

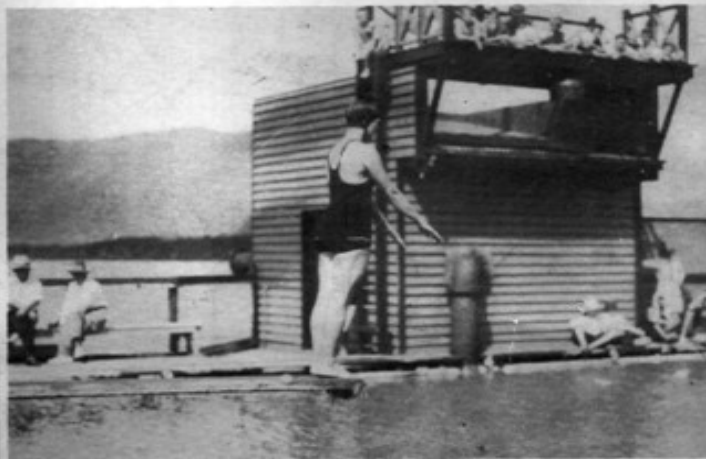
Cairns Amateur Swimming Club

A History

50 Years of Swimming Affiliation

1932 - 1982

**The
Highlights and History
of the Cairns Amateur
Swimming Club**



This booklet celebrates
50 years of affiliation
with the Queensland
Amateur Swimming
Association
1932 — 1982

LIFE MEMBERS

**Fred Robinson
Ruby Robinson
Mick Barrett
Mick Burrows
Jack Young
Bob Beate
Austin McMahon
Dan Troy
Jack Plunkett
Mary Speed
Waddie Helmuth
Tom Freeman
Watty Sykes
Ron McKauge
Norma McKauge
Eddie Pollard
Tom Farrugia
Noel Price
Mrs T. Upton
R. McIntyre
J. McAuliffe
A.T. Covacevich
M. Khan
M. Crittenden
Syd Lavis
Merle Lavis**

FRONT COVER PICTURE: MARIE CRITTENDON at the old Cairns Baths



**C.A.S.C.
Club Trophy
won by
L.J. Emmerson
7.11.1919**

9ct

THE EARLY DAYS . . . 1900—1929

Cairns Amateur Swimming Club dates back to the early 1900's when it operated in a fairly unstructured form. Northern swimmers used to have the advantage of warmer water for training purposes, not that training in those days bore much similarity to that of today. Swimmers used to swim among the jellyfish and sea-wasps were not known in those times. Alligator Creek and the Mulgrave River at Gordonvale were common swimming spots. Our earliest information came from Mr. L.J. Emerson who swam with the Cairns Club from 1919 to 1922. He has donated a gold medal, which he won in club championships in 1919, back to the club. Mr. Emerson remembers Tom Barr as being a big man, very strong, a good swimmer with feet like paddles.

1922 COMMITTEE



Standing: A. LITTLEFORD (Life Member), C.H. OLLSON (Committee), L.S. COLE (Press Corres.),
T.D. BARR (Committee), W.S. PATTERSON (Captain), D.R.M.J.P. TREHY (Committee).
Sitting: P.A. MASON (Asst. Secretary), MISS A.L. OLLSON (Committee), R.B. LeBAS (President),
MISS M. OSTERLUND (Treasurer), J.H. DALTON (Secretary)
Insets: A.M.J. LYONS, E. BLACKMORE.

This 1922 Committee is the first formal committee of the Club. Its president Bob Lebas is well remembered by Eddie Pollard as one of the members who helped to build the mud pool on the Esplanade. Others involved in the project of gathering logs from Bessie Point were Wally and Adam Patterson (the Patterson boys), Spinny Rooney and Jack O'Connell, the

man who was responsible for enticing the young Norm Wedlock to swim with the Cairns Club in 1930's. To compensate for his hard work Eddie was given a year's free membership of the club. They had to cope with the vagaries of the tide in the Inlet, and Eddie remembers being very late home on one occasion because they had been stranded in the mud, and he was dealt some stern punishment by his father on the best-cushioned part of his anatomy. The site for the pool was donated by the Council and the Harbour Board gave the use of their pontoon for the transport of the logs. It served the club for a number of years but was unfortunately destroyed by cyclone only two days after the final payments had been made. Swimmers then used any of three wire enclosures on the Esplanade. Harry Hill's pool in front of the R.S.L. was one of the favourites because he maintained it well. Fred Robinson recalls a crocodile story which occurred near one of the others. A group of men had been playing bridge at one of the boarding houses and four of them decided to go for a swim about nine o'clock because the tide was right. After their swim they sat under some coconut trees and one became aware of a crocodile's claw on his shoulder. He leaped up and the croc's claw left two long furrows down his back, each of which required 38 sutures. It was this event that hastened the erection of the "new" pool which was opened in 1930, saw the development of some fine swimmers, and served the Club for 32 years, for 24 of which it was managed by Fred and Ruby Robinson.

