tremendously successful "Barbecue & Dance" had been organised by the Water Polo section.

It was at this point, "A visit to Kuwait" appears in the Annual Report for 1971! Chris Walkden, as Club Captain, had been approached by an ex-Club member, Martin Alan Hardcastle, following which Chris had been requested to form a team of 11 swimmers, by the Department of Trade & Industry, to demonstrate and compete in Kuwait. The sponsors, the British Bank of the Middle East, requested that the team

was to be no more than 11, including a female diver, a Water Polo team and a full first and second string swimming side, all ex-International or National champions. It was hoped that they would lecture and coach swimming, diving, and water polo, and last but certainly not least, to be a good social side. Eight members were found from Beckenham SC (!), namely, Chris Ayling, Nick Chapman, Mike Clark, Alan Dickie, David & Phil Manning, Andy Wilson and Chris Walkden, himself. Also invited were the 1970, Ladies' National Highboard Diving Champion (Shelagh Burrow); and on the swimming side, John Thurley and Steve Norman, giving the team a butterfly swimmer and a more recent breaststroker than the gallant leader. All the male swimmers were moulded into a useful Water Polo side and won all three matches played. The only Swimming Contest was against the National Kuwait National Team and the visitors won all but the Backstroke, and the second string accounted well for itself. During the contest, the Kuwaities broke six National Records, which just shows what can be done with competition. This ten-day exhausting, but well organised and excessively socially orientated tour was enjoyed by all. The unique team brought together the wealth of talent that had swum for Beckenham over a 20-year period.

Shortly after joining the Club in February, 1972, K.A. Luckhurst was asked to take over as Treasurer's assistant, becoming Competition Secretary. "Ken", no relation of "Jack" Luckhurst, attended his first meeting on 14th. June, 1972. The 1972 Barbecue at "The Foxgrove" was a success, but unfortunately not weather-wise; in 1973, the facilities of Beckenham Rugby Club were used for the Barbecue & Dance. In 1973, Kim Longland, again represented GB at Luxembourg, and England in the School's International in Wales; whilst Phil Manning played in the English Junior Water Polo team in Holland. Fred Scripps retired at the end of 1973, after 9 years as Treasurer.

As from 1st. January, 1975, it was recorded that H. Hamilton "Hammy" Smith, who had been appointed Chief Coach, was recommending amalgamation with Beckenham Ladies SC. Although the Supporters Section appear to have had considerable reservations about such a move, it was decided to form a Sub-Committee with the Ladies. Those representing Beckenham SC were to be Messrs Walkden, Kirkwood and Michie with "Bill" Rushton, as Chairman of this Liaison Committee. It was reported in December, 1974 that International swimmer, Neil Dexter, had gone to New Zealand in January, 1974, to represent England in the Commonwealth Games for 200 and 400 metres Freestyle, and 4 x 200m. freestyle team, but that shortly after this had been involved in a motorcycle road traffic accident and had severely damaged both his legs. Early in 1976, the death was reported of Fred Scripps, Chris Walkden's father-in-law, who had been Club Treasurer from 1965 to 1973. In 1975, Ian Hicks was chosen to represent England in Budapest in the 100 and 200m. butterfly and 400m individual medley events, he also competed in the 1500m freestyle for the Coca Cola Meet at Crystal Palace. It was recorded on 9th. June, 1976, that the Club Doctor was to be Prof. J.M. Cameron. For the first time in the Club's lifetime, a male swimmer had secured an Olympic Medal, and David Dunne (Fig. 19) brought this honour to the Club at the 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal (Bronze medal in 4 x 200m Freestyle Relay Team). The last Fireworks' Display of Beckenham (Mens') SC was on 31st. October 1976, the last meeting of the Committee being on 13th. October, 1976.

Fig. 19.



Fig. 19, Photograph of David Dunne and Margaret Kelly. David brought back from the 1976 Montreal Olympics, Beckenham SC's first Olympic Medal.

The first post- Second World War Annual Report of Beckenham Ladies SC records that, except for periods when the Baths were closed, the Club remained active throughout the very difficult war period and the prolonged bombing sustained by the Area. 1946 witnessed a very lively revival of the Club's activities and excellent progress was made. For the first time members took part in the Centralised National Championships. The chief successes were Margaret Wellington (ASA Nationals:- 100 yds. FS - 2nd.; 220yds. FS - 3rd.; 440yds FS - 4th.; SCASA:- 100yds. FS - 1st.;440yds. FS - 1st. ; KCASA:- 100yds. FS - 1st.; 440yds. FS - 1st.) ; Olive Fell (ASA Nationals:- 150yds. Back - 4th.; SCASA:- 150yds. Back - 2nd.; KCASA:- 150yds. Back - 1st - new record) ; Betty Townsend (SCASA:- 100yds. FS - 2nd.; KCASA:- 100yds. FS - 2nd.) and many others. Financially the Club was reported to be in a very healthy position. The diving boards were apparently not up to modern requirements, but the best use was to be made of them to improve diving ! In the following year the Club had the honour of having Miss Wellington selected to swim for England at Aberdeen in the Home Countries Match on 28th..June, and later, she represented GB in the European Games at Monte Carlo, gaining sixth place out of 15 competing countries in the Ladies' 400m.Freestyle, and was a member of the British team who gained third place in the relay. Also in the English team who swam against Scotland in Edinburgh was another member, Betty Townsend. For the first time, 1947, a team was entered for the Ladies' Medley in the National Championships at Hastings, and gained first place (Fig.20). The team consisted of Margaret Wellington, Betty Townsend, Olive Fell and Pat Skilton.

Margaret Wellington was selected, in 1948, to swim for GB in the Olympic Games, London, and against Denmark at Copenhagen. In the ASA Nationals, the Ladies' Freestyle team (Margaret Wellington, Betty Townsend, Olive Fell and Yvonne Dare (née Riley)) was 1st.; the Ladies' Medley team (Margaret Wellington, Betty Townsend, Olive Fell and Grace Swarman) was 2nd., with Miss Wellington winning the 100yds. Freestyle and being placed second in both the 220 and 440 yds.Freestyle. Margaret Wellington, who, in the Nationals had won both the 220 and 440 yds.Freestyle events and had been placed second, in the 100 yds. race, continued to represent England in 1949, having been one of the successful members of the English team in the Inter-Country Speed Contest for the Bologna Trophy, and being chosen for the Empire Games in New Zealand in February,1950. The Club, however, lost the services of Betty Townsend, who left for South Africa in August, joining the Tec Club, Natal - it was to be hoped she would soon return to Beckenham. The Floatation Team was revived during 1949, and gave several displays. In 1950, Beckenham Ladies SC, for the fourteenth time, won the County Freestyle Team shield, and for the fifth occasion Olive Hale (née Fell) took the 100 yds. Backstroke title in a new County record of 75.1 seconds (Fig. 21).



Fig. 20, National Medley Team 1947  
From left to right, Olive Fell, Betty Townsend, Margaret Wellington, and Pat Skilton



Fig. 21. Beckenham Ladies' SCs' team at the Kent Championships, Folkestone, 1950.  
From left to right, Back row, Barbara Baker, Joan Wright, Grace Swanson.  
From left to right, Front row, Joan Morrill and Olive Fell.



On the 11th., August, 1950, commercialisation for the first time crept into "Beckenham Ladies", for Miss Joan Wright, was then instructed to "purchase 3 dozen ball-point pens, engraved with the Club's name; these were to be bought at 2/-, and sold at 2/6 each, the profit to go to the Club funds" - it is interesting to note that nine of those present at that meeting are still active in Club matters !

The post-war period showed two strange events in the emancipation of women. First in 1951, Mrs. Alice Austin was elected the first female President of ASA; secondly, a member of the Kent Executive in 1953, Mrs. K.I. Bridges (Beckenham Ladies SC) tendered her resignation by virtue of her being a professional, to boot - due to employment by Bromley Education Committee, as a teacher of swimming, during the summer period (May-July), at Bromley Open-Air Swimming Baths. In accordance with ASA Committee Minute No. 52 of the Meeting held on 30th. August, 1952, in response to a question asked by the North-Eastern Counties ASA, it was decided that it was not permissible under the ASA Laws, at that time, for a professional to act as a delegate from an Affiliated club to a local Association. Furthermore, the Southern Counties ASA had implemented this ruling at their Annual General Meeting, on 14th. February, 1953. It was therefore resolved that Mrs. K.I. Bridges, could not, by virtue of being a professional, act as a delegate of an Affiliated club, and ipso facto as a member of the Executive Committee of Kent County. The resignation of Mrs. Bridges (n e Stedman) was accepted, and a letter of appreciation for past services was forwarded to her. The vacancy on the Executive created by this resignation was offered to Norman R. Beadle (Beckenham SC), being the next candidate on the Voting List at the previous AGM.

Beckenham Ladies' "Floating Display" team was still in great demand, and there was a Joint Honorary General Secretary, namely, Mrs. Winifred Townsend and Miss Grace Swarman, who was shortly to be married. On 7th., December, 1951, the Club had a new Honorary Secretary, Joan Wright, later to become Mrs. Joan Paine, and to whom the writer is so greatly indebted. In 1952, Mrs. Austin, became the first lady to hold the office of President of the Amateur Swimming Association, and during her year of office, this wonderful lady insisted to continue as Honorary Treasurer of Beckenham Ladies SC! Also in 1951, Olive Fell won, for the seventh year running, the Kent County 100 yds. Championship, lowering her own record to 74.1 seconds. 1954, saw Beckenham Ladies' SC, for the first time since 1932, win the Southern Counties ASA Girls' Team Championship Shield with the team of Annette Fairbrother, Ann Mullen, Jill Smith, and Valerie Thornton; Brenda Johnson winning the Ladies 220 yds. Southern Counties ASA Breaststroke Championship, and was second in the 110 yds. Breaststroke in the Nationals in Blackpool. Also in the Nationals, Beckenham Ladies' SC was placed third in the Medley Team Championship (Olive Hale; Barbara Baker; Brenda Johnson; and Valerie Thornton). At the 1956, AGM, Mrs. Olive Hale (née Fell) took over from the legendary Mrs. Austin as Honorary Treasurer; "Mrs. A" becoming President, on the resignation of Mrs. Coffin who had held office since 1932. At the same AGM, Margaret Toms was made Junior Captain, and first mention is made of a Press Officer (!); at the next meeting of the Committee, on 8th. January, 1957, Valerie Thornton, daughter of Victor and grand-daughter of one of our earliest members, T.W. Thornton, was elected into this office. 1957 was not a year of outstanding achievement, but rather one of solid groundwork. Annette Fairbrother, however, won four senior Kent County titles and was second, in the Southern Counties' Individual Medley event; her time in Kent's 100 yds. Freestyle of 62 seconds was a new record. In the following year Becken-

ham Ladies' SC were second in the ASA's National Freestyle team event (Annette Fairbrother, Christine Mason, Maureen Rennie and Margaret Toms).

