

ASA North East Region Two Bridges Open Water Swim 14 August 2010

Eleven swimmers from Darlington Swimming Club entered the NER Two Bridges Open Water Event held at Stockton.

It felt chilly - more like an autumn day than an August day. The event started with a mandatory 30 minute safety brief which brought home the true dangers of Open Water swimming to the Darlington swimmers, most of whom were competing in an Open Water event for the first time. The referee cut the girls' fingernails to regulation length. The water temperature of 16 degrees centigrade was confirmed!

Ruth Hansom (15) was the only Darlington swimmer in the first event – the 1000m NER Open Water Women's event – NO WETSUIT ALLOWED. She produced a determined, strong swim that set the bar high for the others waiting their turn. Having not previously attended the practice swims at Ellerton Lake, she was swam bravely

The next race was the 1000m Mixed Novices participation swim – with wetsuits allowed. Head Coach **Glen Fenby** (42) **David Wilkinson** (42), **Robyn Wilkinson** (13), **Victoria Fenby** (13) and **Helen Murray** (15) all swam together. The race was competitive with Robyn Wilkinson winning the 13/15 age group and finishing in 2nd place overall. Victoria Fenby suffered from "I don't want to swim, it's too cold" syndrome but finished 2nd in her age group and 3rd overall. Helen Murray (15) decided to swim alongside the Head Coach because he was suffering in the conditions and she finished in a very respectable time. David Wilkinson (42) also made a PB with a super swim and came in 5th overall. Glen was 7th. A big thanks to David for his help at our practice sessions at Ellerton Lake.

The 3000m NER Open Water event featured **Catherine Fenby** (16), **Lucy Proctor** (15) and **Kate Troy** (14) for the girls, and **Alex Park** (16) and **David Hookway** (16) for the boys and had to be swum WITHOUT WETSUITS – brrr!!! (FINA Rules). Some swimmers dived in at the start but all Darlington swimmers did a push start, all of them adapting to the conditions fantastically (Ellerton Lake training must have helped). Three laps of this hard course in really cold conditions were tough and a couple of the starters chose the speedboat route back to a warm towel rather than completing the swim. All our young, brave (and foolish?) swimmers kept going, encouraged by their good humoured banter between breaths and shouts from parents on the river side. Forty minutes of torture for the swimmers and anxious pleasure for the parents saw all our swimmers return back to the start safely, although extremely cold.

Catherine Fenby (16) came 6th in the 3000m NER Women's Open event in a FANTASTIC PB, 15 minutes faster than her previous attempt two years ago. In the 13/15 age group Kate Troy came 2nd and Lucy Proctor 3rd - both were OUTSTANDING achievements. The 3000m Men's Open Championship saw David Hookway and Alex Park in a very competitive race against the difficult conditions. They did not disappoint, with David coming in 5th overall and Alex Park having a tremendous swim with a 3rd place finish. To see the physical condition of all the swimmers at the end showed they had given everything and it took around half an hour for them to feel human again!

I am very proud to have 3 medal winners in the club from this NER Open Water Event.

In my role as Head Coach I must first thank the parents for allowing their children to attempt this type of event and for giving their enthusiastic support to all the Darlington swimmers. To see our club developing in this way gives me all the motivation I need to start the new season.

Secondly, the biggest thanks must go to all of our swimmers who completed the course and I bet after a well-earned afternoon nap they were raring to go again! So well done ALL.

The season is about to begin. Let's hope that we can and build on this success with some hard training and that we can get behind our swimmers to show other clubs our great team ethos. More importantly let's show everyone that we are enjoying swimming and we are here to compete hard! Bring on a great season.

Glen Fenby (Head Coach)