1931-32 COMMITTEE



H. SWINBURN, M. CRITTENDEN, H. SIMMONDS, T. LENNON
G. SMYTH (Secretary), F. COX (Treasurer), T. BARR (President), R. ROBERTSON (Captain)
N. FAVELL (Asst. Secretary). Inset: P. JEFFRIES, J. O'CONNELL

STATE AFFILIATION . . . 1930s

Ron McKauge came to Cairns in 1931. He was then secretary of the Queensland Amateur Swimming Association, and realising that the club had some excellent swimmers he convinced them to affiliate with the State body, thereby entitling them to compete in the State championships. The above committee was reformed with Tom Barr as president, and Norma Favell, later to become Mrs. McKauge, as assistant secretary. They married in December 1932 and the reception was organised by Fred and Ruby Robinson.

A team was sent to Brisbane for the 1932-33 Championships, and they performed very well. The men actually won the Flying Squadron from The Valley but were disqualified on a technicality. Eddie Pollard was a member of the team and remembers taking 4 seconds off his best time in the relay. Rudi Robertson was also a member of that team. The following season Cairns was duly proud of its swimmers.

1933-34 MEN'S TEAM



*Back Row (left to right): R. SPRECHER, M. BARRETT, J. TADMAN, N. WEDLOCK.
Front Row: W. FLEMING (Captain), F.V. COX (President), H. O'NEIL*

The team comprised Roy Sprecher, Mick Barrett, J. Tadman, Norm Wedlock, Bill Fleming, Harvey O'Neill, Mary Crittenden, Marie Cuzzu and Ellen Barr 13 year old daughter of Tom. They returned with seven championships, three State records and one Australian record, which the men's team lowered by two seconds at a special Thursday night meet in Cairns. Not to be outdone the women with their team of three lowered their Queensland record by 1.5 seconds. The record created in the Flying Squadron, which required 5 men to swim 100 yards each, lasted for many years but was eventually claimed by Bondi Swimming Club. From that same Thursday night Mick Barrett took home a special trophy for lowering his best time for 100 yards by 1 second.

From left:
MARIE CUZZU and MARIE CRITTENDON



W. FLEMING (right) and N. WEDLOCK



The men's team stayed at the home of Ron McKauge at Sandgate while competing. Fleming could beat Wedlock over 100 yards but in the 50's Wedlock could give him 2 seconds start and win. Wedlock's 50 yard time was never beaten by anyone in the club before the yards were changed to metres. Tom Barrett junior pipped his 100 yard time by .2 of a second.

Swimming was not the only talent of this team. A trio much in demand at the Wickham Hotel were Marie Cuzzu on her ukelele, Harvey O'Neill on piano and Mialo Kalili with his guitar.

A feature of swimming in the thirties was tours and demonstrations by champions from overseas. Jack Spence and Mialo Kalili toured, followed by Jack Medica, the current world champion. His tour manager was Ron McKauge. In Cairns Medica made an attempt to better the Queensland record for 400 yards. Mick Barrett swam against him for the first 100, Norm Wedlock took the second 100, and Bill Fleming did the final 200 yards. The last lap brought the large crowd to its feet and Medica won by a touch. He had taken 16.2 seconds off the Queensland record.

In 1938 when S.F. Hodel was secretary and B.O. Balfe was president, Cairns boasted the highest membership in Queensland with 197 active members.

In 1939 Kiyoshi Nakama, Hawaiian champion toured Queensland. He and Bill Fleming finished first and second respectively in three Queensland Championships, all freestyle. Nakama gave the first ever demonstration of the butterfly in Cairns. He had learned to swim in irrigation ditches in Hawaii. Harry Brischke taught Norm Wedlock to swim and Eddie Pollard taught Bill Fleming in Alligator Creek. Wedlock actually beat Nakama over a 500 yard dash and the Club saw fit to present him with a special trophy for same.

THE WAR YEARS . . . 1940s

Then came the war years and swimming went into recess. Fred Robinson remembers providing some fatherly care for some of the servicemen who used the baths. When the troops moved out swimming started again.

