

Neptun Cup Gala

Prague (Short Course)

16 – 18th May 2008

Club Performance:

9 Swimmers – Chris Mercer, Tony Davies, Jane Jones, Geoff Jones, Mike Battersby, Heidi Arnot, Neil Millard, Anna Stokes, Martin Neal

51 Individual swims

0 Team swims

1st place - 19

2nd place - 6

3rd place - 10

Gala Details:

by Heidi Arnot

Not the conventional going away trip, where we all bundle on the same plane and headed there and back again as one large Cardiff Masters Tee shirt wearing group. This time, swimmers took the opportunity to spend some time before the gala enjoying the sights and delights of Prague.

Sadly, we did not get to watch Terry swimming 100m Fly as he did not even leave the UK, as he managed get tickets to see Cardiff City in the cup final at Wembly! I suppose we can forgive him. Chris, also had to miss the trip, due to other sporting commitments. Both were missed.

That left Martin, Tony, Chris (Sir), Mike, Anna Stoakes, Geoff, Jane, Heidi and Neil. Spectators, greatly appreciated were Alysia (Mike's wife, along with her parents (visiting from Germany), Heidi's mum and Anna's mum.

The Merlin hotel, had rooms of varying quality and sizes, but a handy place to drink beer outside! The trip to the pool was a short walk to the bus stop, then a 10 min bus ride up to the Strahov Stadion built between the wars, which served as a Sokol venue (synchronized gymnastics). It is at the top of Petrin Hill, with fantastic views across the city. Strahov is now the training ground for Sparta Prague and a 'rock' concert venue.

It seats 220,000! Built underneath the concrete structure is a 'small' 25 m pool - not seating more than 10! The venue for our gala.

It was very crowded inside (think Sophia Gardens pool) with towels, mats etc marking teams' territory. We managed to secure some space during the day, but were always in the way! Well done Martin for saving a bench on day 2!

The standard was high for a small gala including swimmers from over 16 countries.

The points system, was confusing! However, we eventually worked out that there were Masters of Style awards - in that the top 5, age adjusted swimmers were awarded prizes. This was represented (regularly) with loud 'Rocky' music, with clapping during several ceremonies throughout the swimming day.

Prizes were sponsored 'goodies' of which I acquired some for coming 4th overall for the 50m backstroke.... I acquired a variety of 'interesting' things, in my sponsor bag, including a lighter, dance DVD, some vitamins (donated to the cleaner) - learn to dance Turkish and belly style in Czech (Jane hope you are enjoying!), postcards, pens etc. A pair of goggles - donated to Neil and a hat....

The pool had a well stocked shop/cafe and I know that the beer was particularly enjoyed at 50p for 0.5 litre. (Purely for medicinal purposes).

We missed the evening 'do, as the gala finished fairly late, with a 30 in door to door trip and changing etc, we all relaxed in the hotel restaurant instead. It was warm outside and only rained later. During dinner, Mike and Alysia announced their happy news that they were expecting (a baby!) So congratulations from all was of course celebrated with the local brew.

We had an enjoyable day 'touring' the sites and a group meal after eventually finding space for 13 unannounced diners (Cork managed 20 in the Indian!). ... after that a few of us dived into the Chateau Rouge (late night drinking establishment) for 'several' pivos. Good effort, home by 3am, ready to wake up bleary eyed for the trip home the next day.

There was no club result overall. and a full list of results can be found on the Neptun web site: www.neptunmasters.com/.