In 1958, Beckenham Ladies' SC celebrated its Golden Jubilee. How could this be, is the question, when one has read that the Club was formed as a Branch of Beckenham SC in 1903? One evening, the Committee of Beckenham Ladies' SC was holding a meeting, and during "Any Other Business", someone asked, "When were we founded?". Apparently, in a firm voice, Mrs. Austin replied, "1908". As no-one had access to the Minute Books, it was accepted without question, and as it was 1958, thus it was Golden Jubilee Year. The fact that Mrs. Austin was still Club President seemed to be particularly fortuitous. Plans were set afoot, and it was celebrated with a Special Gala (Fig.22), and the local newspapers reported in detail. Some years later, following the death of Mrs. Austin, the Minute Books were handed over to Mrs. Joan Paine; and it was some time later that she read them and realised what had happened.

BECKENHAM LADIES SWIMMING CLUB

(Affiliated to S.C.A.S.A., K.O.A.S.A. and R.L.S.B.)

(President: Mrs. A. M. Austin)

1908—1958

*Golden Jubilee  
Gala*

(UNDER A.S.A. LAWS)

at BECKENHAM BATHS.

SATURDAY, MAY 10, 1958, at 7.0 p.m.

*Programme*    ::    ::    *Price 6d.*

Front of Programme for the Golden Jubilee Gala that wasn't!

Margaret, the eldest daughter of our Centennial President, Mrs. Eileen Toms, was reported at the December 1959 AGM to be the first Internationalist for 10 years, having won the National Girls 110 yds. Freestyle title; it was also reported that for the first time the Club was to send a Diver, Patricia Toms, Eileen's younger daughter, to compete in the ASA's Championships in the old Derby Baths in Blackpool. The Diving Section, trained at Thornton Heath under Miss Thelma Shaw, and apart from Tricia Toms, there were recorded names of Julie Wells and Pamela Heald, to mention but a few; the Club even acquiring the lease of trampoline equipment for the Section, without detracting interest from Water Polo, although by that time, Swimming, was really the principal interest of the Club. "Mrs. A", was firmly of the opinion, that if "girls got knocked on certain parts of their bodies, it caused cancer". (!), so there was little support for a Water Polo Section at the beginning. Mrs. Rich was the first President to receive the new President's badge. At the 1959 ASA's Nationals, Beckenham Ladies' SC won, by 5 secs., the Ladies' Freestyle Team Championship Final (Annette Fairbrother; Irene Smith; Maureen Rennie and Margaret Toms); and Miss Fairbrother was third in the Ladies' 110 yds. Butterfly Championship.

1960 saw the birth of a Nursery Section, to be known more affectionately as the "Tadpole Section"; Hon. Secretary, Joan Wright, along with Mrs "Winnie" Townsend and Mrs. Muriel Rushton, enrolled "Any girl who can swim less than one length, qualifies to become a Tadpole". There was a Joining fee, not a Subscription, of 5/-, plus 1/- entrance fee each time. The Section was to be held in No 3 Pool, on Friday evenings (6-7pm), and was to be limited to 40 girls, who were not automatically members of the Club, and could only stay in the Section for one year. This became not only a financial success, but a wonderful source of talent for the future Club. The first "Tadpole" to become an Internationalist and Olympian was Helen Burnham. The current GB Ladies' Water Polo Captain, Nicola Herbert, née Harwood, was also a "Tadpole".

It had been a number of years since a mere man had served on the Committee of the "Ladies", but at the AGM held on 9th., December, 1960, it was reported that Muriel Rushton had "persuaded" her husband, "Bill" (see Chapter 5), to become the Press Officer. In addition, ex-Internationalist, Alan Hime, subsequently "Alan Sez", became coach, who when he first arrived said "It'll take a while to get things as I want them". By 1961 the membership of the Club was 334 (74 Morning; 20 Senior; 240 Junior) ladies. Mrs. Austin, who had celebrated her 92nd birthday on 6th., December, 1960, died on Wednesday, 19th., July, 1961. At the AGM, held on 6th., December, 1961, the Hon. Secretary, Joan Wright, had received a letter, dated 25th., November, from Harry R. Austin (who himself died aged 94 years in 1964). Extracts from the letter read are as follows:-

"The transactions and activities of the Club far transcend any of my imaginations of 60 years ago, but I think that the present position and success of the Club is in great measure due to my decision then that the promotion of swimming in Beckenham must be based on a wide foundation. At that time Beckenham was snob ridden, and the snobocracy ruled the roost. The Beckenham Baths 'Ladies' Club would not admit the daughters of tradesmen, and the daughters of the 'superior' tradesmen would have nothing to do with girls who had attended what were then called 'Elementary' schools. But I wanted those girls who had learned to swim in those Elementary schools to continue their swimming as my 'customers' at the Baths, so I formed the Perseverance Club which the Beckenham SC (men) took over as a Ladies' Branch, they being more

democratic than the men's section of the Beckenham Baths Club, which became defunct about 1914. The Ladies Branch of Beckenham SC was successful, ..... their finances were sound, but any surplus was absorbed or spent by the men and that is the reason why the female side decided to be a separate Club."

In the 1961 ASA's Nationals, Beckenham Ladies' SC was placed in the Freestyle Team Championship for the fourth year running, that year Beckenham was third (Pamela Heald; Kathy Leake; Judy Gegan and Margaret Toms). 1962 saw Judy Gegan secured a place in the Empire Games team, reaching the final of the butterfly in Perth, Australia. Mr. Edward E. Lusher became the new Superintendent of the Beckenham Baths, and remained at Beckenham Road until retiring in 1977. At his retirement, he mentioned the fact that before the amalgamation of the two Clubs in 1976, he had been more involved with "The Ladies", and that his advice to the new Club would be "to retain its lady officers, as with their flashing eyes and charming manner, it was difficult for any manager not to agree to their requests"!

On 7th. January, 1964 it was reported that Miss Linda Ludgrove had joined the Club, and later that year both Linda Ludgrove and Diana Harris represented Great Britain. At the AGM, in December, later in 1964, it was recorded that Margaret Toms was now Mrs. Nicholas Brooke and that her mother, Eileen, had resigned as Club's Championships Hon. Secretary, to become the same for Kent County. For the first time in its history the Club had three current Internationalists (Judy Gegan; Linda Ludgrove; Diana Harris), who together with Margaret Toms (herself an ex-Internationalist) had won the ASA's Ladies Medley Team trophy in August at Crystal Palace National Sports Centre (Fig. 23.)

The Club had previously won the Title in 1959. The 1964 Nationals was a most successful one for Beckenham Ladies SC, in that Linda Ludgrove had won both Backstroke titles, the 220 yds., in a new English and British Native Record time; Diana Harris, the Girls' 110 yds. Breaststroke title with Sally May, second; Diana was also third in the Ladies' 110 yds. Breaststroke; Judy Gegan was third in the 110 yds. Butterfly race. Linda Ludgrove and Judy Gegan went on to represent Great Britain in the Tokyo Olympics. The 1964 Nationals was the first "event" at the new Crystal Palace National Sports Centre, and which the Beckenham Club has used as a training venue ever since.

Fig. 23.



Fig. 23. Beckenham Ladies' SC winning National Medley Team at CPNSC. From left to right, Margaret Toms, Linda Ludgrove, Judy Gepp and Diana Harris.

Figs. 24 (A & B).



Fig. 24, (A), Swimmers Presentation at Bromley Council Offices. From left to right, Back row, Jerry Birmingham (WP), Nick Chapman (WP), From left to right, Front row, Margaret Patten, Jill Barnes, Diana Harris, Judy Gegan, The Lady Mayor, Sharon Green, Margaret Lane-Joynt, Judy Kelly and Shirley White.



Fig. 24. (B), Beckenham Ladies' S.C. From left to right, Back row Caroline Tamlyn, Pat Hidden, Shirley Margerison, Pat Hidden. From left to right, Second row, Jane Chewwood, Ann Wheatley, Lyn Henry, Laura Gregory, Diana Harris with Harold Fern Trophy, Trudi Green, Shirley White. From left to right, Third row, Jane Harrison, A.N. Other, Jill Barnes, Sharon Green. From left to right, Front row A.N. Other, and Julie van Cuylenburg.



At the 1965 AGM, it was reported that for the second year running the Club had three current internationalists, and that Linda Ludgrove had broken the World Record in the 110 yds.Backstroke; Diana Harris had equalled the World Record in the 110 yds.Breaststroke, and that Judy Gegan had the 110 yds.Butterfly British Native and English record - not a bad record ! In the Six Nations International Meet in Rome that year, Beckenham Ladies' SC had three swimmers in the GB Ladies' Medley Team. It was also agreed that Diving should stay, and also at this meeting, Eileen Toms succeeded Joan Paine as Honorary Secretary with Mary Williams as an Assistant. On looking back at 1966, the three great International swimmers, Judy Gegan, Diana Harris and Linda Ludgrove must have provided a season of thrills filled with pride. For three years Beckenham Ladies' SC had had three current Internationals, who had brought back from Jamaica a total of six Gold and one Silver Medal, they were all three members of the English Medley Team which, at the Commonwealth Games, broke the World Record in winning the Championship - no other Club in the World has achieved this distinction - three members in a World Record breaking team.

1967 goes down in the Club history, as the year when Beckenham Ladies' SC won the National Ladies' Medley Team Championship and the National Ladies' Freestyle Team Championship on the same day and also broke the English Long Course Records for these events ! The Club was justly proud of winning both these team championships in the same year, and more particularly, proud of the swimmers, Judy Gegan, Sharon Green, Diana Harris and Linda Ludgrove, and also proud of Judy Kelly and Margaret Patten, who had selflessly given of their best in the heats in order to take some of the strain from some of those who swam in the finals. Linda Ludgrove retained her 110 and 220 yds. titles for another year. Diana Harris was the only British swimmer to win a Gold Medal at the World Student Games in Tokyo. Judy Gegan and Linda Ludgrove announced their retirement from competitive swimming at the end of the year.

