

MASTERS DIVER

UK NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2008

Editor: Tony Hunter

Editor's Note

Happy new year to everyone.

It seems like only yesterday when I was writing the newsletter in September 2003 giving notice that, due to business commitments, I was not standing for the position of Masters Director in 2004. It's frightening to think that was over four years ago and it has certainly flown by and now its back to the grindstone. This newsletter is a bit of a catch up. The intention will be to bring out three or four a year, in conjunction with Newsplash, if that gets off the ground again.

As usual, I ask that you circulate a copy around your clubs both to other Masters divers and indeed to your club secretaries. Can the non-GB recipients also pass this on to their administrators and put on your national websites if possible. If you are running a masters event let me have the details and I will give it a mention.

If anyone wants to be put on the newsletter e-mail list please let me know as that is the quickest way to get it out direct to the divers. Keep an eye out on the GBDF website too.

Anyone who wants to write an article/letter is also welcome.

I have reports on the last two major internationals, the World Masters at Stanford University in 2006 and the European Masters in Slovenia in 2007.

So, without further ado, what have we got lined up for you in the next year or so?

Forthcoming Events

The dates below are the ones that I am aware of. I will publish any that I am told of but obviously if I don't know of them, I can not promote. Please email me with any dates, details and venues. All the GB events are 'open' to any of our diving friends throughout the world.

2008

Jan 19/20

Dutch Masters

Eindhoven

We have a team going out to the first Dutch masters in Eindhoven which currently numbers about 40, a mixture of experienced and novice divers from across the country.

Jenni has organized accommodation at the Van Der Valk Hotel a few minutes walk from the pool and a mixture of flights from Stansted into Eindhoven and the Eurotunnel are getting most people there.

The conditions are the same as ours were in the summer with the FINA World Masters lists for the more experienced and reduced conditions for novices. There is a 16-24 age group as the Dutch have seen that it works for us. Contact with the Dutch just before Christmas confirmed about 225 competition starts which indicates about 100 divers. It promises to be a great meet with a function on the Saturday night at the pool.

April 5/6 **GB Spring Masters** **Edinburgh**

Another pool that we have not been to for a long time is Edinburgh and we are back there for the GB Spring masters. It will also be the last time that we will be using the pool for a while as, after the summer, the pool is closing for a major refurbishment and having previously been used for the Commonwealth Games in both 1970 and 1986, we look forward to seeing an excellent facility after the works. By the look of things, it will be the aquatic venue for the 'Glasgow' Commonwealth Games in 2014.

The 'list' will be the World Masters lists (and novice events) as the event is the last one we will run before the lucky few of our divers head off to Perth (and that isn't the one in Scotland) for the World Masters.

As there are few divers from Europe and the USA going to Perth, we are hoping to make this a substitute world event and our invitation goes out to our friends in Europe and the rest of the world to join us in what promises to be a fabulous meet. It is most likely that we will start the event at 5pm on Friday evening due to the anticipated number of competitors.

We will also have to put a maximum on the number of entries so please get your entries in early and don't wait for the closing date. It may be that the entries have been closed prior to that date. Entry forms will be out in January.

April 20/25 **World Masters** **Perth**

We have about 8 divers that I know about who are off to Perth and, whilst she is not co-ordinating any bookings or accommodation due to divers and friends wanting to choose their itinerary, Jenni has booked accommodation for a small group. It will not be as well attended as Stanford due to cost and distance, but it will be a fabulous trip for those who can make it. As with the US trip in 2006, there are no 'official' coaches organized by the GBDF although I know of at least one who is going.

May 18/19	US Spring Masters	Knoxville
July 4/6 (TBC)	German Masters	Sindelfingen
July (TBC)	GB Summer Masters	TBC
Aug 21/24	US Summer Masters	Houston
Nov 8/9	GB Winter Masters	TBC

2009

Sep 16/22

European Masters

Seville

Past Events

World Masters Diving Championships-Stanford University, California
13-16 August 2006

Having breakfast on Thursday 10 August and contemplating the flight to San Francisco and the World Masters Championships when we got there, the television was flicked on to inform us that Britain's airports had been closed overnight due to police raids on terrorist cells which were planning to blow up planes over the Atlantic.