1945-46 TEAM



G. MICHILIOS, C. BURROWS (Captain), FLORA MAY, W. BOURNER, C. HONDROS

C. FRY, P. PEARSALL (Manager), Mrs E. POLLARD, E. POLLARD, W. WYER

S. HILTON



A team went to Townsville to compete in the North Queensland Championships. Mick Burrows the current Club champion won the 100 freestyle Open event creating a new pool record. Bill Bourner also made a pool record in winning the 100 metre breaststroke. Flora May won the 50 metre freestyle championship lopping 3 seconds off the pool record.

Flora May came from Harvey Creek near Babinda. She travelled 7 miles each day for training and 32 miles to Cairns once a week for competition.



It was Flora May who finally broke Marie Cuzzu's North Queensland record for 100 yards freestyle.

From Left:

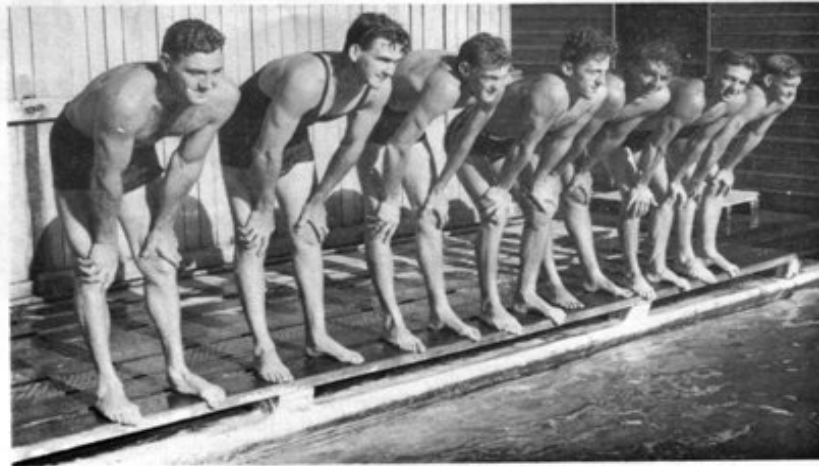
NANCY SPEED,

FLORA MAY and

MARION SPEED

at the Valley Baths, Brisbane

In 1947, Cairns sent a team to the State Championships and competed in the Flying Squadron for the first time for 13 years and won again. The team consisted of Mick Burrows (Capt.), Bernie Webb, Howard Cook, Con Hondras, Noel Ashton and Archie James. In a superb swim in the last lap Mick Burrows managed to overhaul the Valley contender and won by a touch. Individuals performed very well too. Howard Cook won a total of seven state championships during his swimming career.



MICK BURROWS, HOWARD COOK, BERNIE WEBB, CON HONDRA, NOEL ASHTON,
ARCHIE JAMES, NORM JAMES

Flora May took a State title in the 100 metres Junior freestyle. She was chosen along with two other Queensland girls to stay in Brisbane for three weeks at the expense of Queensland Amateur Swimming Association to try to topple the Victorian Judy Joy Davies who held the Australian record. However the latter swam brilliantly and retained her title.



FLORA ROBINSON



HOWARD COOK

Joan Speed was another State title holder from that era. The Speed family were all good swimmers Joyce, Joan, Nancy Marion and Teddy. Their mother helped to chaperone Cairns travelling teams.

During that era also Wattie Sykes was starter for many years. He would have the distinction of being the longest serving starter for the Cairns Amateur Swimming Club.

The requirements for a swimmer's badge for Scouts had among others, these clauses

1. Swim 50 yards with clothes on (shirt, trousers and socks as a minimum) and undress in the water.
2. Swim (without clothes) 100 yards on the breast and 50 on the back with hands clasped or arms folded.

It was Amateur Swimming Club personnel who lent a hand to the scout movement. It was Amateur Swimming Club personnel also who taught the children to swim, right up to the 1970's.

Names (left to right):
JILL ROBINSON,
INNES PRICE,
BERYL PRICE,
FRANCIE JOSUE,
OWEN ROBINSON and
RHONDA OLLSEN



N.Q. CHAMPIONSHIPS . . . 1950s

In 1950 the North Queensland Championships were held in Cairns. Seating accommodation was insufficient to cope with the large crowd.

One of the best races seen in the north for many years was the win by A. Boundy of Cairns in the 880 yards freestyle for men. P. McCarthy came third.

The outstanding women's competitor of these championship's was Dot Battle who won each event in which she competed.

Veteran swimmer Bill Rail of Innisfail, though the oldest contestant in the carnival, finished the 880 and 440 yards in good time.

