**Tribute to Ian Newell**

**31st March 1947 to 20th March 2021**

Sadly, Ian Newell passed away on 20th March 2021, in honour of his life, I have documented some of Ian’s memories as well as my own experiences of him. There are many, many more things I could have mentioned and perhaps we could collectively add to this and help his legacy live on. Rest in Peace, Boss, you are so missed.

Ian started his career in 1969 as head coach at a small swimming club in Scotland. Some years later one of the swimmers he had trained there went on to represent Scotland at the Commonwealth games. In the mid 70’s he moved to London to take a position as an assistant coach with Beckenham. There he gained valuable experience, with the club producing over 13 Olympic swimmers who competed at the 1976 & 1980 games. Beckenham produced many more GB National and international swimmers. Ian also worked alongside renowned coaches at other London clubs like Hounslow Borough SC with another 14 international swimmers in their squad.

In 1982, due to his mother’s illness, Ian made the move to Brighton to care for her. He worked for Brighton Council at Prince Regent swimming pool, and, almost immediately started to discover and encourage potential young swimmers. At the same time, he became Head Coach of Shiverers and set about restructuring and building the club. Ian never left Brighton and remained a very loyal Head coach of Shiverers for 32 years until 2018.

Ian, like Brighton rock had ‘swimming’ in his core. Throughout his life he lived for swimming, and his swimmers, never wavering from his mantra: ‘always doing the right thing by the swimmer for their success’. Ian’s endless hours poolside for training and galas meant his swimmers became parts of his extended family.

In all the years Ian coached he encouraged and shaped thousands of swimmer’s lives’, whether they were from his own club, or elsewhere. He could naturally ignite belief in all he knew by knowing instinctively what to say, and when. Innately knowing when to speak, when to hold his tongue, or when a funny mannerism would defuse a swimmer’s negative thoughts. His famous remarks like shouting: “you’ve made the final” as a swimmer finished a gruelling 1500m or 3k, or “pretend it’s a race” as they stood ready to climb onto the blocks, as well as the ‘moooove it’ we all knew and loved will live on in our memories of him.

The tributes that have come pouring in for Ian from swimmers from all around the world expressing their sadness and love are testament to this great man. Indeed, we speak of Ian’s humour and remember him for his jokes and jolly demeanour, but all this belied a depth of knowledge/experience and resolute passion he had for a sport and the swimmers he literally lived for.

He had an innate understanding of the benefits of nurturing both the mind and body in synchronicity. He could create belief in people, even those that did not initially have any in themselves. We called it “Ian’s magic”. To him there were no bounds to the capabilities of his swimmers. Believing that no-one knows the limits of the human body, or what the perfect training/stroke is, only that we are constantly evolving.

Ian planned his training meticulously, and was always conjuring up different ways to train, motivate, inspire, and challenge his swimmers. Always finishing a training session on a high with a relay or fun activity, motivating his swimmers to work even harder, and, most importantly, to come back and train again. To Ian this was just as important as a main set. Even if sets appeared similar on occasion, his delivery was never the same. Anyone watching Ian would usually be wondering what was coming next. Having a laugh and a joke while getting on with the job was typically the order of the day. Ian knew a relaxed happy swimmer who loved training could go far. Ian was a showman in club training, never easy due to the number and mixture of ability of swimmers without spare water time for specialisation. Ian coped anyway by treating them all as individuals /special whilst often in the same session or lane and used to talk about times he had a junior 100m British record holder train with a 1500m swimmer. He made it work and they were all successful.

Ian and I spent almost 20 years working together. Hours poolside at sessions/galas and hours more analysing on the phone afterwards was our typical daily routine. I felt extremely privileged to have worked so closely with Ian, and glad that I could see this remarkable man in action. His time coaching was not exclusively reserved for the most talented, he believed all swimmers could be nurtured if they wanted to be. He always made time to talk to every one of our clubs’ swimmers.

In 1988 he was appointed to the position of swimming coach at Lancing College, simultaneously holding his existing coaching role at Shiverers. Ian’s knowledge helped to create a strong college team. His Lancing team highlights including finishing 2nd in the National schools Bath cup to Plymouth Leander. Ian coaching Shiverers and Lancing school swimmers was to the mutual benefit of both groups, Lancing students could swim in Shiverers sessions, and some club swimmers then went on to join the college as students.