Not what we wanted to hear but a phone call to coach, Chris Jenkins, confirmed that the taxi was on its way with two of our party already in it to take us to Heathrow and we had no choice but to go and see whether we could get to the USA. The airport was packed with people and we queued outside for about an hour before we were called to a check-in desk and told that we would be going about 2 hours late. As a result, we thought and after depositing all our belongings in the hold, we were on the plane at the time they said. Unfortunately, due to the US not being ready to accept inbound flights, we waited on the tarmac and our 2 hour delay became 7. At least we got off and we cannot criticise the airport authorities or British Airways at all for the way they handled the whole situation.

Arriving at our hotel at about 10pm, we discovered that the Americans like to eat early and there was absolutely nowhere to get a bite to eat. Never mind, I needed to lose a bit of weight before the event! Just to make me sharper!

After all the hassle of the trip, what a place to arrive at for the event! The sports facilities at Stanford University were second to none and overall they put to shame some of our national stadia. The Maas diving 'tank' was absolute perfection: two of each of the springboards and platforms from 1m to 10m with plenty of space around for competitors and spectators, all in the beautiful Californian sunshine. It was a non-smoking venue even though it was open-air which is as it should be for a sports venue.

Having no co-ordinated British trip, divers and supporters made their own way out to the championships and we only really knew who was going when we arrived. The divers who made it out there were:-

Rene Puddifoot (St Albans)
Ron Smith (Bristol Henleaze)
Jenni Cluskey (Amersham)
Tony Hunter (Southampton)
Helen Tatch (Ilford)
Amanda Prentice (British Armed Forces)
Leilani Macdonald (Ilford)
Sam Jeffreys-Allen (British Armed Forces)
Richard Heraty (Barnet Copthall)
Susan Brierley (Barnet Copthall)
Naomi McBane (Unattached)

Naomi managed to avoid all the airport security issues, having flown out a week early and competed in the US Masters at Pasadena, an ideal warm up for the event at Stanford.

Due to the distance and cost involved, there were no 'official' coaches sent with the British contingent and those who did go were completely self-funded with no arrangements between the GBDF and the divers for the usual coach contribution. Our thanks to Chris Jenkins, Chris Chambers and Jan Isherwood for their assistance during the trip.

There were two days of training prior to the start of the competitions, and this was all very relaxed, the only problem being avoiding getting too much sun and drinking enough water. Oh, and spotting! Now, I didn't think I spotted but I was surprised to find how many problems I was having. Getting dazzled by the sun on each rotation does not help seeing the water. Anyway, a lot of fun in the sun was had by all.

The first day of competition started with a comedy display with all welcome to participate but mainly left to the American contingent who seemed to have it all in hand. The opening ceremony followed and then it was into the events. The springboard events were run in tandem so there was a 1 metre event going on at one side of the pool at the same time as a 3 metre event at the other. This took a bit of getting used to but it was a good job that this was the arrangement as the events would have been going on until midnight. It also allowed a very useful half hour between competitions for training for the next event. The competitions were split into 5 year categories and we had competitors diving in the 25-29 category and also the 80-85 group, together with many in between. At World Masters, medals are awarded for 1st to 6th places – the customary gold, silver and bronze with 4th-6th places also receiving bronze medals.

First up was Rene, our oldest diver, on the 1 metre and Ron on the 3 metre. Rene took gold and Ron was 2 points away from a bronze in his event. A good start for the British divers and the shape of things to come. The next event saw Leilani, Susan and Naomi diving in the Ladies' events on 1 metre and Sam diving in the Men's event on 3 metre. Naomi and Leilani both finished 4th in their respective age groups and Susan managed to sneak into the medals at 6th with a very creditable performance against strong competition.

On the 3 metre board, Sam suffered from the 'dual competition' scenario when he mistook an announcement from the 1 metre to hold back on his dive and he stopped on the end of the board on a 305C, resulting in it being classed as a restart and a 2 point deduction from all the judges. After the multiple of the degree of difficulty, this reduced his score by about 17 points, resulting in 4th place only 9 points behind 3rd, making this mistake very costly.

