

SCWP&SA Iron Men and Ladies strike World Championship Gold!

We normally race indoors at this time of the year in a comfortable 27-28C. and if it should drop by even as little as one degree we'd soon hear from someone. So what sort of reaction do you think we'd have if we asked you to swim in 1C? Yes, really one degree Centigrade...

The Finns, Russians and other northerly resident Europeans have indulged in ice plunges and winter swimming as a way of life – healthy, social and fun – and this has developed into a bi-annual World Winter Swimming Championship, mostly held in the north of Finland, but with occasional sorties to other countries. This year it was held from 22-24th January in the very picturesque Lake Bled, in Slovenia.

The scene greeting the 700 or more competitors from over a dozen nations on the first day was a heavy cold mist, snow and ice all around as if icing sugar had been sprinkled on the picture-postcard surroundings. But the only sugar was in hot chocolate and coffee – this was proper ice, water somewhere between 1C and 2C, and the air a refreshing –5C to –10C during the course of the day. Clubs from the Norwegian Fjords, Lapland and Murmansk to name a few.

Great Britain was represented by a 40-strong contingent of swimmers from the UK's largest, and Surrey's newest affiliated, club South London Swimming Club (SLSC) including a number of regular SCWP&SA Masters.

Races were 25m head-up breaststroke (the "traditional" Winter Swimming Stroke) and 25 and 50m freestyle. The "pool" was created by three floating pontoons on the lake with 25m racing lanes. No starting blocks, as you don't dive. Races start from the water which you enter via steel steps which never really got clear of the icicles that had formed. No tumble turns either. A cup of warm fruit tea on exit from your race followed by a hundred yard trot to a stint in the sauna with fellow competitors is the usual warm-down routine..

The water was warmer (well, less cold then!) than the air so keeping warm before and between races was paramount. The commentary on the races, coupled with music to boogie to kept the atmosphere warm and happy. Swimmers from 15 years old to a spritely 80 plus took part in races and relays, including an incredible 400m swim across the lake.

We are delighted to say we now have six more Surrey World Champions and took a fine haul of medals.

Next time is Latvia in two years time and there will be a UK Cold Water Championship at Tooting in January 2011. Plenty of time for you all to get some acclimatisation and training and help us boost the medal count!

25m Breaststroke		
GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
Ann Brimelow		Lucy Neal
		Mandy Worsley
		Nicola Malin
25m FS		
GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
Lucy Petrie	Nicola Malin	Joseph Lennon
Mandy Worsley	Margy Sullivan	
Ellery McGowan	Patricia Baker	
50m FS		
GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
Ellery McGowan	Mandy Worsley	Nicola Malin
Rob Hughes	Rory Fitzgerald	Joseph Lennon
Margy Sullivan		
Freestyle Relays, 200 yrs+		
GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
	Nicola Malin	Andrew Ingamells
	Mandy Worsley	Deb Wright
	Rob Hughes	Lucy Petrie
	Jim Boucher	Ellery McGowan

See some pictures and be inspired by looking on <http://www.flickr.com/search/show/?q=WWSC2010&ss=2>