Fig. 25 (A & B).



Fig. 25. Beckenham Ladies' SC, 1954, 1954 (A) Presentation at Bromley Council Offices. From left to right, Back row, The Mayor, Mary Williams, From left to right, Middle row, Judi Green, Sharon Green, Linda Ludgrove, Dina Harris, Roslyne Wilton, Margaret Lane-Joynt, Sally May, Judy Kelly. From left to right, Front row, Richard MacNance, Carol Bryant and Mike Rushon.



Fig. 25. (B). From left to right, Linda Ludgrove, Mary Williams, Sharon Green, Roslynn Wilton, Susan Smith, Elizabeth Hicks, Judy Kelly, Sally May, Mrs. Keighley, Margaret Lane-Joynt, Margaret Patten, Penny Upton, Judy Gegan and Diana Harris.

Carol Bryant, an Honorary member of the Club, swam for GB in the Paraplegic Olympic Games (Fig.25 A) in Stoke Mandeville, and won a Silver and a Bronze for swimming; a Gold for the Salom event, and a Silver for Table Tennis. At the Nationals in Blackpool in 1968, again the Freestyle Team Championship was won by Beckenham Ladies' SC (Margaret Patten, Diana Harris, Shirley Margerison and Sharon Green), and were second in the Medley Team event. Diana Harris won the 110 yds.Breaststroke, but in her heat she created a new British Native Record (1m.-17.6s.) - this being good enough to take her to Mexico to represent GB in the Olympic Games. In 1969, Beckenham Ladies SC, again won the Freestyle Team Title (Trudi Green, Jill Barnes, Diana Harris and Sharon Green) and were second in the Medley Team (Trudi Green, Diana Harris, Jill Barnes and Sharon Green). 1969 was the first year that the Club had competed abroad, taking part in the Euro Zwemlust Trofee, held in Utrecht, in competition with Clubs from other countries. Diana Harris and Gillian Treers competed in the 1970 Commonwealth Games, Edinburgh; and in 1972, Diana was joined by Susan Richardson at the Olympic Games in Munich. Sue Richardson and Caroline Tamlyn represent England in 1974 Commonwealth Games, and Helen Burnham and Judith Lowe were chosen to represent Great Britain, whilst Moira Brown and Marylin Borlase compete for Britain in the World Student Games in Moscow. At the 1975 AGM in November, Prof.J.M.Cameron became Medical Adviser and Pamela Meek became Treasurer of the Club. When the President, Mrs.Mollie Heald had taken over the Treasurership some 14 years previous the turn-over of the Club was approximately 500 per annum in 1961; that had increased by some 3,000% to 15,000 in 1975. Susan Barnard appeared for a short while in Beckenham, and was chosen for GB in the World Championships in Cali, along with Susan Richardson and Helen Burnham; and the same trio were chosen for the 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal. During the year, Graeme Gibson joined David Dunne in being the Club's representative for GB in Minsk.

Fig. 26.



Fig. 26, Beckenham Ladies' SC Medley Relay Team.  
From left to right, Back row, Sally Cooksley, Judith Lowe.  
From left to right Front row, Sue Richardson and Helen Burnham

A Special General Meeting was called on 7th. August, 1976, to discuss amalgamation with Beckenham SC; the result being 59 to 9 in favour of such an amalgamation. Between 1920 and 1976, Beckenham Ladies' SC had achieved every honour open to them, and had won every Championship and Trophy for which they had been eligible. The final AGM was held on 17th. November, 1976, and was closed with the Secretary's declaration that, "Beckenham Ladies' Swimming Club is dissolved and its assets transferred to Beckenham Swimming Club".

## CHAPTER 5.

### THE 'NEW' BECKENHAM S.C. (since 1976).

"However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results."  
Winston Churchill.

"From 1976, it is the sincere hope that the one club of the future will be even greater than the sum of the two 'pasts'." - Eileen Toms (1976)

The "new" Club was formed in 1976, being the amalgamation of the Men's Club (founded in 1893) and Beckenham Ladies' Club (founded in 1903). It has a proud record of Olympians, Commonwealth Games and World Championship competitors, and International representatives, together with enjoying a long standing reputation for competitive success at all levels. Throughout the years the Clubs have produced over 60 Internationalists, including 18 Olympians, and 4 World Record Holders.

On the 4th., October, 1976, was when the first "mixed" club night took place. Initially, there was a membership of around 700, consisting of a "Tadpole" Section for children who had progressed from the Borough's Teaching programme; Junior and Senior competitive swimmers; a strong Water Polo Section (men and women); and a flourishing competitive Masters' group for the over-25's, many of whom were ex-competitive swimmers, who liked to swim hard once or twice a week. There was, is, and hopefully always will be, a place for everybody in the Club. Beckenham Swimming Club, which is not subsidised, has always depended heavily on the proceeds of various fund-raising activities, organised by a dedicated band of voluntary helpers, and in recent years has been very indebted to Mrs. June Piper, ably supported by her husband, Peter. The prime object of the Club has been, and is, to promote the improvement and practice of all disciplines of Swimming, particularly swimming at all levels and at all ages together with Water-Polo and Masters' swimming.

The main Club Night, which is the focus of Club activity is, at the moment, on Monday evenings at the Beckenham Leisure Centre, 24, Beckenham Road, Beckenham, Kent, between 6 and 10 p.m. in all three pools. Swimmers are placed in groups according to age and ability and are under the supervision of the Club Coach with help from assistant coaches. Promotion between groups is continually under review. During Club Night, the Club's administrative officers are always available to answer questions or deal with problems - coaches have no responsibility for administration. There is a Club shop selling Club "gear" - costumes, trunks, caps, sweat shirts, track suits, goggles, floats, etc., and members are expected to wear Club uniform whenever they are representing the Club in all competitions. As swimmers progress, optional extra training is available leading to more advanced training in graduated squads, or more water polo training. In the squad system swimmers are prepared for all types of competition, from local inter-club matches, through County and District events up to the ASA National Championships and International Meets.

The first President of the "new" Beckenham Swimming Club was former Olympian, Chris Walkden, and the first Annual General Meeting after the amalgamation was held on Wednesday, 16th., November, 1977. Our Coach "Hammy" Smith departed, but the Club was singularly fortunate in being able to welcome David Haller, the GB team Coach, and as his assistant, "Bill" Penny, an outstandingly successful age group coach, to follow "Hammy" Smith, Mike Stafford and Eric Henderson. Also in 1977 "Bill" and

Muriel Rushton departed for the wilds of the Kent Coast on "Bill's" retirement; Kate and George Hartshorn, both founders and stalwarts of the Supporters' Section and Editor of the Club's News-sheet, "Splash" and subsequently, "Splashdown", moved to Sussex. In 1977, in celebration of Her Majesty, The Queen's Silver Jubilee, the Club organised a two session, Age Group Meet, at West Wickham Pool on 7th., May, which was a great success. It was recorded in the 1977 September Issue of "Splashdown" that Sue Field had been selected for the GB Life Saving Team (memories of Harold Austin !); Michael Clark, no relation of Dr. Mike Clark of Water Polo, had been selected for the GB "B" team; and that Colin Kirkwood had reached the notable milestone in his Water Polo career, one thousand games.

Since, 1979 the Club has organised its own "designated" Open Meet, firstly at West Wickham Baths (1979,1980, and 1981), and then annually from 1983, at the Crystal Palace National Sports Centre; and the Centenary Open Meet was held in March,1993 at the Crystal Palace National Sports Centre, when numerous former Olympians and Internationalist Beckenham swimmers came out of the wood-work, to support an extremely successful and enjoyable Meet.

1978 was to be a year in which the new regime achieved success in full measure in terms of swimming results, winning every Club and National Trophy that was possible to win and the winning of the National League Final (Figs 27 A/B) was certainly the last of a "Grand Coup" for the year; apart from that in Water Polo, thanks to Colin Kirkwood and David Manning.

Apart from the team efforts there were the excellent medal winning performances of Margaret Kelly, David Dunne and Duncan Goodhew in the World Championships and Commonwealth Games. Mandy James (Wales), who also swam in the World Championships, together with Richard Iredale (Scotland) and Christina and Rosanna Lam (Malaysia) were also selected to swim for their countries in Edmonton.

In addition, Pat MacNamee's success in obtaining sponsorship (McLaren's Meat Processors Ltd.) after so many setbacks (Fig. 28). It was about this time that "Bob" Beasley, took over the mantle of Raymond Brown, in that he took up correspondence in the Local Paper (Fig. 29).

The death of 58 year old "Ginger" Rowlinson, however, did cast a shadow over the events of the year, for there have been, and will be, few so devoted to swimming in general, and Beckenham SC., in particular. The service such as "Ginger" gave to the Club and to its swimmers will be long remembered. Club had an office at Beckenham Baths from 10th August,1978, until it was converted into Beckenham Leisure Centre in 1989 (Fig.30).





Fig. 27, (A), Speedo League - 1979. Coaches and Team Captains with Trophy  
Bill Penny, Andy Wood, Maggie Kelly and Dave Haller



Fig. 27, (B), From left to right, Back row, Bill Penny, Maggie Kelly, Mandy James, Dave Haller, Richard Iredale, Jane Cahill, Kim Burns, Ian Hicks, Maureen Cameron, Andy Wood, Sally Oliver, Phil Osborn, Jane Bickerstaff, Ian Hughes, Doug Golder, Colin Dale, Garry Freese, Jackie Elliot. From left to right Middle row, Caroline Shephard, Lawrence Davidson, Mark Sheldon, Nicky West, Paul Ryan, Richard Grimshaw. From left to right, Front row, Terry Ward, Heidi Quinn, Karen Brazier, Nick Hayler, Neil and Andrew Smith, Nicky Harwood, A.N. Other, Joe Staggs and Richard MacNamee.



Fig. 28. McLaren Meat Processors Ltd., Sponsorship. From left to right, Mrs. June Piper, Ken Ludkin (Production Manager) Marylin Ridgewell, Margaret Kelly, Mr. John Boswell (General Manager), Dave Haller (Chief Coach), John Mills, Bill Penny (Asst. Chief Coach) and Mr. Ken Luckhurst

## No nightmares for swimmer

I feel I must take issue with your correspondent Mrs Brenda Moore regarding her complaint in her letter in the May 31 issue. She speaks of a hideous cockroach floating towards you, and goes on to say that after that nightmare experience she will never use the Pools again.