Amanda, Sam's army team-mate, hit her dives to pick up a bronze in 3rd place in her 1 metre event at the same time as Richard was taking 10th place in the 3 metre event. I was next up on the 3 metre board and another problem of the Stanford pool raised its head. When the sun went down behind the main building the pool became a very deep blue and extremely difficult to spot. I have never seen so many wipe-outs on dives which competitors were hitting in training. Competition was extremely strong, particularly from the Americans, and I only managed 9th place.

On the first evening, we were treated to the first of the American's superb displays of hospitality. The Maas family (you may recognise a connection with the name of the diving pool) hosted a party at their house in Silicon Valley to which all divers and their friends were invited. This proved to be a fabulous evening with coaches laid on to transport guests to and from the house and its magnificent grounds where a barbeque feast was experienced swilled down with moderate amounts of alcoholic (bearing in mind some of us were competing the next day) and non-alcoholic beverages.

It was great to see a legend of diving in the form of Dr Sammy Lee whose amazing energy inspired us all. Not only was he around for the majority of the day watching the events but I think he outlasted most of us at the party! Talking to him briefly at the party, I mentioned we were from Britain and his face lit up remembering the 1948 Olympics when he won the Men's Platform event. It was fabulous seeing him at the event and shows how seriously the Americans regard their master's programme.

The second day was quieter for the British on the competition front with only 3 divers. Ron got us going with a 4th place in the 1 metre, missing out on bronze by only 3 points. Jenni was even closer in her 1 metre event, missing the bronze medal by 0.4 points. We then had an excellent performance by Amanda producing an amazing set of dives, nailing her 'single twister' to win her age group by 20 points.

The third day was a busy one with virtually everyone diving from the British competitors. Jenni was first up on the day and was slightly below par in her 3 metre competition only managing a 6th place. I was up next on the 1 metre, again not up to full performance, also getting 6th place. At the same time on the 3 metre, a great battle was taking place in the Ladies' 30-34 competition with the top four divers within 10 points of one another. Helen came out top of the pile and Naomi was unfortunately pushed into 4th place. We also had success in the 25-29 age group for the Ladies' 3 metre where Leilani and Susan got 3rd and 4th places respectively.

In the afternoon, the 'younger' men were on the 1 metre and the 25-29 age group was as nail-biting as it could be with sheer adrenalin pushing Sam to his second 3rd place bronze medal of the championship. Richard, in the very competitive 35-39 age group, finished a very credible 7th place.

The Americans invited us to the second social occasion of the week which was a party at the house of one of their divers, Kelly. It was on a slightly smaller scale than the first one but very enjoyable nonetheless and it was very kind of Kelly to open up her house to us all.

The final day of competition is generally the one that both competitors and spectators look forward to, being the 'Platform' day. Over 100 divers, at an age when they should know better, hurling themselves off heights between 5 and 10 metres is always worth watching. And what a day it was! Jenni got us up and running with a silver, not quite managing to outperform the very steady US diver, Mary Bennett. I was judging that competition and I reckon it was the best Platform performance Jenni has put in for quite a while.

Ron hit the boards next with his unorthodox technique resulting from many years competing in gymnastics. It always seems to be well received and he ended up with a bronze medal in a very tough age group. John Deininger, the American who won gold, averaged a raw score per judge of 7 throughout the event and nailed a 5132D from 7.5 metres for his final dive. Ron managed to edge his old rival, American Fred Fox, into 4th place. Rene continued her great series with yet another gold.

Then, the 40-49 years olds had their chance. This was a very long competition and with 38 divers in total and 20-30 minutes between dives it was very difficult to keep focused. But we did and I managed to get a bronze behind a brace of Americans, Roy Botsko and Kevin Wilson. We had a great competition and the camaraderie was excellent with everyone wanting their rivals to dive well as much as anything to raise the bar for all.

The ‘youngsters’ finished the meet with their Platform events where we came away with 1 gold (Helen), 2 silvers (Susan and Amanda), 3 bronzes (Leilani, Naomi and Sam) and one 7th (Richard).

Naturally the Americans arranged a ‘social’ at a local bar which I think all the British divers went too at some stage of the evening.

After the events, everyone went their various ways, most people having a few days round San Francisco and some of us heading for other parts of the USA.