Other winners for Cairns in the men's were Norm James, 100 back and 150 medley, Arch James, 100 breast, W. Bournier senior breaststoke, P. McCarthy 220 free, M. Crittenden Intermediate 100 free and 150 Medley, T. Barrett junior 220 free, J. Gray 12-14 boys 100 free, Alan McKenzie 10-12 50 free and breast, P. Guild -10 breast.

Results for women were A. Mullins 12-14 50 free and back, D. Jukas Junior Girls diving, and of course Dot Battle and her wins in 5 events.

Cairns also won the women's 200 yard relay, Boys 250 yard relay and the senior Flying Squadron.

That was the year that Waddie Helmuth, Jack Young and Ruby Robinson stayed with the swimmers in barracks at Townsville Showgrounds. When it was time to leave they found that the caretaker had locked them in. So over the top of the wires had to go swimmers, luggage and of course — chaperones.

During the 50's Tom Barrett won state titles in three successive years. He would probably have won more but he did not attend.



TOBRUK POOL . . . 1960s

The first important swimming event of the 1960's was the Olympian Swim Meet when the Olympic Swimmers came up from Townsville to stimulate a continued interest in swimming in Cairns and to aid the Cairns Amateur Swimming Club in its Clubroom Building project.

A short time later they competed at the Olympic Games in Rome. The next big move of the sixties was the move to Tobruk Pool. Swimmers then swam in chlorinated water as opposed to the old salt water baths.

Some of the better-remembered swimmers from that team were Terry Gathercole, Jon Henricks, Murray Rose, John Devett (Captain), John Conrads, David Theile, Rosemary Lassig, Lorraine Crapp, Dawn Fraser, Gergayina Beckett, Jan Hogan, Alva Colquhoun, Ilsa Konrads and Sandra Morgan.



The most outstanding swimmer of the 60's was John Covacevich, whose father now Sir Thomas Covacevich, was president of the Club for many years. He is still the Patron of Cairns Amateur Swimming Club and has recently accepted the position of Patron of the Far North Queensland District Amateur Swimming Association. During those years John was to make five Queensland records and one Australian record.

Club Champions of 1962 were: Girls: V. McKay, Lesley Carter, Jennifer Davis, Anthea Lazarus, Wendy McKay, Margaret Lazarus, Marilyn Upton, Carol Lazarus and Boys: L. Booth, K. Booth, K. Elcoate, R. Breinl, B. Bishop, R. Carter, K. Thompson, W. Newbould, E. Blackmore, W. Stone and the president's trophy for winning the highest number of points in championships went to Marilyn Upton and John Covacevich.

Wayne Stone and John Covacevich once dead-heated in creating a new club record for the under 14 200 m. freestyle.

In early 1963 at the North Queensland Championships John established 6 records in one race the 220 yds. Medley. They were the Queensland, North Queensland, North Queensland Resident, Pool and 2 North Queensland metric records.



Left: John Covacevich
Bob Blackmore,
Marilyn Upton & Ted
Blackmore in Brisbane
for Queensland
Championships about
1958-59.



Right: John Covac-
evich at Valley Pool—
Queensland Champ-
ionships about 1958



Back Row (left to right):

JOHN COVACEVICH, WAYNE STONE, BRYAN BELL

Front Row:

SNOWY STONE, WAYNE BOOTH, MARGARET McALISTER and EDDIE McALISTER

As well as those in the photographs the following swimmers were known to create records in Swim Meets throughout the Far North, Carol Lazarus, Anthea Lazarus, J. Davis, Lesley Carter and Boys B. Twomey, Jen Davis, and W. Newbould.

CLUBHOUSE & GRANDSTAND . . . 1970s

With the help of the Returned Services League Cairns Amateur Swimming Club members managed to raise funds to build the present grandstand and Clubhouse, a credit to both organisations.

At the beginning of the 70's Club members were still teaching the youngsters to swim. Jeannie Hubbard was taught by Fred Aprilovic, who also taught many others. Mark Biancotti was taught by Les Webb who was Pool Manager at the time. From these years developed some fine swimmers through the 70's. Jeannie became a fine backstroker — one of her Far North Queensland records lasted until 1981.

Jeannie gave up swimming when she broke her arm, aged 13. Other good swimmers around that time were Dennis Oswin (freestyle), Kerry Wharton (Fly), her sisters Cathy and Lorraine, Carmel McCauliffe and Peter Zabske.