I have been a regular swimmer at the Beckenham Pools for more years than I care to remember, and so far I have not suffered from nightmares as a result. I would suggest that had she pointed out the

insect to an attendant it would have been instantly removed.

Be fair, it is surely unreasonable that a single cockroach in a 90 year old building, warm and damp at all times should be the cause of such a panic.

I notice from the photograph that she is showing off the hideous creature, perhaps she has formed an attachment for it.

R. H. Beasley, Beckenham

Fig. 29, "Bob" Beasley doing a Raymond Brown!

Fig. 30.



Fig. 30, The New Beckenham Leisure Centre, 1989.

In the following year there was the largest number of Internationalists, Senior, Junior and Water Polo, ever, up till 1979, in one Club. Margaret Kelly received an MBE from HM The Queen early in the year and was congratulated on her Gold Medal in the World Cup in Tokyo. From the Club's point of view (Fig. 31), it was as successful as in 1978, in, that again, every trophy that it was possible to win, was won. In the Scottish Short Course Nationals, Richard Iredale won the Mens' 100m.Butterfly, and Maureen Cameron won the Silver in the Womens' 100m.Backstroke. At the ASA National Age Group Competitions in 1979, a team consisting of Maureen Cameron, Jane North, Katy Archer and Nicky West won the Girls' 16/17 years Medley Team Title in a new record time. In the Scottish Age Group Championships in November,1979, Maureen Cameron was awarded a Gold and Silver in the Backstroke in the 16/17 year group, her time for the 100m. broke a record of five years standing, but she missed the 200m title by a touch, although like the winner, her time was faster than the previous record.

Pamela Meek resigned at the end of the year as Treasurer, and was succeeded by Mr.Gordon Muir. 1980, apart from the Moscow Olympic Games, saw the end of the sponsorship by McLaren's Meat Processors Ltd., due to commercial considerations. Our GB Olympians (Margaret Kelly, Duncan Goodhew and Paul Marshall), together with Peter Evans (Australia) had a tally of two Gold, one Silver (Fig. 32) and two Bronze Medals - from one Club, quite a nice collection ! At the National Long Course Championships the Club again won the Optrex Trophy, and as this was the third year running the Club had won this Trophy, Optrex presented it to the Club. As from the 1st.,September,1981, the Tadpoles and Dolphins Sections were absorbed into the Club, and renamed the Beckenham Swimming Club Teaching Group.



Fig. 31, (A), Beckenham SC Cadbury's Club Team Champions.  
 From left to right Spencer Pratt, Paul Ryan (part hidden), Mandy James, Mark Beveridge, Jane Cahill,  
 Kim Burns, Phill Osborn, Peter Evans, Maggie Kelly, Dave Dunne, Anne Hefford, Jane North,  
 Doug Golder, Jamie Walker, Graham Sadler, and Duncan Beveridge.



Fig. 31, (B), Virtually all Beckenham SC swimmers at a Presentation in Bromley Council Offices.

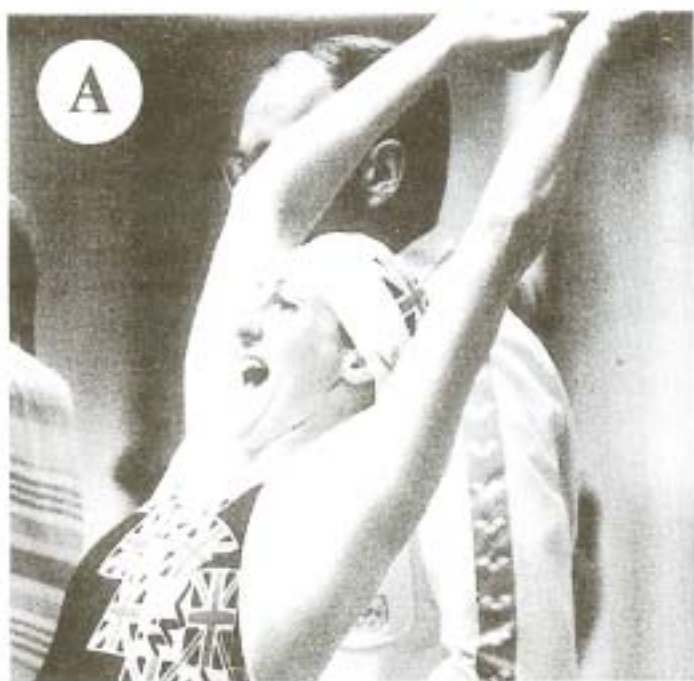


Fig. 32, (A), Margaret Kelly at the end of the Olympic Medley Relay in the Moscow Olympics, 1980, when G.B. won the Silver Medal



Fig. 30, (B), Margaret Kelly with Coach David Haller.

At the AGM on Wednesday, 18th., November, 1981, Eileen Toms retired as Honorary General Secretary, having held office in Beckenham Ladies' SC and Beckenham SC for almost 25 years - and to this day one is delighted to see she is still in office. Also at this time, the Treasurer, Gordon Muir, resigned on his leaving the district. These two important posts were filled by Mrs. Prim Cameron and by Mr. Marcel Roberts.

As so many senior swimmers retire after the Olympic Games, the following year was rather quiet; but the Club and its Chief Coach, "Bill" Penny, did have seven Senior Internationalists, namely Anne Hefford, Juliet Archer, Colin Dale, Philip Osborn, Frank August, Jamie Walker and Wilson Mills, with Donna Dawes, Louise Maidens, Jackie Elliott and Simon Driscoll all swimming in Junior Internationals.

At the National Long Course Championships at Crystal Palace NSC in August, 1982, the Club had 24 finalists; Andrew Gray won Silver in the 1500m. Freestyle, and Bronze Medals were won by Frank August (200m. Breaststroke), Phil. Osborn (100m. Freestyle), Andrew Gray (400m. Freestyle) and the Women's Medley and Freestyle Teams. Philip Osborn was chosen to swim for England in the Commonwealth Games in Brisbane, where he gained a Silver Medal in the Men's 4 x 100m. Freestyle Team Relay. Gray, was not considered, having been banned for two years for a drug offence during a Meet in Edinburgh. It was reported by Colin Kirkwood that Women's Water Polo was having a mini-boom up and down the country, and the Club was advised to watch out for "our liberated lassies" in a few years time! 1983 saw its first official recognition, with the ASA holding a Women's Water Polo Championship, followed by trials for a GB Ladies' team. In the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games the Club was represented by two swimmers Iain Campbell and 13 year old Zara Long, the youngest swimmer up till then to compete for GB at an Olympic Games; in addition, the Club's President and Honorary Medical Adviser was also with the GB Team as the Official Team doctor. With "Bill" Penny now were "Tony" Ross and Conrad Cawley as assistant coaches, Jon Glenn and John Anderson having left. Lucy Hilder represented England in a 6-Nations Women's Water Polo Tournament in France, and in doing so, became the Club's and the County's first ever Women's International Water Polo player. Not to be outdone, the Masters' Section had been entering various competitions, and its members had been winning numerous Gold, Silver and Bronze medals. The newest section was the "re-born" Synchronised Swimming Section, and was reported to be very popular and locally successful with an increasing membership. Unfortunately before the end of the decade, the Section ceased to exist due, in part, to the lack of interest and the larger successful Synchronised Swimming Section of Bexley Swimming Club.

In January, 1985, the Club lost the services of "Bill" Penny, who had come to the Club in 1977 as Assistant Coach, and went on to become Chief Coach in 1980. During the eight years he was at Beckenham, he brought many excellent swimmers with him and his coaching standard would be a difficult one to follow. He was succeeded as Chief Coach, some six months later, by Olympic Backstroker (1980/84), Douglas Campbell, brother of Iain Campbell, with Tony Ross remaining as assistant. Nicola Harwood joined Lucy Williams (née Hilder) as a GB Women's Water Polo International, whilst Jeremy "The Boot" Birmingham was now GB Water Polo Team Captain. The greatest tragedy to hit the Club in 1985, was the untimely death of Past-President, Chief Coach, former Olympic swimmer and friend, Alan Hime. Thanks to the efforts of Doug Campbell, four of the Club's senior swimmers were selected for the 1986 Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh (Stephen Willis, Nicola Fibbens and Nina Herbert



represented England, whilst Iain Campbell represented Scotland); Nicola Fibbens won an individual Bronze, plus a Team Gold and Silver. Another three received GB selection at Senior (Sarah Garrett and Kate McDermott) and Junior level (Neil Grenyer). It was appropriate that during the Presidential year of Dr. Mike Clark that in the Water Polo Section, the success of the Ladies' Team due largely to the coaching they had received from their Captain, Australian, Lesley Dickens over the previous few years, three ladies, Lucy Williams (née Hilder), Sheila Hollingsworth and Nicola Harwood, were selected for the Great Britain squad, along with Jackie Elliott. They had played at International level and competed in the first ever Womens' World Water Polo Tournament in the World Championships in Madrid in 1986; and one of them is the current (1993) GB Captain (Nicola Herbert, née Harwood).

In 1987 Kent County appointed Mrs. M. J. Parkins (Beckenham SC) as their first Masters' Secretary - she was succeeded in 1989/90 by Maureen Cameron, also of Beckenham SC, and formerly Beckenham Ladies' SC.. For a number of years one or two governing bodies produced competitive opportunities for those "past their best". In road running, cross-country and in orienteering, a "Veterans" class has been included in most events. In swimming, the idea of providing competitions for "Veterans" started in the United States. The Americans called it "Masters' Swimming", and anyone over 25 is eligible and competitions are arranged for swimmers in five yearly increments up to 80 years and over. It is only within the last 10-15 years that Masters' Swimming in Britain has developed a following. At International level the most significant date was 1985, when FINA asked Member Federations to recognise Masters' Swimming, encouraging the first World Masters' Championships in Tokyo in July 1986. In 1990, LEN formed its first Technical Masters' Swimming Committee. The first Kent County Masters' Competition (to be a Championships as from 1993) was not till 1989, when it was shown that there appeared to be a considerable demand for masters swimming in the County. In their Centennial year, 1991, Kent County ASA was invited to organise an Inter-County Championship at CPNSC for the Southern Counties ASA. In Kent, over the last five years, Masters' Swimming has gone from strength to strength, encouraging swimmers to stay fit, by allowing them to compete "just for the fun of it". However, with the advent of Inter-County; Inter-District; National and International Competitions may mark the start of a more serious approach, but only time will tell. A Masters' Section was first mooted in the Minutes of Beckenham SC (Mens' Club) on the 1st. March, 1968, when a Working Committee was established to consider the formation of such a section to swim in No 3 pool on Club Night from 9.15pm until 10pm. Chris Walkden was deputed to look for suitable recruits; and some 25 years later he is still responsible for the Masters' Section of the Beckenham Club which now is well established and continues to train, gain medals and break individual records at County, District, National and International level, in all the age groups. The first Masters Inter-Club Competition took place in September, 1992, when Beckenham drew on points with Shiverers, followed by Haywards Heath and Brighton SC..