Our thanks to the Americans for hosting a superb event under the excellent stewardship of David Cotton. Apart from the (usual) glitch with the computers, the whole event went like clockwork and divers and spectators alike had a terrific time - or to quote the American superlative... **AWESOME!**

Total British tally: 6 gold, 3 silver, 9 bronze and the full results are below.

Diver	Age Group	1m	3m	Platform
Ron Smith	Mens 65-69	4	4	3
Tony Hunter	Mens 45-49	6	9	3
Richard Heraty	Mens 35-39	7	10	7
Samuel Jeffreys-Allen	Mens 25-29	3	3	3
Rene Puddifoot	Womens 80-84	1	1	1
Jenni Cluskey	Womens 55-59	4	6	2
Amanda Prentice	Womens 35-39	3	1	2
Leilani Macdonald	Womens 25-29	4	3	3
Naomi McBane	Womens 30-34	4	4	3
Helen Tatch	Womens 30-34	N/A	1	1
Susan Brierley	Womens 25-29	6	4	2

European Masters Championships – August 28-30 2007 – Jesenice, Slovenia

For the first time the event was held in the former Yugoslavia. We had a team of 26 divers competing and 3 coaches to assist them in their preparation. Jenni was back in action organizing the trip and her usual efficiency secured us accommodation at a hotel overlooking Lake Bled. It was the first time we had stayed together as a team for several years and it was fabulous to see the team spirit that emerged from the group. We did not stay in the hotel suggested by the organizing body for the divers, the Hotel Krim, as it looked like what it became known as, ie. the Hotel Grim. It certainly was and the feedback from other nation's divers who had stayed there confirmed that we had made the right decision.

Bled is a beautiful location and there are restaurants and bars as you would expect in a town trying to build up its tourist market. Some of the hotels and other buildings are a bit grim but for anyone who knows the history of the former Yugoslav republic this will come as no surprise.

Saturday 25 August saw most of the group at Stansted airport wearing team kit. This certainly got us noticed and comment from some of the masters swimmers who were on the same flight. Check in was amazingly quick for Easy Jet and having cleared security, the Wetherspoons bar was the chosen spot for lunch – a relaxed affair as Easy Jet had kindly delayed the flight for an hour to allow us more leisurely refreshment.

We had pre-arranged to have dinner at the hotel on the first night and sampled the local cuisine. Slovenia has a varied foodstyle with influences from its Italian and Austrian neighbours but sadly its wine does not live up to that of Italy!

On Sunday, we travelled down to Kranj to arrange for our accreditation. This was a little frustrating as it was completely in the opposite direction to Jesenice where the diving was taking place. Why they didn't arrange for divers' accreditation to take place at Jesenice we do not know. As it was it took us several hours and was also costly. We headed straight for the pool after accreditation to make a start on training as our three coaches, Chris Jenkins, David Wood and Betty Allen put us through our paces. The facilities were good on the whole although there were only one of each 1 metre and 3 metre springboard which led to queues at busy times. This was not too bad when the sun was shining but it had a habit of disappearing and when the wind whistled through the valley it got pretty cold. The scenery was quite spectacular, the pool being located in a village surrounded by mountains.

A further day's training on the Monday was cut short due to our intention to attend a function organized by British Swimming at a hotel on the outskirts of Kranj. Sadly, after an hour and half of driving round, we were still unable to find the hotel where it was being held. The sight of five cars packed with divers hurtling round the countryside must have been quite amusing for the Slovenians as we travelled up and down the same roads.

Eventually, we aborted that part of the trip and headed off to the opening ceremony at the pool in Kranj where the swimming was taking place. Apologies to Verity Dobbie who had organized the function on behalf of British Swimming. We did try and I can assure you we would have all preferred a couple of glasses of wine rather than an extended drive.

The competitions were from Tuesday to Friday with all the Springboard events on the first three days and Platform on the final day. The organization was under the control of Hana Novotna and her team comprised mainly of Czechs who did an excellent job of keeping to the timetable. Everything was going well until the rain came which inevitably when competing in an outdoor pool it did. For safety reasons, when the lightening was deemed to be within 2 kilometres of the pool, it was necessary to stop and this happened on two occasions. Fortunately we managed to get back on track and no competition had to be postponed until the following day.