Highlights of the 1970's were provided by Kane Hollingsworth, John Carmen and Mark Biancotti. All held State titles and Kane's name is still in the State records for holding the 14 yrs. 100 metre free, 14 yrs. 200 metre free and the 16 yrs. 200 metre free. Both Kane and John were chosen in the State squad after the State championships to attend the National Championships in Melbourne later in 1975. John's best was the 200 metre butterfly.

Mark Biancotti has won many State championships in the 50 metre freestyle. In 1977 Mark was awarded the Sportsman of the Year trophy by the Brother's Hockey Club. This was the first time a swimmer had ever won that honour. Two years later Mark represented Australia at the Games in Christchurch and gained a silver medal in the individual medley. Jens Kreuter also won a State Age group title when he was 11, for the 100 metre breaststroke. The same year Jens won a bronze for the Backstroke.



1974: TOM C. presents MARK BIANCOTTI with Club Championship.



Trophies ready for presentation.

The end of the 74-75 season saw Watson's Hall chosen as the venue for presentation night. Many swimmers had done well and members were justly proud.

At Easter in 1976 a fairly large squad attended the North Queensland Championships, now always held in Townsville, and there were many wins especially in the relays. Cairns Amateur Swimming Club has always performed well in the relays, perhaps the tradition dating back to the fantastic Flying Squadrons of earlier times. The Club came second in the Aggregate.

NORTH QUEENSLAND CHAMPIONSHIPS, TOWNSVILLE 1976



Back Row: KANE HOLLINGSWORTH, MARK BIANCOTTI, ION JONES, JOHN CARMEN, ROBERT CURTIN, CHRIS NEILSON, ELIZABETH JONES, IAN CARMEN, ANTHONY SOMERVILLE, MIKE WALKER, MIKE CURTIN, NARELLE LAVIS, DEAN McPHEE (Team Manager), PETER TIBBS (Pro. Coach).

Centre: JON MCKENZIE, JENS KREUTER, TONY TIBBS, JON CATTANA, DAVID WOOD, TREVOR LAVIS, HAYLEY SILSAN, CATHERINE JONES, FRANCES BATY, JANE CARMAN, KATHERINE PADGETT, VICKI KREUTER, BILL NOLAN

Front: ANDREW CARMAN, GREG MCKINNA, BRONWYN SOMERVILLE, PETER WOOD, NOLAN, LISA BLAKE, RHONDA LAVIS, TERESA NOLAN, ANN CARMAN, SUE MCKINNAN

Later in 1976 Cairns Amateur Swimming Club had another win in the Parade celebrating Cairns' Centenary Year. Their float was called "Futuristic Swimmers", and won first prize for originality. Those painted in silver ore are Marie Walker, Nicky Andrews, Mark Biancotti and Chris Neilsen.



MARIE WALKER, NICKY ANDREWS, MARK BIANCOTTI and CHRIS NEILSEN

NOW . . . 1980s

Eddie Lovelock was developing into a fine distance swimmer until sinus trouble afflicted him. Eddie is back training in the 80's.

In 1980 Jon Cattana won the State Title for the 200 metre Butterfly. Jon now lives in Brisbane and swims for Leander Club.

In early 1981, the Cairns team for the 10 and Under Boys Medley Relay created a new North Queensland and Far North Queensland Record. Both records still stand.


SUMMARY . . .

With many young and enthusiastic swimmers in the Club today, we hope it will not be too long before someone from Cairns Amateur Swimming Club is at the top again.

One cannot help but notice the family names repeated down through the years in the swimming and other affairs of the club. Mary Crittenden swam in the 30's Max Crittenden swam in the 50's, and Ken Crittenden is still swimming. Jim Andrews has been refereeing for years. His son Les swam at the old baths and his daughter Jenny swam at Tobruk, but has just been coach of the Northern Territory team at the Pacific Games in Brisbane. Les's son Ricky now swims for Edge Hill. The Pollard has been associated from the 1920's. No one would have done more for Cairns Amateur Swimming Club than Eddie Pollard. Mick Barrett taught his son Tom to swim. Tom Barr swam for many years and his daughter Ellen was a fine swimmer, and so it goes on....

With many State Champions, two Australian Champions, and records galore in its past, Cairns Amateur Swimming Club can be justly proud of all its history and look to the future with hope.

The Committee of the Cairns Amateur Swimming Club wish to apologise for any omissions or any inaccuracies printed in this booklet. It is not an easy job to sift the facts from more than 50 years but we have done our best, and hereby thank all those people who so generously gave of their time, their cuttings and their photographs, not forgetting their memories, and for responding so promptly to information from the Cairns Post. Thank You.



Cairns Amateur Swimming Club
1900's – 1980's