

2017 Report

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This being my first year running the Torbay even, everything has been quite a sharp learning curve. But having said that, it's most people's opinion the 2017 event was a fantastic success. All feedback so far has been overwhelmingly positive, which is in no small part down to all of the officials, our safety crews, Paignton SCs safety cover (Drew Gibson and Rob Banham), the kayakers and of course the swimmers. The support from both the president (Mark Sheridan) and president elect (Philip Yorke) was also invaluable.

The initial weather forecasts underestimated how good the weather was going to be, a moderate westerly wind meant the swim was not too rough due to the bay being protected from westerly winds. We were very fortunate to have nothing but blue skies and sun shine, which really made a big difference to the swim and how people found the 14.9 °C.

Swimmers started registering from 8 am onwards and the registration process for both swimmers and kayakers went smoothly. Although if we had the 40 original entries we were meant to before some swimmers withdrew, this may not have been the case. In my opinion, we are more than likely to see the same number of entries if not more next year. Therefore, it may be a good precaution to have more than one person on registration to register swimmers and kayakers. Having said that, I really enjoyed being able to meet every single one of the swimmers and kayakers. I hope that's something they appreciated to! The registration period finished on time, giving me, Andy (safety officer), Steve (Race Control) and Mark (president), enough time to prepare to brief swimmers and the swimmers weren't left waiting too long. The t-shirts we had at registration on sale were very popular with swimmers and 5 more were bought by swimmers in addition to the 10 pre-orders I already had. That left 10, 7 of which were given out to volunteers at the event as a thank you for all their help and support. Next year, I'd like to make sure everyone gets something as a thank you for us.

The briefing went well, with the pairing of kayakers and swimmers worked well. Swimmers and kayakers seemed happy with everything said and I believe the information given was thorough.

However, at the start of the swim, not all kayakers had checked in with Steve as instructed at the briefing. I don't think this was down the kayakers the BLDSA had put on with the cooperation of the local canoe clubs. This caused a delayed start of 11:04, which had a negligible impact on the race and swimmers didn't seem to mind, happy that we made sure we had everybody accounted for.

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The race start went off without problems and our safety crews triple checked that we had all kayakers accounted for on the water. During the race, the general public were genuinely interested in our event and asked 'is this a new thing?', after the event taking place every year (bar one or two) for over 50 years. Therefore, next year I will be making arrangements to not only publicise the event amongst the swimming community, but the local community as well (since there is clearly an appetite to hear about these events in Torbay). There could also be the possibility of an introductory event for people interested in the BLDSA and as way of getting more people involved.

High speed craft during the event could have quite easily been an issue for us, however thanks to our safety crews and the two skippers from Paignton Sailing Club, the event was undisturbed by these water users. I'd like to thank both for their hard work during the event, they are crucial to the event and without them, Torbay wouldn't take place.

Our race controller, suggested for next year we have dedicated check in and out sheet (which I completely agree with and will implement). During the race, communication worked well between the swim secretary, race controller, finish timer (Nikki Bromley), safety crews, first aid (Janet Wilson) and turn judges at Fishcombe. The team that ran Torbay worked fantastically together and I'm extremely grateful to them for all their hard work.

The first swimmer home by half an hour, was Oliver Wilkinson (Gloucester Masters SC) in 3 hours dead. The 2nd and 3rd swimmers came home in a dead heat at 3 hours 30 minutes, with Brian Allen and Christopher Astill Smith, both from the Red Tops Swim club. The first female home, was Liane Llewellyn Hickling in 3 hours and 47 minutes, followed by first time BLDSA swimmer Rebecca Hollingsworth in 3 hours and 48 minutes. The third female swimmer home is a regular on the BLDSA circuit, with Wendy Figures completing the course in a swift 3 hours and 52 minutes. The only breast stoker for the 8 mile distance was Philip Yorke in 5 hours 49 minutes, an amazing time for a breast stroke swim. The 4 mile competition was dominated by Andy Middleton, another first timer, doing extremely well in 2 hours and 1 minute. The female veteran prize went to Lesley Ferguson. I was really happy with how the swimmers participated and all honoured the traditions of good sportsmanship. It was a pleasure to meet everyone and I hope they come back again for next years swim!

I would also like to thank Dan Jepson for being our official photographer for the event, who took all our presentation photos and will soon produce a video of the whole event. I'll post this as soon as it's ready, Dan's work before this has been fantastic, so I'm sure this will be no different. And finally thank you for coming to this event and supporting it during my first year as swim secretary. I would also like to thank outgoing

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secretary, Peter Larrad, for all his help and support in the lead up making my life a lot easier. Peter has given years of service to the BLDSA and is one of the humblest people you will meet, we wish him well in the future.

Yours Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'A. M. Roberts'.

André M. Roberts
Torbay Swim Secretary
British Long Distance Swimming Association