The placings of the GB divers were as follows:-

Diver	Age Group	1m	3m	Platform
Bob Townsend	Mens 70-74	4	4	N/A
Jim McNally	Mens 55-59	2	2	N/A
Tony Hunter	Mens 45-49	4	3	1
Stephen Pattinson	Mens 45-49	7	9	7
Lindsay Dibden	Mens 45-49	9	7	10
Bryan Lingard	Mens 40-44	12	12	12
Peter Nicholson	Mens 40-44	10	10	9
Bryan Ditchburn	Mens 35-39	4	8	N/A
Richard Heraty	Mens 35-39	6	5	
Greg Cliffe	Mens 35-39	1	1	N/A
Jason Mann	Mens 30-34	10	8	N/A
Jenni Cluskey	Womens 55-59	3	3	2
Rosanna Townsend	Womens 50-54	5	3	N/A
Barbara Heathfield	Womens 45-49	3	3	N/A
Katie Bell	Womens 40-44	1	2	1
Hazel Perrett	Womens 40-44	4	N/A	N/A
Amanda Prentice	Womens 35-39	3	1	1
Leilani Macdonald	Womens 30-34	8	6	N/A
Naomi McBane	Womens 30-34	3	3	4
Tanya Ross	Womens 30-34	6	8	N/A
Beth Ackroyd	Womens 30-34	1	1	1
Amanda Robinson	Womens 25-29	9	10	N/A
Lindsay Tott	Womens 25-29	13	N/A	N/A
Orla Gilmore	Womens 25-29	1	2	1
Gemma Pearson	Womens 25-29	5	3	3
Kay Burford	Womens 25-29	10	8	7

Beth Ackroyd was our top diver, and our only triple gold medal winner, with hard fought competitions against the Hungarian, Silvia Stefanka-Sarkosy, when she had to pull out her best and in the 1 metre competition there were only a couple of points between them. Katie and Greg both got 2 golds with some excellent diving as did Amanda and Orla who left us all with an absence of fingernails during their Platform lists which contained some difficult dives.

The competition was the strongest I have seen in the eight European Masters Championships that I have competed in and the results right through the ranks are to be proud of. For our 'virgin' International Masters divers this was the first time most of them had competed outdoors and the weather was less clement that we would all have wished for.

As has become the norm in recent years, the GB team organised an informal after-competition function which was held in a local restaurant and was attended by the most of our European friends who were staying in Slovenia on the Friday night.

We had a final day and a half remaining before returning back to the UK and our "social secretary", Peter Nicholson, made sure that we were not idle. "Why don't we swim to the island in the middle of Lake Bled?" was suggested during the function on Friday night. Fuelled by the party atmosphere, the gauntlet was laid down and a contingent of British and Germans assembled at 0830, slipped quietly into the lake and swam across to the island. Despite us having Jason, a diver who was also competing in the swimming, the Germans still managed to get their towels down on the island first. Back on the mainland, a breakfast followed and a discussion as to the length of the swim. Nicholson's estimate went up by the minute and anyone listening would have thought we had done the 10 km open water swim. I must say it did look a long way when Michael Palin's TV programme featured it (the town not our swim) a few weeks later. After breakfast, the team headed off to hurtle down a mountain in what can only be described as a cart on a metal rail. The idea was not to brake until the bottom and some claimed to achieve this although the jury is still out.

Finally for the day's activities we went white water rafting down the River Sava where the Southampton boat took challenges from the 'Rest of World' boat and another boat full of Italians. The result is still a little hazy although we certainly beat the Italians when we stopped for a breather and had a 'skid over the raft' competition. I think Jim McNally's 5122D onto/over the raft was the overall winner. Not bad at his age!

Our social secretary, aiming to stretch the adrenalin buzz to a maximum, arranged a quiet Sunday morning, tandem parachute jumps from 10,000 ft. Seven hardy souls ventured into the clouds strapped onto an instructor and jumped out of the plane. What a way to finish the week! Back on the ground there was just the mundane 'pack up and head for the airport home'.

A great week in all with the best camaraderie I have seen for many years from the whole party. The support throughout the competitions from all was immense. Many thanks to Chris, Dave and Betty who nursed us through our lists, often in weather which was less than perfect. I can certainly say that you brought out the best in all of us.