Fully cognisant of the Local Government Act, 1988 and Compulsory Competitive Tendering - one realised that Bromley Council, like all Local Authorities, had to put the management of swimming pools and most other sports facilities, out to tender. It was fully appreciated that difficult decisions would have to be made particularly in respect of conflicts between public access and swimming development. As a Competitive Swimming Club, one, quite naturally, wished to retain its current Club night, if possible,

together with its training and competitive times at Beckenham Leisure Centre. Whilst Bromley Borough might have wished to reprogramme them, a fact which was fully appreciated, there were certain important factors to be borne in mind, in particular, Club nights, which are "family" affairs and not really able to be undertaken by Local Authorities, should begin in the early evening in order that coaching of young children could continue. Early evening times cannot be substituted by extra early morning time. Having to provide training at other pools increases the Club's expenditure and therefore the swimmers' fees. Movement of swimmers to other pools over recent years, due to pool closures, had involved the Club with extra expenses, and although it was recognised that the closures were necessary, parents with children in different squads/groups had been forced to travel between various pools, had become disgruntled and so members and revenue were lost. There was a definite need for Local Authorities to teach swimming, particularly with the decline in Local Education Authority lessons. As a Swimming Club it was NOT its duty to teach swimming, as new members were required to pass a swimming ability test before being admitted as a member. There was a considerable need for a partnership in this role.

In 1987, David Stacey set a new British and Commonwealth Record for the 800m.Freestyle, and a new English and British Record in the 1500m.Freestyle; and Mike Fibbens set a new English and British record in the 100m.Butterfly. Although having been with the Club for a short time, Doug Campbell left at the end of the Summer, 1988, leaving the way for Tony Ross to succeed him as Chief Coach, having been with the Club since 1983. During 1988/89, it was decided to replace the Presidents' Collar with a Presidential Collorette (Fig.33); and it was further decided to purchase a hall-marked Silver Cup, from a friend of Mr. & Mrs.Williams, parents of a swimmer. This Cup was engraved with the names of the Presidents of the new amalgamated Club, and it is retained by the President during his/her year of office, and is known as the President's Cup (Fig. 34).

Figs. 33 & 34.



Fig. 33, Collorette and Jewel.



Fig. 34, The President's Cup

New leisure facilities were Officially Opened by Cllr.R.L.Ainsby, The Worshipful The Mayor of the London Borough of Bromley, at 11am. on Friday,14th.,July,1989, at the site of the old Beckenham Baths. They were to be called the Beckenham Leisure Centre. As far as the Club was concerned, one of the changes that affected swimmers was the closure of the original entrance to the pool buildings, all users of the overall complex being required to use the main entrance to the new Sports Building situated beyond and to the right of the old building. Access to and from the pools would be via a new access corridor that crossed the No2 Pool and adjoined with the old corridor in what used to be the Manager's office. Such a move necessitated No2 pool being shortened by 5ft. to accommodate this link corridor.

The Club had two representatives at the 1988 Seoul Olympics, namely Mike Fibbens and Zara Long; however, there was also in Seoul a former Beckenham Olympian, Margaret Hohmann (née Kelly), representing Wigan Wasps SC.. Zara Long followed this up, by going to the Commonwealth Games in Auckland, where she reached two finals as well as picking up a Bronze medal in the English Relay team; and Zara again represented GB at the World Championships in Perth, Australia in January,1991. For the second year running Zara had successes at the National Championships, and as a consequence, swam in Athens at the European Championships. At a Grand Prix Meet in Canada, she realised her ambition, by beating the 200m.IM record held for a number of years by Sharron Davies. It was also a good year for Angela Pendrich, with successes in the Kent's, the Southern's and from there being selected to swim at the European Junior Championships in July, when she came fourth in the 400m.Freestyle. Along the way, she set new Junior Scottish records in the 200m., 400m., and the 800m.Freestyle. She was selected to train with the Olympic Squad on the strength of her time of 4m-21.2s. for the 400m.Freestyle. Unfortunately, she was pipped at the finish in the Trials, and missed out of selection for the 1992 Barcelona Olympics - the first Olympic Games since 1936, that there was no Beckenham swimmer in the GB Team. During 1992 the Club lost the services of Tony Ross, on health grounds, and there was a complete coaching re-think, with the Club welcoming back "Bill" Penny as its Chief Coach after a 7 year sojourn in Spain. The Club was extremely fortunate to have his knowledge and expertise - especially with its Centenary Year on its doorstep.

## CHAPTER 5.

### *WHO WAS & IS WHO IN BECKENHAM SWIMMING CLUB.*

"Men are made by nature unequal. It is vain, therefore, to treat them as if they were equal." J.A.Froude (1877)

During its 100 year history Beckenham Swimming Club has had a number of distinguished members, as the following small "Who was and Who's who" section mentions. In addition there has been, and are, many more equally distinguished members of, and in the Club, who this writer has been unable to mention. Please accept his humble apologies.

#### Mrs. Alice Muriel Austin.

'Ma' Austin, (Fig. 35) as she was affectionately known, when she was Hon. Secretary of Beckenham Ladies SC (1920-1930). She was the wife of Mr.H.R.Austin, (see infra), and was first elected to the Executive of Kent County WP/SA in 1921, and was their first Lady President in 1925.

She was first elected to the Southern Counties Executive in 1915 and served on numerous Committees, filling with distinction the offices of Honorary Secretary and Chairman of the Ladies' Committees and also Honorary Secretary of the Coaching and Education Committee, the latter appointment she retained by popular demand in 1926 during her year as President of Southern Counties ASA - during the Association's 37 year history, there had not before been a Lady President. It came as no surprise therefore, that in 1951 she was nominated as the first Lady President of the ASA (Fig.36) - and subsequently, in 1955, she became Honorary Treasurer of SCASA. All this time she continued as first Honorary Secretary/Treasurer (1908-1930), an then as Honorary Treasurer (1930-1954) of the Ladies Section and then Beckenham Ladies' SC - as well as holding the office of Honorary Treasurer to the Southern Counties ASA for very many years. She died in July,1961.

#### Mr.Henry Ratcliffe Austin

Harold/Harry.Austin, (Fig.37) the Superintendent of Beckenham Swimming Baths as from 1st.,February,1901, was a well known and respected authority on Ornamental Swimming (forerunner of synchronised swimming) and the official lecturer of the Southern Counties ASA (Fig. 38).

He had also been one of the first swimmers in the country to gain the much coveted Diploma of the Royal Life-Saving Society, and he always maintained his interest in Life-Saving. When first appointed to Beckenham Baths, his sister, Miss Austin, also took charge of the ladies' and girls' department and was, it is believed, for five years the only instructress in swimming. He married, Alice, in 1907.

#### Raymond V. Brown.

Raymond Brown, (Fig.39) who died in 1959, founded Beckenham Swimming Club in 1893 and became Treasurer of KCWP/SA in 1907 and served for four years till 1911. He became President of Kent County in 1913 and served the County as President till 1920. Apart from 1910, he was Treasurer of Beckenham SC from its formation until 1934 - some 41 years; and was Secretary for the period of the First World War (1912-1918); and President 1954-1955, he was Beckenham Swimming Club.



Fig. 35, A much younger Mrs. Alice M. Austin



Fig. 36, Mrs. Austin, the first lady President of the ASA.





Fig. 39, Raymond V. Brown.



A. Victor "Peddler" Palmer.



#### A. Victor Palmer.

1935 saw a new Baths Superintendent, Mr. A. Victor Palmer, (Fig. 40) who was made an Honorary Member of the Club, was to play an important part in the administration of the Club during the Second World War. At that time he was Acting Secretary/Treasurer, and gained many successes against Club and Service teams. Beckenham being the only Club to beat the Combined American Forces Team which included Taylor Drysdale, the World Medley Champion. "Peddler" Palmer was Baths Manager from 1935 until he retired in 1962, at the time he was Club President; in 1962 he moved to Totland Bay, Isle of Wight, to enjoy his retirement, before dying in 1977. During the War he was both Secretary/Treasurer, and led the Club in a very active life throughout the war, handing over to returning members in 1946 a very strong financially sound Club.

#### Lord Forster of Lepe.

Henry William Forster, President of Beckenham SC from 1908 to 1920, was born in 1866, the son of Major John Forster of Southend Village; he was educated at Eton and Oxford, playing cricket for both and also for the Gentlemen v Players. He was a Lord Commissioner for the Treasury, 1902-1905; Conservative MP for Sevenoaks, Kent, 1892-1919; Financial Secretary to the War Office, 1915-1919. He lost two sons, tragically killed in the First World War, and it was as a memorial to them that he gave Forster Park, Catford to the Borough of Lewisham for the recreation and enjoyment of the people. He was created 1st Baron Forster of Lepe, Southampton in 1919 when he became Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1920 until 1925. He died in 1936 and left two daughters but no living heir.

#### Lt.-Col. Hon. Cuthbert James.

Born in 1872, the second son of 2nd Lord Northbourne, was educated at Harrow and Magdalen College, Oxford. Gazetted to 2nd. East Surrey Regiment in 1894; joined Egyptian Army in 1899, and rejoined the Army as a Major in 1914 in 7th. Service Battalion of the East Surrey Regiment, seeing service in France, before transferring to the Royal Marines in 1916. Was heavy-weight boxing Champion for both the Army and the Royal Navy in 1898. He married in 1905, and was President of Beckenham SC from 1921 until 1924, dying in 1930.

