

Head Coach Report to AGM 2025

Over the past 12 months there have been a significant number of changes at the Club. Our Head Coach Elaine retired at the end of December 2025 after 18 years in the role. She and I worked successfully together for 13 years and on her retirement, I agreed to take over as Head Coach to ensure a smooth transition and maintain stability within the Club.

The past 10 months have been a very busy time for me. I have worked hard to ensure all our swimmers at whatever level or stage of their swimming journey have an enjoyable and productive time at the Club. I have done this without the support of a Development /Assistant Coach which at times has been very difficult. I have been given tremendous support from my team of volunteer coaches who are loyal and work so hard for the Club to ensure training is rarely cancelled even when our meets diary is so hectic throughout the year. I extend my thanks to several of our Masters swimmers who give up their valuable water time to work poolside in support of the Club particularly Mark Banwell and not forgetting Alex Clarke, Sam Hatch, Andrew Pillow, Steve Kendall, Phil Trelford and Martyn Fresher.

The Club has very low rates of attrition (swimmers leaving the Club) which is very encouraging. It proves that the Club is in good health and the training we provide is working well. In December 2024 we had 102 swimmers we now have 105 swimmers, and all our squads are currently full. We are no longer taking new members whilst our waiting list currently numbers 6

Attendance is good right the way through the squads, it is pleasing to see swimmers keen, motivated and wanting to train to a high standard and better themselves. Evening sessions are always well attended especially when all squads train together on Tuesday evening. The Wednesday morning 6.30 swim session since being opened to Green squad has become popular with more swimmers realising the importance of morning training to their success in swimming. Currently 20 swimmers regularly attend the early morning session.

I have changed the Land Training session on Tuesday evening. Jack Bartlett, who was our coach, has now left and we now have Matt Daybell providing strength and conditioning training to all our swimmers. Matt brings a wealth of experience in delivering sports education as a teacher and Head of Department at a local secondary school. His sessions have seen attendances rise with up to 50 swimmers now regularly turning up to enjoy well organised training which meets the needs of all our athletes irrespective of age or their stage of development. Matt is currently working through a 10 week agreed plan

At the start of the season in October 2024 we held our Distance Club Championships, this is where the whole club come together to compete and race against each other in a friendly environment. It was very pleasing to see 68 of our swimmers take part in 633 events with 10 swimmers under 10 competing. These swimmers are the long-term future of our club, so it is very important to get our youngsters racing, they are all crucial to our club's success over the next 5-8 years.

At the turn of the year in late January early February 2025, 20 of our swimmers competed at the Cambridgeshire County Championships in Cambridge. After being ravaged by either injury or illness a much-depleted team managed to collect 1 Gold 6 Silver and 12 Bronze in the individual events. Across

all events City of Ely were at their best achieving 65 PB's with 6 swimmers achieving Regional times in a total of 22 events.

A busy weekend in March 2025 at the Cambridge Spring Open saw further success for our swimmers following on from a strong showing a week earlier at Luton. This time we had a great turnout of 39 swimmers competing across all the squads, bringing back a sizeable haul of 49 medals 10 Gold, 19 Silver and 14 Bronze. Every swimmer was able to improve on their PB's with a total of 149 new PB's achieved across all the squads in the Club. Special mention should go to Cillian O'Brien who took 2 Club Records in the 200 and 100 Breaststroke.

In May 2025 5 swimmers took part in S E East Region Long Course Championships at Norwich and Luton achieving some remarkable results against the best swimmers in the East of England achieving a total of 22 PB's. Alex Pashley swam well to reach 2 finals finishing 4th in the 50 backstroke and 6th in the 100 backstroke and going on to achieve 7 PB's at the meet. He qualified to take part in the 14 and under 100 backstroke event at the Aquatics GB Next Generation Championships July 2025 Summer Nationals in Sheffield

In the 15 + age group at Regionals Cillian O'Brien achieved 3 PB's. Annabelle Smith with a leg injury achieved 2 PB's. In the 14 and under Zoe Thompson achieved 5 PB's and Peony Jackson still recovering from illness achieved 5 PB's

Swimmers attended the County Developments competition in July over 2 days at the Newmarket Pool achieving 88 PB's with Toby Taylor gaining 8 new times, Isabella and Charlotte Beardmore 6 new times each, Layla Latimer, Emily Daybell and Madeleine Pillow 5 new times each. On the medals tally we won 29 Golds, 29 Silvers and 24 Bronze medals.

Alex Pashley competed at Nationals in Sheffield in late July 2025 in the 14U 100 m backstroke event achieving a fantastic new PB

Special mention should be made about the success of our younger swimmers who took part in the Junior Fenland League winning 3 preliminary rounds and competing in the A Final where we finished 4th overall. Congratulations to all those who competed in this team event a fantastic achievement.

Eleven swimmers registered to swim at our 3 Open Water training events at Gildenburgh during late June early July and did a fine job as most of them have never swum in a deep lake before. I must thank Amy and Andy Sole for all the help and coaching in the water to swimmers at all levels.

City of Ely took a small team of 5 swimmers to the East Region Open Water Championships on Sunday 13th July, where everyone swam at their very best in warm sunny almost ideal conditions on Whittingham Lake in Norwich. The team achieved amazing results with every team member medalling on the day. Bella Pillow at her last competitive meet for the Club before going off to university competed in the 2K event and won a Cambridgeshire County Gold and an East Region Silver. Another old boy who is always pushing his own boundaries Phil Trelford also won County Gold and Regional Silver in the 2K event.

Not to be outdone by these Ely oldies the younger squad members competing in the open water for the very first time did an amazing job. Erin Latimer winning County Gold in the 1K event, Zachary Woods also winning County Gold in the 1K with Norah Daniels taking County Bronze in a very competitive 1k group of girls. I am confident that our younger squad members will be here again next year

The Masters Squad captained ably by Mark Banwell has continued to flourish over the past 12 months, welcoming new members attracted to both the competitive and social aspects of swimming with City of Ely. The highlights of their competitive season encapsulated by Sarah Smith and Martyn Fresher winning medals at the British Master Championships. Later in the season Matthew Chadwick successfully swam the English Channel for the third time, this time as part of a relay team. To beat that Matt then completed the Triple Crown which is a swim of the 3 largest lakes in England. The Masters team won multiple medals at Regional Level. The growth in numbers and continued improvement of their swim times and fitness has enabled entry of multiple Masters relay teams across the region.

At the East Region Master Championships in September 2025 Lauren Grice won top female swimmer with Hannah Kershaw 8th best female swimmer. Phil Trelford was joint 3rd best male swimmer with Martyn Fresher 5th best male swimmer. The team came a very creditable 6th out of 43 teams in the region

The Masters team are a great example to all younger members of the Club and are an invaluable asset assisting coaching poolside.

All the success the team has enjoyed would not have been possible without the fabulous support of so many people. I would like to thank those unsung heroes in white who officiate at events far and wide throughout the year. I would like to put on record my thanks to the administrative work plus that the Executive Committee do to support the Club and myself. Also, in my first year as Head Coach I would like to extend my personal thanks to Deb Kendall whose intimate knowledge of the intricacies of Club swimming has kept me on the straight and narrow and made sure I have not made too many mistakes.

Finally, my thanks go to all swimmers and families who make this sport what it is.

Tom Lowther

Head Coach

City of Ely Swimming Club