He helped future stars flourish at both club, and college during the many years he spent working at both institutions. Some of his students began swimming for Great Britain whilst studying at Lancing College. Ian also helped bring the Penguins Swim school to Lancing. He held his post at Lancing until 2008.

He enjoyed having laughs with his master swimmers, composed of mainly former age group swimmers returning in their adulthoods to swim with Ian once again. Always encouraging to everyone young and old, he worked with a former Italian top swimmer who came to Brighton to work for 3 months and helped him knock 6 seconds off his time to win, breaking a Sussex masters 100m freestyle record in the process. Another ex-swimmer turned up and asked if Ian could help him get to the Commonwealth games trials, just 6 months away even though he had not swum in 5 years! He made it in style and went on to break Sussex county records for both 50m, and 100m freestyle.

Ian cared deeply about all his swimmers. He knew instinctively for each swimmer that which was beneficial to their development, and that which was not. As a result, when things went off track, or plans had to change this could be rather painful to him.

He often wrote his most heartfelt thoughts down, usually about swimming. I tried, unsuccessfully, to encourage him to write a book and share his written wit and wisdom with others. Hopefully we can gather these notes to remember Ian by as they are so special and show just how deep, thoughtful, and caring he was. He could remember all his swimmers, their racing times, the things they had said, and perhaps most importantly, their excuses made for not being able to train.

Ian’s philosophy was always aim high, ‘that way’ he said, ‘you aim for the stars and still get to the moon’, or more often ‘aim for Nationals, and County and Region qualifications can be achieved on the way!’. His dedication, commitment, and belief in his swimmers fostered mutual respect and was part of his recipe for success.

He was always able to take the pressure off his swimmers by being there for them in his funny, friendly, supportive way. Even when swimmers moved on to pastures new, Ian had already prepared them for their next journey, and they will each remember the opportunities Ian gave them personally for the rest of their lives.

I was fortunate to earn the right to be poolside with Ian at a good many British Championships and Nationals where I witnessed Ian’s genius receive the respect and recognition it deserved.

Ian always paraded his new swimmers around the pool at their first nationals to his many coaching friends, not to boast, but to build an even greater belief in the swimmer. He would talk the talk and tell his friends just what potential they had in such a lovely and respectful way. He would say if you talked about something it will happen, as thoughts first become believable, and then become reality.

Ian’s Nationals podium successes resulted in frequent requests for his coaching ideas and training sets, he was always willing to assist, fostering a mutual respect with the other coaches.

For Ian, Nationals was the pinnacle of the swimming year and brought him back to the early days of his coaching years in London. He loved a trip down memory lane and would often talk about those times. To him, you didn’t just train to get to nationals, there was a master plan beyond that, some swimmers went on to become National champions, and new swimmers emerged to follow.

A coach is defined by their successes, Ian produced more age group swimmers who reached National finals and won more National Championships than any other club

Ian had swimmers selected to the then World Class programme, National Development programmes, Regional talent, and County development. A World Class coach told Ian’s swimmer that she had been provided the best possible club development of any swimmer seen on the programme. The parent in me brimmed with pride but also satisfaction that I had done the right thing in trusting Ian implicitly.

Ian’s swimmers went onto swim at Olympic level, World Championships Pool and Open Water, Junior GB Olympic team, Commonwealth Games, European Championships Junior and Senior pool and open water, GB international representation, BUCS, School National Championships ISSA, IAPS, Bath Cup, representing their own countries abroad like the Macubian Games and Trinidad and Tobago. Swimmers also competed for GB in Biathle at World and European levels plus World Triathlon with 2 swimmers ranked top 3 in World for age group School Biathlon. In the 50 years Ian worked his magic there were so many other successes and British, National, Regional, County records broken along the way. There were endless other highlights like in 1989 when Shiverers won Top Club in the London Speedo (now Arena) League, and when Ian’s swimmer was the first 11-year-old in the world to break 60 seconds for 100 freestyle 59.89. A swimmer who started on her career path with Ian breaking a British junior record went on after Ian to swim in 4 Olympics. One of Ian’s best memories was watching his swimmer swimming the 1500m in 1987 in the Commonwealth games in New Zealand and his Sussex County records for 1500 and 400m freestyle still stand to this day!