#### Lady (Ruth) Sutton.

President of Beckenham Ladies SC from 1922 until her death in 1931, when she was succeeded by Mrs. Margery Coffin. Ruth's husband George, who died in 1934 and to whom she married in 1884, was created Baronet George Sutton in 1922, almost a year after she was first elected President, this fact does not appear to have been noted until now, or was it conveniently overlooked, like the date of the Foundation of The Branch of Beckenham Swimming Club. At one time there was a Ward named after her, in the then, Beckenham Cottage Hospital.

#### Miss Gertrude M. Jenkins.

This self effacing lady first joined Beckenham Ladies' SC in 1908, when it was still a Branch of Beckenham SC, being elected to the Committee at the AGM held on 16th., February, 1912. She was Assistant to Mr. Austin, the Bath Superintendent, for most of her working life. She remained a member of "The Ladies" all her life, being Assistant Secretary to Mrs. Austin 1924-1930; becoming a Vice-President in 1959, and President 1963-1964. Never too proud to perform the most menial of tasks for her beloved Club, she was a shining example of what loyalty in all its forms really incurs.

One could say she was a true Beckenham Lady, being responsible for instructing the art of Ornamental Swimming in the Club for over 40 years !. She died in 1970

Charles T.F.Watts.

Charles was Chairman of the Elementary Schools Swimming Association and Principal of the Beckenham County School for Boys. "Charlie" Watts was President of Beckenham SC from 1932 until his death in 1936. In Kent County ASA, he was Honorary Treasurer, 1925-1933; and President in 1933. In Southern Counties, Charles Watts was President in 1932, having been Honorary Treasurer from 1928 until 1936.

Ena F.Jewry (née Compton).

Ena joined Beckenham Ladies SC in 1928, became a Life member and was President 1966/67. She served as Honorary General Secretary in the 1930s. A one-time member of the Executive Council of the Beckenham Schools' Swimming Association; Coach/Trainer (1937/39) of the Association Girls Team, with the resultant success in the London Schools' Competition, etc.. From this involvement came Ena's emergence as a first class coach, introducing many post-war Olympians (Margaret Wellington & Ron Stedman), as well as other International and National Champions, to the sport. Her interest, encouragement and development of swimming in schools continued until her retirement in 1970. Her support and work for Beckenham SC continues to this day - no matter how menial or important the work - she is never found wanting.

John Rowlinson.

"Ginger", was a very loyal servant of Beckenham SC and his duties as Secretary were carried out conscientiously and efficiently. This slim, ginger-haired, six footer, before the War, returned to Beckenham, rather more "rotund", and was a great source of "home brewed beer", in order to make the Meetings flow. Almost immediately he was made a member of the Committee, and was Assistant Secretary for two years, first to J.Lawson Wrathall, and then to Eric C.Bingley, before taking on the onerous task of Honorary Secretary, a post he held from December,1948, for 26 years, until the amalgamation of the Ladies' and Mens' Clubs to form the new Beckenham Swimming Club in December,1976. He was a County Starter, Judge and Timekeeper, and would be always willing to give his service, especially to youth organisations. As an official, he was noted for chatting to the swimmers to give them confidence and relaxation. He enjoyed Water Polo and played as a "2 yarder" in all the Club teams and for Kent. His humour and singing was a firm foundation of the Club's social activities, and the success of the Anglo-Netherlands tours to Wageningen and Arnhem (Fig.41) was largely due to "Ginger"'s presence and organisation in and out of the water. For some years, along with Reg.Mardon, "Bobbie" Hale and Derek Camp, he organised the running of the local Boy Scouts and Girl Guides Swimming Galas. He was President of Beckenham SC - 1969/70. He is remembered by the John Rowlinson Cup, awarded to the Club with the most points in the Beckenham SC Open Meet.

Fig. 41.

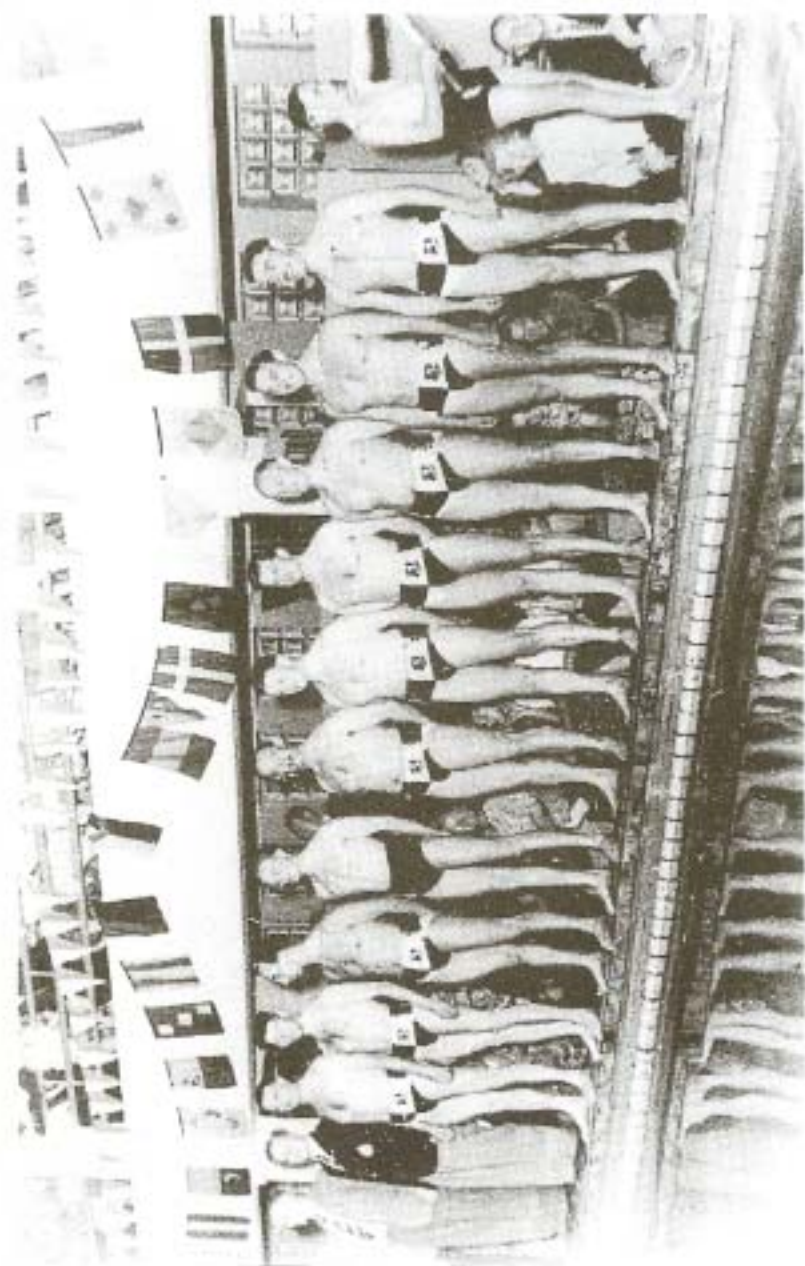


Fig. 41, Beckenham SC v Arnheim PSC, Arnheim, Holland, 1948. From left to right, or top to bottom, Eric Bingley, Norman Beadle, Peter Dodman, Jack Nurse, "Wiggy" Twill, Ted Hooker, "Ginger" Rowlinson, Derek Camp, Brian Piddock, Reg Mardon, Franco Niel (swam freestyle for Australia in 1948 Olympics), and "Buster" Beeton

Reg M.Mardon.

Reg. joined Beckenham SC in 1933, and was an immediate friend of "Ginger" Rowlinson; after the War he was, like "Ginger" Rowlinson elected on to the Committee, and soon became the Swimming Honorary Secretary and official coach.

Eric Stratton.

Eric, (Fig. 42) joined Beckenham SC in 1924, and soon demonstrated his fondness of the breaststroke. Along with Rom. Gabrielsen, Eric joined the Empire SC in 1938/39, and in an International Swimming Meet at Wembley represented the Empire against the Rest of the World, with Rom. in the Freestyle and Eric doing the Breaststroke. In 1938, he was Silver medallist in the National 200 yds. Breaststroke Championship event, and from 1929 he was the Kent Breast- and Backstroke Champion, titles which he held for six years, whilst being a reserve for Water Polo in Kent.

Ronald E. Stedman.

Ron. (Fig. 43) joined Beckenham SC in the late 1930's, being the nephew of Mrs. Kate I. Bridges (née Stedman). In mid-1945, he was awarded his Club Colours and in June, 1947, it was reported that Ronnie had been chosen for his first International for England against the other Home Countries; and in 1948, having won the 100 yds. Freestyle Championship in the Nationals, along with Margaret Wellington of "The Ladies", he was picked to represent GB in the Olympics in Wembley (Fig. 44). Both these Olympians owe much to the coaching they received from Ena Compton, later Ena Jewry. Later that year Stedman equalled the British Native Record of 53 secs. for the 100 yds.

Figs. 42 & 43.



Fig. 42, Eric C. Stratton.



Fig. 43, Ronald E. Stedman.



Fig. 44, Ronnie in Olympic gear.



Chris Walkden *en route* to the  
1960 Rome Olympics.

