










Otter Aquatics Newsletter

No 30. October 2017

Dear swimmers and others

Welcome to the October 2017 edition of the Otter Aquatics newsletter.

Look inside to find:

-  A report on this year's European swimming holidays – plus a few pics
-  An article from Outdoor Swimmer magazine about a certain group of open water swimmers at Queens Beach North, Brisbane
-  'The Fourth Lap': Chloë McCardel's attempt at a fourth English Channel crossing
-  Yet another new venue for our Sunday Adult Learn-to-Swim, Stroke Correction and Swimfit training: Murrumba Downs
-  A note about our 2018 swimming holidays
-  A few other bits and pieces
-  And our quote, quiz and pic of the month

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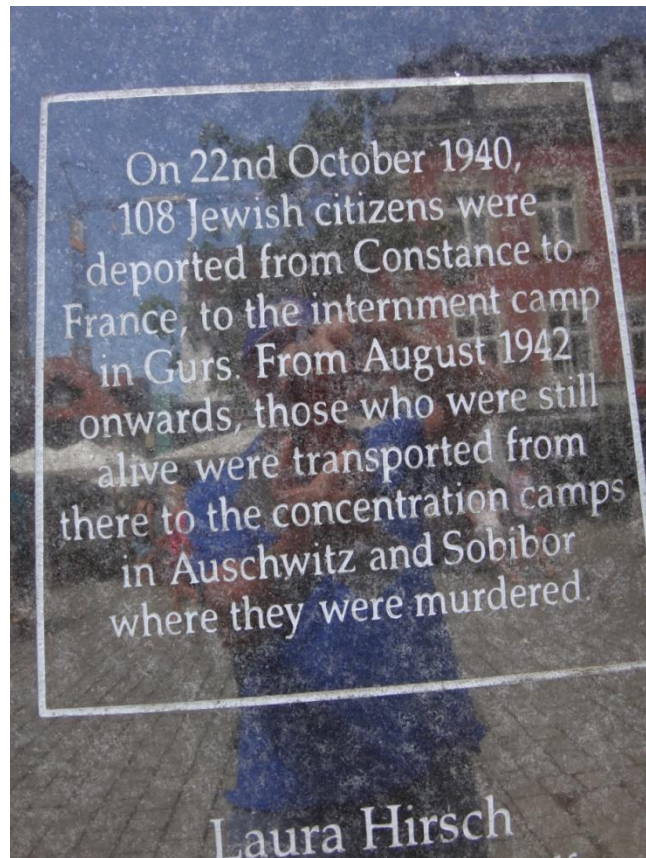
Otter Aquatics 2017 European Swimming Holidays – a short report

For the month of August 2017, a number of keen swimmers participated in three European swimming holidays: cycling and swimming around Lake Constance (Germany, Austria and Switzerland), swimming Slovenia's lakes and rivers and swimming in Italy's Lake Orta and nearby lakes.