See you all in Seville.

Winter Masters – 10/11 November 2007 – Hatfield

It had been 10 years since we had our previous visit to Hatfield for a masters event so it was a great pleasure to return. The smaller number of entries that we get for the winter rather than the spring event made the whole occasion more leisurely. Some arrived on the Friday evening and managed to get a training session in courtesy of Beaumont Diving Academy who gave up an hour and a half of their time for us. Many thanks to Derek and his colleagues for that.

There were divers from Germany, Italy, Belgium and Sweden in addition to our GB divers and it was great to renew our acquaintances with friends who we had seen over the summer in Slovenia. Sadly the Dutch contingent, who were planning to be with us, had to return to the Netherlands due to Mikel, one of their divers (who at the last minute had decided due to a back problem not to travel) needing hospital treatment back in their home country. So, having arrived at Dover, the rest of the team turned back to be with him. Hopefully, he will be fully recovered by the time we visit them in January.

Saturday started with some training at the pool and our main competitions which, for most, consisted of a series of six dives from a combination of 1 metre and 3 metre springboards and 5 metre platform. The novice masters, who now number about 15% of our divers compared with around 50% 3 years ago, executed only 4 dives.

The full results can be found on the GBDF website but there were some 'battle royals' during the days with some close competitions. Emily Pattinson fought hard to overcome Kim Purkis in the 16-24 group by 0.35 points and the Essex pair of Gemma Pearson and Liz Simpson were 4 points apart in the 25-29 group. Only seven points separated the top 3 places in the Mens 30-39 group with Richard Heraty just pulling out the stops ahead of Lerry Broccardo and Bryan Ditchburn. The contest for runner-up spot in the Mens 40-49 age group was exciting where Lindsay Dibden just got the better of his Southampton team-mate Peter Nicholson and the Mens 16-24 competition was close with two points between Belgian diver, Roeland Baeyens, and Manchester's Richard Ward.

We all thought Amanda Prentice was getting some extra practice for the feet first entry competition on Sunday but her entry style was dictated by an injury to her hand. She still managed to stay in contention with the 30-39 eventual winner Beth Ackroyd, just the sort of determination we expect from a member of our armed forces. Sadly, she was not able to benefit from her feet first practice the following day as she was required to attend a Remembrance Day service with her regiment.

Saturday evening, we retired to the hotel where the function was being held. We have held a dinner dance for the last couple of years and this does seem to be enjoyed although it is a lot of work to put together. If you remember last year we ran it in conjunction with a Highgate Dinner dance (until about 10 years ago the Highgate dinner dance was one of the 'musts' of the social calendar) and there were a lot of ex-divers there who were not involved in the masters event. It is difficult to get people year after year to attend particularly with the cost of accommodation nowadays. We were originally hoping for 100 but I think we ended up with about 80 in the end so well done to Jim for his perseverance.

Sunday saw us all bright and breezy down at the pool for the Feet First competition. It is one that I have been wanting to run for a long time and it was worth the wait. We don't do many feet first entries do we! The definite 'judge splasher' was the 104C just making it into the water and there were quite a few of those. The most spectacular dives of the weekend (and probably our competitions ever) were performed by the Belgian, Jerry Lefebvre. I was looking over at the judging panel opposite when I announced the dive numbered 5163D and saw Beth Ackroyd, who was judging, with her jaw dropped. Sadly, Jerry had a restart on the dive but once he plucked up the courage it was like a walk in the park. Add to that a 5145D and we had a quite an entertaining competition. Overall though everyone entered into the spirit of things and threw a few dives off that they had not done for a while.

The synchro was the final competition and this just seems to get better and better. It was quite an Essex girl podium at the end with Beth and Gemma in first place and Liz as one of the 2nd placed divers, partnering Mancunian Sarah Smith. The European partnership of Barbara and Johanna made up the third place on the box.

Altogether a very enjoyable meet.

Odds & Sods

Congratulations to John Whitby, our former Chief Executive, on his marriage to Mara on November 17.

Finale

That's about it for now. See you in Eindhoven in January and Edinburgh in April.

Contacts

If you wish to contact the GBDF board, their emails are available on the GBDF website - www.diving-gbdf.com