### Christopher Charles Walkden.

Chris (Fig. 45) who had "learned" to swim as a 10 year-old on a family holiday, first took swimming lessons at Beckenham Baths at the ripe old age of 12 years, mainly due to his having envied his brother Anthony's achievement in swimming for his school, but also his younger brother, Gordon, was then learning how to swim. The Crawl did not come easily to Chris., but as a Breaststroker, he was a "natural", and in 1950, Sid Ford, suggested he should join Beckenham SC. Improvement was rapid, under Eric Stratton, and in June, 1955 he was chosen to represent GB against Germany, his first International in Bon-Accord Baths, Aberdeen. At this time Reg Mardon and Chris decided to work together to see if individual coaching would help, and it did, the main problem in those days being where to train, and how to get the best from one's training when alone in a pool. The nearest 55 yard long Bath, was Brockwell Park Lido, for his long distance swimming, and Beckenham for his sprint training, averaging 3 mile per day. Now 17, he won his first Senior National Title, 200yds., at Blackpool; the Beckenham SC team which reached the finals of the National Mens' Medley Relay event in 1955, having beaten Birkenhead SC. in the heat, was Mike Clark, Chris Walkden, Martin Hardcastle and Graham Bownes, but were beaten into fourth place by Otter, Wallasey and York City SC. Chris who was to win two more titles, was rewarded in 1955 with the Parker Trophy from Kent County, and the Allen J.Perring Trophy from Southern Counties, for being the most outstanding swimmer in Kent and the Southern Counties. In 1956, after retaining his National Title, he was selected to swim in the 200m.Breaststroke in the Melbourne Olympic Games. The air flight was the first occasion that Chris had flown, with the Super Consolation stopping in Greece, Iraq, Pakistan, India and Malaya before reaching Melbourne, three days after leaving London. In 1957, having swum regularly in Internationals, his training was, for a while, seriously interrupted after leaving Quinton School to join the RAF for two years National Service, but gradually he regained his position in GB swimming, and went on one of his "most memorable trips" to Communist China. It was then that Chris damaged his right knee and he was sent to the Orthopaedic Department, at Guys' Hospital, where they recommended surgery; this was not exactly acceptable to young Chris, who agreed to Reg Mardon's suggestion of his going to get a second opinion from that well respected swimmers' Doctor with Sutton & Cheam SC, Dr.Hume Kendall, who on seeing the troublesome joint, advised against surgery, but rather Chris should strengthen the leg by exercises (ie. intensive physiotherapy). This improved his knee, and it was not until many years later, after his competitive years, that he was called back to Guys' Hospital Orthopaedic Department for a research project into how knee joints had improved, or otherwise, over the years; Chris. was told his knee was good and was asked what he had done with it, on being told, the surgeon informed Chris (Fig. 46) that that was what they were then recommending rather than surgery ! Improving all the time, in 1958, he gained a Bronze Medal in the VI Empire & Commonwealth Games, Cardiff, and competed in the European Championships; it was this same year, that he produced his best performance, equalling the World Record for 200m.Breaststroke in 2m.-36.6s.. That one evening in Wallasey, in November, 1958, he captured 8 English and British Native Records.

Fig. 46

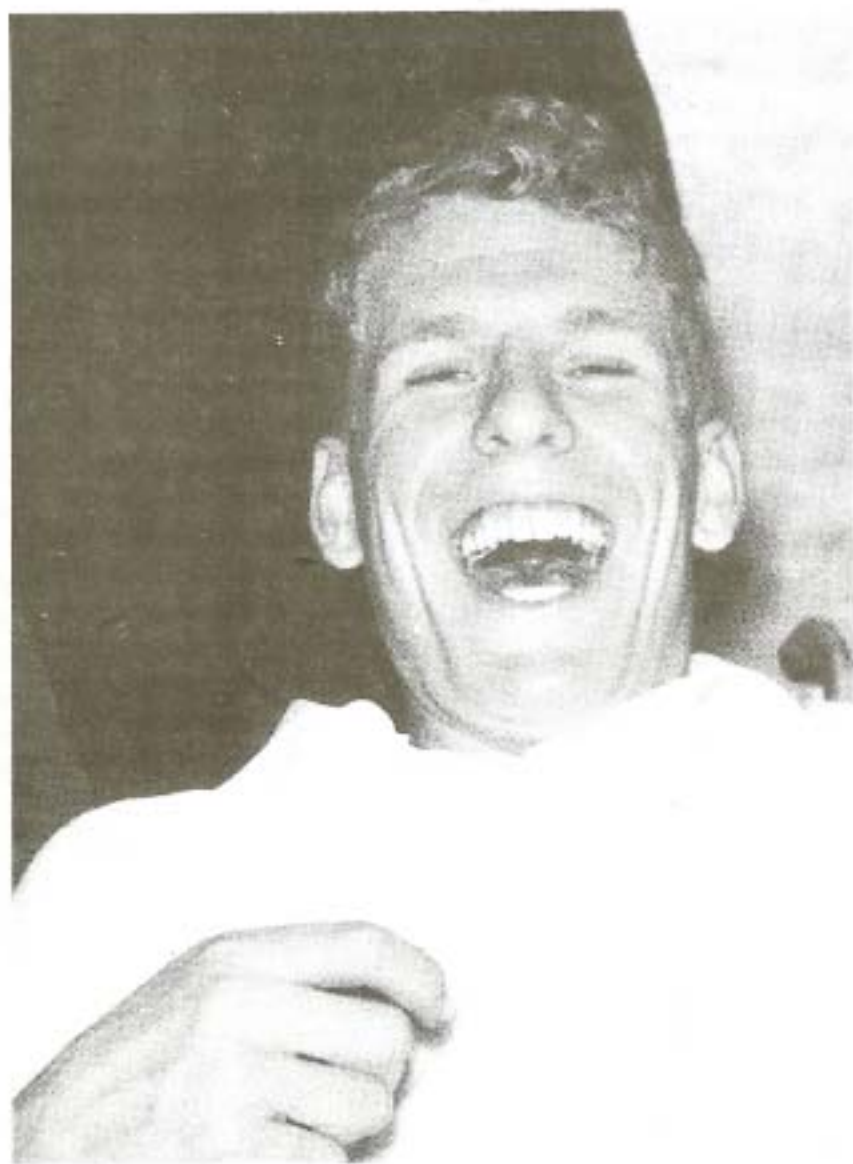


Fig. 46, Chris having heard the remarks from the Orthopaedic Surgeon.

It was about this time that apart from breaking records, he got a different one, being fined 3 for having been caught, and "booked" for speeding on his scooter on the way home from an Inter-Services Meet at Eltham Baths. He "retired" in 1959 to earn a living, but once settled in a printing company, he was given permission to train during working hours, and came back, after battling against an extra stone of weight, to compete in the 1960 Rome Olympics, after which he retired from competition for good (until the Masters' "Bug" got him). His interest then turned to Water Polo for Beckenham and Kent. From being on the Beckenham SC Committee, he was made Kent Swimming Captain, and then served on the Kent Executive Committee as Trophies' Secretary. In 1969, he was installed as Kent President and in 1976, Chris was proud to be installed as the First President of the newly amalgamated Club.

#### Derek R.J.Camp.

Derek joined the Club as a Junior in 1935. Returning from War Service in 1948, he was for a considerable number of years very active in the Club's swimming, water polo, teaching; Treasurer in 1959/61, having been Treasurer's "dogsbody" for many years; a Committee member for a number of years and was the last President of the Original Mens' Club (1975/76). In his early days he had been the Club's first choice backstroker and goalkeeper for the (1st) team. In 1969, he passed the ASA's Teacher examination, and was the founder and leading light of the Club's "Dolphin Section", remaining so for some twelve years. At least one member achieved GB representation. In addition, he fulfilled the official Gala duties of Referee, Judge, Starter and Timekeeper on many occasions. As the last of the Beckenham SC (Mens' Club) Presidents, he naturally took an important role in the ensuing handover to form the new amalgamated Club.

#### Joan Paine (née Wright).

Joan joined Beckenham Ladies' SC in 1943, and has taken part in almost every aspect of the Club's activities, starting as a somewhat mediocre competitor who managed Kent County Junior representative swims in 1945 and 1946, before fading (according to her), into oblivion, and to become, for 17 years, Honorary Secretary of the Club. She was a co-founder of the "Tadpoles"; taught the Club's lower groups, and was President in 1969-1970. She never became the completely dedicated swimmer or official, always maintaining contact with the "outside world", and so could assess the Club from afar and her counsel is highly regarded.

#### Olive L.Hale (née Fell).

Olive learnt to swim about 9 years of age and joined Beckenham Ladies' SC in 1937, when training was just one Club session per week in No1 pool. Her first competition was in Beckenham Junior Schools' Annual Gala when she won the 33½ yds. backstroke in a new record time. She is still creating backstroke record times today in Masters' events. There was very little competition for the under 16's and her first County event was the 100 yds. freestyle in 1939 when aged 12, she was placed third. War broke out and most championships were canceled for the duration, it was quite difficult to continue swimming with pools closed with bomb damage or lack of fuel, so she had to travel to New Cross, Greenwich, Forest Hill, Downham or Marshall Street for a swim. When the county Championships were resumed after the war, Olive was the county Champion in the 150 and 100 yds. backstroke from 1946 to the early 1950's, being Ladies Captain of Kent County ASA in 1952. She swam in her first Nationals in the bitterly cold open-air pool in New Brighton in 1946, coming 4th in the 150 yds. backstroke; and in the following year was in the winning National Meadley and



Freestyle (4 x 100 yds.) teams. (Figs. 16 & 17) As a result of the disastrous weather conditions in Scarborough in 1948, the Nationals have been held in indoor pools. Olive also played Water Polo, representing Southern Counties in Holland in 1951, but gave up competitive "swimming" in 1953, the year she married "Bobbie" Hale, a well-known and respected member of Bekenham SC, of which he later became president in 1972/73. Olive succeeded "Mrs. A" as Treasurer of Beckenham Ladies' SC in 1956, a post she held until 1963; during this period she and "Bobbie" became county Officials; Olive was elected President of Beckenham Ladies' SC in 1971/72. In 1982, on medical advice, because of an old knee injury, she retired to the pool, and in 1983 competed in her first Masters' competition at an Otters' Gala, after a thirty year gap. Since then her record breaking streak has continued to date.

#### Norman 'Bob' Beadle.

Joining the Metropolitan Police in April 1931, Norman (Fig. 47) who had been born in Erith, was transferred to "P" Division in 1940, where he chose to remain until his retirement from the active Police Service in 1962. He was a member of the "P" Division team that won the police National Life Saving Championship, from 1962 until 1965. He was President of Kent County ASA in 1962, and was a President of East Invicta Swimming Association. He retired to Herne Bay in 1966 and soon became involved with local efforts to have an indoor pool built in the area, not unlike Raymond Brown some seventy years earlier. In 1977, he turned his attention to the bowling fraternity and was a founder member and former Chairman of the Canterbury and District Indoor Bowling Association, where his efforts and those of his fellow directors culminated in the formation of the Whitstable-based "Oyster Indoor Bowls Club", with an eight rink building in Whitstable Harbour in 1987. He was the first President of the Club - an office he held until his death in 1989. He was Captain of Herne Bay Bowling (Outdoor) Club, and in 1981 re-introduced their Open Bowls Tournament after a 36 year lapse. At his Presidential Dinner of KCASA his life was described as "this man's life history is a story of service to others".

Figs. 47 & 48.



Fig. 47, Norman R. Beadle



Fig. 48 Eileen M. Toms.

Eileen Muriel Toms.