Zürich's fast-flowing River Limmat – a real thrill

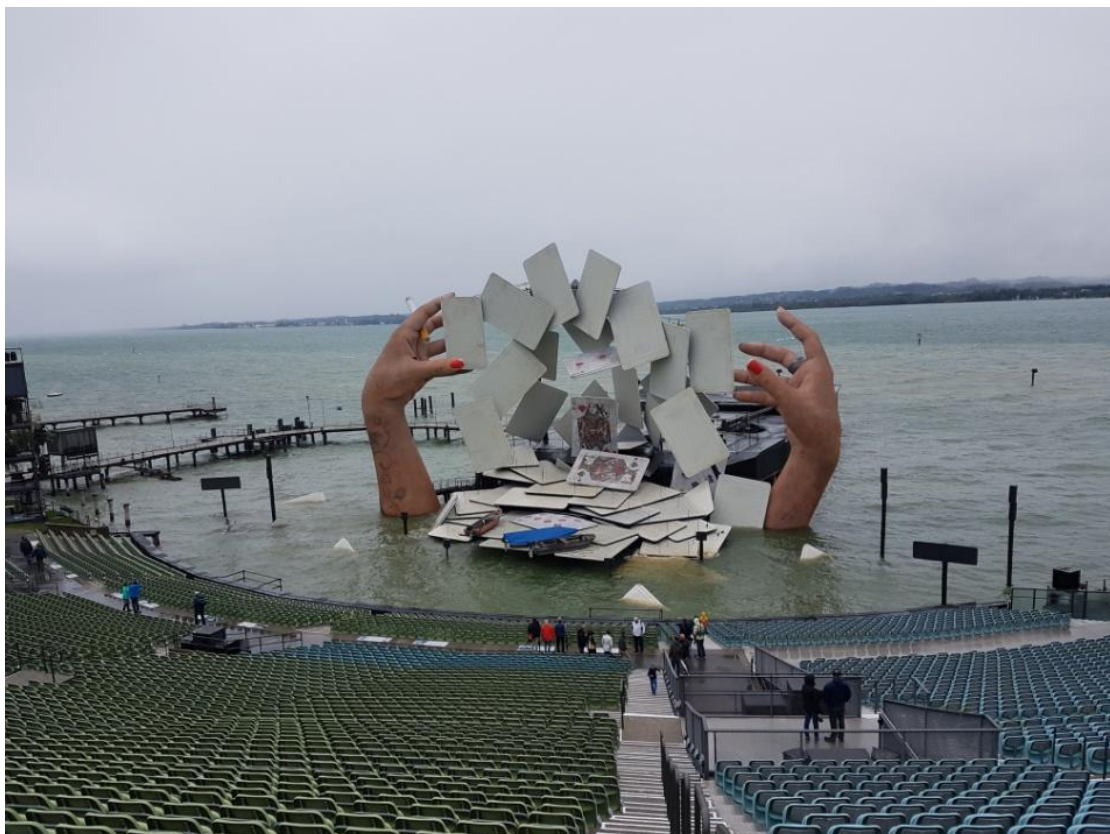
Before we arrived in our Lake Constance hub in the German city of Konstanz, two of us spent a couple of days in Zürich which was surprisingly good. We swam – or at least floated – in the very fast flowing Limmat River and Lake Zürich's beautiful swimming spots (*Schwimmbäds*). We then spent a couple of days in Konstanz experiencing the history of this ancient city, including a not-very-ancient museum of Konstanz's experience of Nazism. We also took a short train trip to the town of Singen and swam in a fantastic public pool made completely of stainless steel (why don't we do things like that in Australia?). Then, over the next few days, we cycled the 250 or so kilometres around Lake Constance staying overnight in the towns of Immenstaad and Lindau in Germany, Bregenz in Austria and Arbon in Switzerland before returning to Konstanz. Along the way we visited the wonderful reconstruction of stone-age dwellings in Uhltingen, whiled away a few hours in the Zeppelin Museum in Friedrichshafen, missed out on our planned performance of Carmen in Bregenz's famous 7,000 seat lakeside stage (the weather had turned sour) and had an 'adventurous' next few days of battling snow and sleet (well, rain and cold at least) as we cycled back to Konstanz. This was the 'A' in adventure travel. But we did manage a swim every day in the warm waters of the lake. Among the many highlights was the experience at our first overnight stop in Immenstaad where we stayed in the German equivalent of a country pub which was just great. There we were, two almost-teetotal Aussies, tired and sore-bummed from cycling, having a quite beer or two. I gather that our conversation got louder and louder by the litre and provided great entertainment for the locals.



Holocaust memorial in Konstanz



Stainless-steel pools in Singen



The washed-out *Seebühne* stage of *Carmen* in Bregenz



Battling the conditions on the Austrian/Swiss border

After Constance, we flew to the Slovenian capital of Ljubljana and then onto Lake Bohinj for the start of a week-long swimming 'boot camp' conducted by Strel Swimming Adventures. On our arrival at Ljubljana airport we were met by none other than marathon swimmer and 'Big River Man', Martin Strel. What a buzz! We experienced long-ish swims: 2k in the mornings followed by another 2k in the afternoons with a 4k length of Lake Bohinj (after a 6k walk to the starting point!) on the last day. I was completely buggered on that swim and needed to be urged on by Peter for the second half of the long swim. It was a week of fabulous scenery – high, steep mountains, crystal clear water, sometimes cold, with a river swim over the border in Italy on one day.