In 1992 Ian’s swimmers won the National Televised Hula Hoops Swimming games and in 1996 Shiverers had 8 relays qualified for the National age group Championship’s which was the highest number in whole of GB. Ian firmly believed relays allowed opportunity for more swimmers to compete and experience nationals. In more recent years he has helped swimmers achieve qualifying times in ALL events at Nationals which may be a record as well as them being selected for the National Development squad and go on to represent England. Ian could produce national champions year on year and recently another former star of Ian’s has gone onto realise his dreams and start a new career swimming for a USA College. Swimmers have won or been shortlisted for Sussex sports personality wards and in 2014 Shiverers won ‘Club’ of the year at the awards ceremony. Always a supporter of Sussex and the friendly rivalry nurtured between coaches, Ian’s Shiverers always maintained a top 3 presence at County champs and have achieved so many recognitions like the most won Pier to Pier team trophy wins and many other contested Open meet trophy wins throughout Ian’s career.

Ian knew from the early 1980’s that taking swimmers abroad to train and experience made a huge difference and he organised training camps whenever the opportunity allowed like when he coached the National Trinidad and Tobago team, he invited his swimmers from Shiverers to join him. This undoubtedly helped his Commonwealth games swimmer in New Zealand. Training camps took the training and Ian to another level and helped lift swimmers’ spirits, renew enthusiasm and bond as a team. Ian would record every swimmer’s distance trained, even the master swimmers or odd coach who dropped in for a session. He invented the Olympic set where every swimmer swam every Olympic event in a session which was then changed to go up and down the Olympic set and called the infamous BOGOF. When local pools were forced to close for holidays or maintenance Ian would arrange for swimmers to join him in Tenerife for extra training and before long those swimmers were winning counties and moving up the rankings through the opportunity Ian had created.

In 2004 we were training in Malta over Easter and Ian arranged for swimmers to compete in the 110th Maltese International competition. We came away with 240 medals and gained the admiration of the Maltese organisers for our team spirit and effort amid an intensive training week. One swimmer who later went onto win gold medals at the Cerebral Palsy World games and selected onto the World Class programme was recognised with a Silver Maltese congressional medal for his competitive efforts. Ian was appointed National GB Modern Pentathlon swimming coach in 2003 and always encouraged his Shiverers swimmers to join him at the Crystal Palace pool to gain 50m training and of course help the pentathletes. Due to Ian’s enthusiastic promotion 32 Shiverers swimmers qualified for the Modern Pentathlon National biathlon championships also in the same year.

Ian also inspired and appreciated all those who helped him poolside, not least Sue his sister who was a valued part of the coaching team for many years. Always a strong bond between Ian and Sue as she was also an ex-swimmer and closest family member. Sue was a coach whom the younger swimmers looked up to and loved and the older swimmers respected as much as they did Ian. Such lovely memories of Sue looking after my own children in the pool and at training camps and her own daughter working so hard for Ian and myself breaking a Regional record and being highly placed at Nationals-always a team swimmer who gave her very best for us all. Losing Sue first to her illness when she could no longer be poolside to help was sad for all and then her recent passing must have been so devastating for Amy and Dave and family as it was for Ian too.

Ian was dogged by ill health in later years, but he gave his life to swimming and his loss so soon after his beloved Sue’s passing signals an end of an era in the world of swimming and will be deeply felt by those who truly knew him. Sadly, he never really came to terms with leaving Shiverers and the difficulties and loneliness he faced as a result. Ian was a member of Lancing College SC when he died and some of our parents kindly helped him over the last few years - we are all very grateful. It was hoped he would be able to help work his magic again on the next generation of swimmers at Lancing College SC and we had begun to make plans for this after lockdown. Ian was a larger-than-life character who was an enigma and often underrated.

Whilst no words can ever truly do this great man justice, I hope reading this will help his legacy live on. To me Ian was a much-loved member of our family, and I will be eternally grateful for our long and happy association. I owe Ian everything and will ensure his memory lives on in future generations to come. Ian certainly started swimmers off the right way and helped open doors for their future, something I and the rest of my family know and experienced. Thank you, Ian, and Sue, from the bottom of our hearts.