When Eileen (Fig.48) enrolled her daughter, Margaret, in 1952, as a member of Beckenham Ladies' SC, little did she realise that over forty years later she would be so heavily involved in Swimming administration, let alone being President of the "new" Beckenham SC in the Centenary year. Within four years of assisting at the poolside, she was elected to the Executive Committee of Beckenham Ladies' SC on 6th., December, 1956, and shortly took over the duties of the new post of Honorary Contest and Gala Organiser, to be followed in 1958 with a six year tour as Club Championship Secretary, acting as Official Chaperon to Beckenham Ladies' SC swimmers at the National Championships at Blackpool until 1964. In 1963 was elected to Kent Counties' Executive Committee, and in 1964 became Kent County Championships Secretary, Bulletin Editor and President in 1970. She was appointed to the ASA's list of Chaperons (now Assistant Team managers) to International Teams in the early 1960's; and in 1968 she was Chaperon to the GB team at the Mexico Olympic Games, along with Norman Sarsfield (Team Manager), "Hammy" Bland (Chief Coach) and Noel Bleasdale (Team Doctor). Also in 1968 she became the General Honorary Secretary of Beckenham Ladies' SC, an office she held until 1976. In 1973 she was President of Beckenham Ladies' Swimming Club: then three years later, in 1976, when the two clubs amalgamated, she continued as General Secretary of the "new" club until 1982.

Muriel Rushton (née Ames).

Coventry born, Muriel, (Fig.49) began her career as a Breaststroker, but it was on Backstroke that she made her mark for Coventry SC., competing at County, District and National level. At the 1937-38-39 Nationals, she came 5th., 4th. and 3rd. respectively in the 150 yds. Backstroke, and on one occasion was a member of her Club Medley Team which came second. Her County records for the 100 and 150yds. Backstroke stood for over 10 years. After the Second World War, she continued her competitive career, winning the 150 yds. County Championships' Backstroke event and was second in the 100 yds. Freestyle (swimming backstroke !!). Subsequently, as a member of the Birmingham Mermaids, the District Synchro. team, Muriel gave displays all over the country until the family moved. The Rushtons' connection with local swimming began when the family moved south in 1956, Muriel and daughter Jean, joining "The Ladies", with "Bill" and son Michael, joining Beckenham SC. Both the children progressed into excellent Club and County swimmers. Muriel became a Committee Member of Beckenham Ladies' SC in 1959, and went on to serve as Training Secretary for 12 years in all, with a short break as Gala Secretary. She was made a Life Member in 1965; Vice-President in 1966 and President in 1974. She was, in addition very active in Kent County, originally serving as Kent Training Secretary and then Education Secretary. As President of Kent in 1975, she was followed by "Bill" in 1976.



Fig. 49, Muriel Rushton.



Fig. 50, "Bill" Rushton.

### T.W.S.Rushton.

"Bill", born in Nottingham, first came into swimming in 1931, when aged 14, he joined the newly founded Portland SC in Nottingham, being one of the first swimmers from that Club to compete in the Midland District Championships. In 1934 he joined Nottingham SC in order to play Water Polo and to swim competitively. During 1937/8 he swam and played Water Polo for Nottinghamshire and became a swimming official. In November, 1938, he moved to Coventry, joining Coventry Swimming & Life Saving Society which eventually formed part of the City of Coventry SC.; "Les" Ames, the Secretary of the Coventry Club had a sister, whose name was Muriel ! (see supra ). During 1939 he played Water Polo for Coventry, and reached the semifinal of the ASA Backstroke Championships swum that year in the open air at Minehead. After his release from Prisoner of War Camp in 1945, he returned home and married Muriel in December. For two years after the war, "Bill" played Water Polo for Warwickshire, before moving to Birmingham in 1947, where he joined Aston SC. In 1948, he became Honorary Secretary of the Birmingham Association of Swimming Clubs, and in the following year, of Warwickshire County ASA, being also elected to the Executive Committee of ASA (Midland District). In 1950, he retired from competitive swimming, but continued to play Water Polo for a further two years before becoming a referee. During 1952, he was put on the ASA's list of Swimming Officials and was involved in the introduction of the Midland District Swimming Officials Examinations. In 1956, he resigned as Hon.Secretary of Warwickshire County ASA and from the ASA (Midland District) Executive because of his impending move South. His long association with Beckenham SC commenced in 1957, where he was quickly elected to the Committee, being Treasurer for four years, from 1961-1964; as Training Secretary from 1964-1969; becoming President in 1974. He attended his first AGM of Kent County ASA in 1959 and was accepted on the Kent Swimming Officials list, but was a decade in the South before being elected to the Kent County Executive Committee in 1967; "Bill" was President of Kent County for the first time in 1976/77, taking over from his wife, who had been President the year previous. "Bill" (Fig.50) was chosen by the Past-Presidents to be the President in 1991/92 - the Centenary Year for the County ASA. The following year, 1992, he became the President of Southern Counties ASA - the third member of Beckenham to have been so honoured. In 1982, he, for some time an acknowledged expert on Swimming Law, was appointed Chairman of the Southern Counties' District Judicial Tribunal, a post he retained until appointed, some five years later, as Chairman of the ASA's National Judicial Tribunal.

### Margaret Restrick (née Wellington).

Margaret was the first member of "The Ladies Club" to be selected for the Olympic Games. She started to swim at the "early age" of seven years, and eventually swam, without success, in the London Schools Championships. Her first notable win didn't come until 1942, when she won the Southern Counties' Junior 100 yds. Championship in 69 seconds. Working in a suburban bank throughout the war, Margaret kept in training, when and where she could, despite blitzed baths and the blackout. This auburn-haired, 18 year old Sydenham girl, came from obscurity to National level in virtually only two months, using a somewhat inelegant style of orthodox "crawl", but with fierce determination (newspaper jargon !).

### Colin Kirkwood.

Colin joined Beckenham SC in 1947, and although he has been mainly connected with the Water Polo side of things, he has turned in some pretty useful performances in Masters' events. Colin was a regular member of the Kent County Water Polo Team for over 20 years, being first awarded Senior Colours in 1955, in the position of goalkeeper, up to and including 1980. He is a qualified coach and referee, and is a member of the Kent County and London Water Polo Committees. In 1977 Colin reached the notable milestone in his Water Polo career, of one thousand games - one is not aware of the current total, some 15 years on, but no doubt one will be told !.

### Prim Cameron.

Prim was born in Scotland, took a three year degree course in Speech Therapy and after qualifying, she worked in the County of Lanarkshire, eventually becoming the Senior Speech Therapist, responsible for the administration of all the County's Speech Therapy Clinics. Her interest and involvement with the Club and Swimming began in 1969, when her daughter, Maureen, joined the Tadpole Section of the then Beckenham Ladies' SC. She took up swimming herself and gained Life-Saving & Personal Survival awards. She succeeded Eileen Toms as Hon.General Secretary of the new amalgamated Beckenham Swimming Club in 1981, and in 1983 was elected to the Executive Committee of Kent County, subsequently becoming Assistant Championships' Secretary, a post which she still holds. She took over the Presidency of the new Club on 14th., November, 1985, from her husband, Malcolm, and was President of Kent County in 1991/92.

### Prof. James Malcolm Cameron.

Educated in Glasgow, Malcolm came to London in 1963, and for almost 30 years was associated with The London Hospital Medical College, part of The University of London, and of which he is now an Emeritus Professor of Forensic Medicine. His main sports were athletics and rugby. He was a University Blue in Athletics, the Scottish Universities' Captain and Quarter Mile Champion. "Taffy" played in First Class Senior and Representative Rugby in Scotland, retiring in 1952. His interest in swimming began, like his wife's, when as a parent, he became involved in swimmers' injuries and problems. This interest grew and he was, apart from his involvement with Beckenham SC., GB Team Doctor from 1980/81, at numerous Internationals, Olympic and Commonwealth Games and World Championships; in 1980, appointed by Kent County as their first Medical Adviser; in 1985 as Hon. Medical Adviser to the ASA ; a member of FINA Medical Committee (1987) and Secretary from (1992); and Chairman/Secretary of the LEN Medical Committee (since its formation in 1990). An authority on Drugs in Sport, being a member of the Drug Abuse Advisory Group of The Sports Council and Chairman of its Scientific Advisory Committee, he was President of Beckenham SC in 1984, and of Kent County ASA in 1989 (Fig. 51).



Fig. 51, The Author



Fig. 52, June Piper.

### June Piper.

June (Fig.52) came into Club work as the result of her daughter, Mary's membership of Beckenham Ladies' SC, and was first elected to the Committee of that Club in 1963, becoming Championships' Secretary in 1966. Throughout this time, up to her year of Presidency of the "new" Club (1977-1978), and since then, June has given the Club a vast amount of her time and enthusiasm. Not only for the Club, but also for the County, for after a year as Assistant, she took over the post of Kent County Championships' Secretary in 1977. Since 1976, June co-ordinated the Club's Fund Raising activities herself, undertaking the organisation of the majority of such events, including the Annual Open Meet. The money, generated as a result of June's efforts, has been, and is, vital to the continuation of the Club's work. After her Presidential year, June retired as the Club's Championship Secretary after an unprecedented "stint" of thirteen years in this office. Nobody who has not done the job can appreciate all that it involves, not least the endless telephone calls.

### William Duncan.

The grandson of the joint founder, John Duncan, who along with William Syme, formed the Beckenham building partnership of Syme & Duncan in 1870, was a member of Beckenham Council. There he took special pride in fostering the town's swimming facilities and the fortunes of BSC, earning the distinction of being Beckenham's Mayor in 1955-1956. He was a Vice-President of the Club, and died in 1992.

#### EPILOGUE.

"If it be true that 'good wine needs no bush', 'tis true that a good play (or History) needs no epilogue." William Shakespeare - As You Like It

Thus we have arrived at the Centenary year of the History of Beckenham Swimming Club, during which period many members have passed in and out of its portals with credit - let us hope - to themselves, of benefit to their fellows, and advantage to the times in which they lived. Let us be grateful for the past and let us be optimistic about the future. Let us also enjoy "swimming" for that is what 'our' sport should be all about.

And, as it may be seen from the foregoing that some good has been achieved - and much more, we trust, that is not recorded here - let us humbly pray that Beckenham Swimming Club may still pursue its onward course. The Club has but to pause and look back at its 100 year history with sober satisfaction. Beckenham can also look forward to the future with confidence.



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"You will find it a very good practice always to verify your references, Sir !"  
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