Meeting the 'Big River Man', Martin Strel, in Slovenia



Lake Bohinj, Slovenia – we swam its full 4k length



Lake Bled, Slovenia – we swam this one too

After the Strel week, we spent a weekend in historic Ljubljana checking out this delightful city – ancient, clean, environmentally conscious and with an excellent public pool. And this was the first example of quotable quotes of the trip: ‘A dead-set giveaway’, commented a complete stranger to us as we sat on the steps of Ljubljana town hall waiting for our tour guide, presumably aimed at one of our number declaring his national allegiance by wearing a Bunnings cap. Then we were off to Trieste (disappointingly shabby but historically interesting) and Venice which brought about the second of the quotable quotes: ‘Vena Sitaly’ shouted many of the thousands of American tourists into their mobile phones to explain to folks back home where they were calling from.



Ljubljana Town Hall steps: the Bunnings cap and the ‘what country are we in now?’ navigator



Vena Sitaly

And then a train trip from Venice to Milan and onto Lake Orta. We swam from right outside the front door of our hotel 400 metres to *Isola San Giulio* and back and around, across Lake Orta one kilometre or so to the town of Pella (as in 2015, I got the landing point wrong and we had to mix it with two ferries), the two kilometre length of nearby Lake Mergozzo and other places, all the time experiencing this unique, beautiful and ancient location. And onto a third quotable quote – or at least an experience to relate. On one day, we had two swimmers and two walkers. The walkers' job was to go around the lake, find our landing place at a certain kiosk of unknown location and wave the swimmers in. The swimmers never did see the walkers or their waving. So the by now worried swimmers came ashore and proceeded to carry out a search for the others imagining the worst: one (or two) collapsed walkers in need of first aid. I sent a text to one of the walkers 'Where are you' and the reply came 'At the kiosk'. 'Thanks very much', I responded, none the wiser about where they or the kiosk were. The walkers had decided to sit down at the kiosk and drink coffee instead of carrying out their assigned task. I got a, in my opinion, totally undeserved rebuke for the outburst I let out when we did eventually catch up.



We swam to, from and around *Isola San Giulio* in Lake Orta with its 15th Century monastery



After the Lake Mergozzo swim – joined by daughter Alexandra and her bf Ben. He was suitably capped – but not the one promoting Bunnings



The piazza and old town hall right next to our 200 year old hotel in delightful Orta San Giulio

After Orta, we went our separate ways: Iain home to Capetown via Brussels, Noel home to Brisbane via Madrid, Peter home to Sydney via Bangkok and me home to Brisbane via Hanover, London and fantastic Hong Kong.

Join me in 2018!



MY FAVOURITE WILD SWIMMING SPOT

Queens Beach North, Scarborough, Australia

Clear water and turtles make Queens Beach North Mark Otter's favourite swim spot. Just don't mention the jet skiers...

My favourite wild swimming spot is Queens Beach North in the northern Brisbane suburb of Scarborough. I first found this magical place when a friend who lives nearby told me that he had spied an old bloke swimming up and down the beach's small bay. Next time I saw this friend, he said: "Now there are two old blokes swimming up and down the bay". "Yes," I replied "and the second one is me".

That was a few years ago now. These days, a group of us under the informal banner of 'Otter Aquatics' gather a couple of times a week for a very non-competitive swim that can range anything from 500 metres to three or even more kilometres, generally swimming multiples of the 650-metre 'lap' between the northern and southern rocks bracketing the bay. If the wind is up, it can be very choppy and quite tough swimming but we adopt the philosophy that "we won't appreciate the good days if we don't swim in the bad ones". And there are many more good ones than bad, even in winter when the sea temperature drops to about 16 degrees Celsius.

So why is this so good, even for those of us who have swum all over the world? The answer is partly to do with the fact that it is home – we all live no more than a 20-minute drive away. But

it's also because the beach is so damn lovely; it's away from the noisy crowds of the more popular surf beaches to the north and south of Brisbane and the water is, mostly, amazingly clear.

We always see plenty of plant life under the water and often enough sea creatures to make it 'interesting'. While we haven't encountered any sharks – neither do we want to – we are very mindful of when not to swim and we always swim in our own 'pod' for safety.

We have had a few encounters with marine turtles. Moreton Bay Marine Park, in which 'our' beach sits, is one of the few places in the world where large populations of turtles are found so close to a major city. All but one of the world's seven marine turtle species are found here and there are at least five year-round resident turtle species in the marine park: green, loggerhead, Pacific ridley, flatback and hawksbill and all species are all listed as endangered.

Moreton Bay is one of the most important feeding areas for loggerhead turtles along the east coast of Australia. A few months ago, we spied a loggerhead turtle in distress, so we swam up to it and saw that it had the ropes of a crab pot entangled around

WE HAVEN'T ENCOUNTERED ANY SHARKS

Email your favourite wild swimming spot to: editor@outdoorswimmer.com with the subject 'Wild Swimming'

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Queens Beach North



Mark and the Otter Aquatics

its neck and fins. We managed to free the poor creature who then swam away – I'm sure he would have thanked us if he could have.

We live happily and cooperatively with other water and beach users – well, mostly. Anglers in boats or fishing from the rocks are not a problem, neither are kayakers or SUPers. But then there are the jet skiers. One very narrowly missed us on one occasion, the driver going so fast he would have been totally unaware of our yellow-capped heads. We both reached the beach at about the same time so I went over and spoke to him.

"Did you know that this beach is off limits to jet skis?"

"No," he replied, "I didn't know that". It isn't in fact, but my ruse worked – we haven't seen him or any of his noisy mates since. Please don't tell them.

The Fourth Lap: Chloë McCardel's valiant attempt at a fourth consecutive English Channel crossing



Rather than paraphrase it, I am providing below the full account from her own website of record-holding Australian endurance swimmer Chloë McCardel's brave attempt at a fourth consecutive English Channel Crossing. While unsuccessful this time, she is still one of the greatest endurance athletes of all time.



On 29 August 2017, Chloë attempted what is widely considered the greatest endurance challenge – the 136km quadruple non-stop crossing of the English Channel. This had never been attempted previously, let alone completed.

While unsuccessful on her first attempt, Chloë is extremely proud to have completed her third double crossing of the English Channel. Chloë does not see this attempt as a 'failure' but rather a step closer to achieving this incredible feat. It has provided her with an opportunity to learn more and find ways to improve. Chloë still believes a quadruple crossing of the English Channel is possible and is inspired to dramatically alter the perception of what the human mind and body can achieve in such harsh, inhospitable conditions.

Chloë, who is at the pinnacle of her career, is arguably the greatest ultra-marathon swimmer in history. In 2014, Chloë set the World Record for the longest unassisted ocean swim of 124.4km in 41.5 hours and in 2015, was the first Australian to complete a triple non-stop crossing of the English Channel. Only three other ultra-marathon swimmers have completed a triple non-stop crossing of the English Channel, which were completed over 27 years ago.

In 2016, Chloë crossed the English Channel eight times, breaking the World Record for crossings in one season. This also gave her the Australian Record of 21 crossings of the English Channel, breaking Des Renford's long-standing Australian record of 19 crossings.

In preparation for this epic feat, Chloë trained in water temperatures as low as 11°C for up to six hours, completed overnight training swims of up to 20 hours in 15°C with 3°C air temperature; and distances of 110-140km in a week. This is the largest training block completed by Chloë, which also included pool training equivalent to a male 1,500m Olympic-level swimmer during their peak training period.

Chloë said, "I've reached all my original goals. I've pushed myself as much as I thought I could have. Now, it's about pushing the boundaries of marathon swimming."

"It's about pushing the human spirit. What can our body and mind achieve? Do we really know our potential? Maybe we can go further."

"I hope to keep pushing the sport and the human spirit forward."

Over 700,000 people have completed Ironman triathlons. It is estimated that approximately 200 people have sailed non-stop solo around the world. Approximately 4,500 individuals have scaled Mt. Everest and over 10,000 Olympic gold medals have been awarded. Twelve people have walked on the moon and four people have completed a triple English Channel crossing. No one has yet attempted or completed a quadruple non-stop English Channel crossing.




Yet another new venue for our Sunday swimming training

We spent a couple of the winter months at Redcliffe pool and it served our purposes very well. But now it is time for yet another change. From Sunday 24 September, we moved to Murrumba Downs pool for our adult LTS, stroke correction and swimfit training. Redcliffe is good too and we will return there when Murrumba Downs closes down for the winter.

I think Murrumba Downs is perhaps the loveliest pool in Brisbane – it's a small community pool (25 metres compared with Redcliffe's 50m) and is outdoors, but it has shade cloth over half the pool's length. The depth ranges from 1.2m to 1.5m and it has nine lanes, three of which will be made available to us on Sunday mornings. It has clean, functional facilities; it is well maintained and it has attractive grassy and trey grounds, complete with a BBQ if you want to use it. They also have a coffee machine and could possibly be persuaded to actually turn it on. It is heated to about 28 degrees and it has access ladders at all four corners. The pool is on the corner of Dohles Rocks Road and Ogg Road Murrumba Downs with the car park entrance off Ogg Road. It is diagonally opposite Maccas – not that any of you fit and health swimming types would need to know that.

2018 European swimming holidays

The timings for all our European trips are centred around the one we do each year with Strel Swimming Holidays. In past years this has been Croatia and Montenegro; this year it was Slovenia and next year it will be Greece. Borut Strel has now confirmed with me the dates in 2018 for their Symi Island Greece trip, so I can now confirm the dates for all our 2018 trips as follows:

-  **27th August to 2nd September. Italy's Lake Orta.** This, our flagship tour, will be similar to this year's – see: <http://www.otteraquatics.com.au/orta.html>
-  **5th to 12th September. Cycling and Swimming Tour of Lake Constance** This will also be similar to this year's – see: <http://www.otteraquatics.com.au/constance.html>
-  **13th to 21st September. Symi Island, Greece** – for the 2017 trip see: <http://www.strel-swimming.com/s1a252/swimming-holidays-greece/symi-swimming-odyssey-7-days.html>.
Note – the dates for the Greece trip have changed slightly – brought forward by two days from what I had advised earlier.

Symi Island is in the Dodecanese island group in eastern Greece whose major island is Rhodes. The Otter Aquatics group will gather in the medieval city of Rhodes (remember the Colossus of Rhodes, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, from your school days?) and spend a few days becoming absorbed in ancient Greek culture before taking a ferry to Symi Island from where we will join up with others in the Strel group for a week of unforgettable swimming.

There will be a few days in between each trip to allow those who wish to do two or three trips time to get from one place to another. A good way to get from Milan/Orta to Zürich/Konstanz is by train – straight through the Swiss Alps! It will probably be best to fly between Zürich and Athens before flying on to Rhodes.

If you are interested in coming on one, two or all three of the 2018 trips, please let me know as soon as you can. A number of people have already expressed interest but now is the time to be somewhat more definite. The deadline for registration and deposits is **31st December 2017**.

Each trip will only go ahead if there are sufficient numbers.

Quiz of the month

The answer to last month's quiz question, which was 'Who am I? I am a small country in southern Central Europe, located at the crossroads of main European cultural and trade routes. I am bordered by Italy to the west, Austria to the north, Hungary to the northeast, Croatia to the south and southeast and the Adriatic Sea to the southwest. I am a democratic parliamentary republic, independent since 1991 and I am a member of the United Nations, the European Union and NATO. And I have some of the most stunning swimming scenery on the planet' was – yet again – Marieta Hanaghan. Marieta did receive her postcard from said country which is, of course, Slovenia.

This month's quiz question is: 'By what name do the Americans call Venice?'

Quote of the month

'The noble, healthful and pleasant pastime of swimming' (a banner promoting swimming in the late 19th Century)

Pics of the month (two this month)



Three Aussies doing Lake Bled, Slovenia, synchronously, stroke-by-stroke (L-R: Peter, Noel, Mark)



One of Slovenia's crystal-clear lakes – always with stunning backdrops