

Report by the ESSAC Chair, to the Members – AGM 2008

Dear fellow Club members,

In the year 2007/2008, the 'ESTEC Swimming and Sub-Aqua Club' (ESSAC) has continued to offer its members the same range of water sports related opportunities as in preceding years. The activities include swimming, snorkelling, diver training and diving, as well as a number of social events.

The report that follows is an updated version of the March 2008 report which I, on behalf of the club submitted to the SSAC. The updates related to dropping of activities, which took place prior to last years AGM and the inclusion of those events which have taken place during the past few months.

Regular Club Activities

All year round, the ESSAC provides 90 minutes of pool time in the 'De Sterrenbad' in Wassenaar. During the winter period (November – March) half these times slot is allocated for dive training and snorkelling with the other 45 minutes being exclusively for 'free' swimming. Outside of the winter period, diver training, in the main, takes place in the local lakes, around Amsterdam & Rotterdam and in Zeeland. As a result therefore the "summer" pool slot assigned to the divers is normally available for swimming members. The 'De Sterrenbad' pool is often crowded, and so is the coffee table afterwards where members socialise.

During the winter period, the ESSAC rents additional pool space (60 minutes per week) at the 'De Schelft' in Noordwijkerhout. The De Schelft, available for our exclusive use on Sunday afternoons, is used entirely for swimming. In addition, due to the availability of a slide and an 'adventure' pool it proves very popular with those members with young children.

All diving-related activities are carried out fully in line with the rules of our 'parent' diving organisation, the 'British Sub-Aqua Club' (BSAC). All instruction is performed and all Club diving activities are lead by the Club's own instructors on a voluntary basis. An extensive inventory of available equipment has been performed.

Organised Events

In addition to the 'regular' events described above, the Club has also organised a number of additional events with strong social components.

At the end of September the Club organised a one week's diving trip to Marsa Alma, on the Red Sea. This trip proved to be a very popular & enjoyable excursion and from the article published in the latest issue of the Club Newsletter it was excelent way to close out a diving summer.

In October the club also organised a Wine Tasting & Walking weekend to the Moselle are of Germany. The weather was a little on the nippy side but the 10 members how participated all had a fantasitc time. Also October, despite the threat of rain and the cold weather, the club had a very enjoyable BBQ at the Tennis Club. This is always a great way to introduce new members.

The club's Christmas social event was held on Saturday 8th December in restaurant 'de Sniek' in Zoetermeer. In attendance were a total of 37 club members who will all agree that if you were not there you missed a terrific evening.

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In March 2008 the committee organised a large promotional event in ESTEC. This event, for which the club owes Wim (Master Poster Producer) much of the thanks, generated a lot of interest, as many of those going to lunch on that day, were surprised to discover that ESTEC had a Swimming & Diving club and more so that we rented premises outside.

On 4th of April the club held it's first ever Pub Quiz in Escape. This masterminded by Brian Hedly, was opened to all of ESTEC. On the night, around 30 people, including 9 non club members participated.

Also in April about 20 members went to Brussels to dive at 'Nemo 33'. The 33 refers to the depth "in metres" of the main pool. Diving in Nemo has become somewhat of an annual event and is proving a great way to introduced new diver to diving at depth, before taking them open water in the not so good visibility of the local Dutch lakes.

Another, almost annual, event is the Club's long-weekend to Zeeland. This week-end is geared mainly for open water dive training but some non-divers also participate. This year the event took place in May with some 20 members actively participating,

Club Resources

The most important 'piece of equipment' that ESSAC can offer its members is pool time, which - in contrast to the situation for many other ESTEC clubs - is rented externally at free market rates. The reason why we have to do this is that there are no suitable facility available onsite at ESTEC. The fact that we need to pay commercial rates for our core facilities means that the clubs running costs increase yearly (See Treasurer's report.) and more often than not at rates well in excess of the local inflation rate.

The next main club resource is its' boat. This boat, a RIB with a powerful outboard engine, is heavily used in the summer months, mostly in support of diving related activities. It is however available for use by all club members in possession of the appropriate skills & legal qualifications.

There is obviously a yearly cost, see Treasurer's report, in maintaining this complexed & expensive piece of equipment, to the appropriate Dutch legal standard. In addition, due to a lack of on site storage facilities, the club has to pay for local (offsite) storage. Again this storage has to be paid for at market rates and the present storage location can only be afforded a cost sharing exercise with another local diving club.

The ESSAC also has diving equipment used almost exclusively for diver training. The club does have a policy of equipment maintenance, & replacement where necessary, but major upgrading of equipment (although infrequent) often requires funding from the SSCC. For example, during 2007 the BSAC (without advanced warning) modified the training course and included NITROX dive training as standard. Without the generous support of the SSCC the club could not have procured the necessary new/dedicated training equipment required. Without this help the training within the club would have been seriously hampered.

For the coming year 2008/2009 I do not anticipate the club will have to purchase any new diving related equipment. The main outlay will be on maintenance of what we have.

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Membership Fees & Pool utilisation

At the ESSAC AGM in **June 2007** the membership approved a restructuring of the membership fees, along with a 10% increase in the adult fee. In addition, as mentioned earlier, it was also agreed to reduce our use of the 'De Schelft' pool from 7 to 6 months.

The decision to restructure & increase membership fees along with the reduction in use of the 'de Schelft', were both taken in an attempt to offset the rising costs, incurred by the club, for the rental of the pools. This was a decision not taken lightly by the membership, as we were well aware that several family groups, especially those who predominantly use the 'de Schelft' pool, would be hardest hit.

The present/current (post June 2007 AGM) ESSAC membership fee structure & rates are:

- Child of member not yet 6 years old - free (unchanged)
- Child of member 6 years or older but not yet 18 years old - 30 Euro (was 20 Euro)
- Adult member, 18 years or older - 110 Euro (was 100 Euro)

Although addressed in more detail, in the Treasurer's Report, the present/retiring committee see no reason to increase or adjust these fees this year. In fact as a result of the brave action taken at the last AGM, the club has this year made a very small profit. Hence during this past year and in the coming one, I believe that the club (as a whole) must do everything possible to increase the membership, which albeit at a slower rate than in previous years is still declining.

The Treasure's Report will show that, in past 12 months, there has been a slight increase in the number of diving (BSAC affiliated) members whereas the number of swimming (non BSAC divers) has continued to decline. As a result therefore there is a strong emphasis in both the Treasure's & Swimming Officer's reports on the need to boost swimming membership, especially with regards families.

The reason why the focus has to be on maintaining & if possible increasing swimming memberships is not that we want to keep a balance in numbers but is based on the simple fact that this club can only survive if it maintains a healthy (Steady) number of swimmers & divers. As the financial adverts say; "good past performance does not guarantee good future performance". There is also therefore no guarantee that the observed slight rise in diving members is nothing more than a blip. In fact, on the diving front, room for further improvements is severely limited.

The biggest constraint on just how many new divers we can absorb is not based on available pool time, nor equipment but on instructor numbers. In this respect the club is now at an all time low. On paper we have 6 but in reality, when it comes to supporting pool & open water instruction, the number drops to 3 (at most). That translates to a maximum of six new students this coming autumn. By itself this number is not a bad thing as the club needs to devote more time to training up our next generation of instructors. It does however mean that the club cannot dive our

What the answer?

Well it has to be **PROMOTION; PROMOTION; PROMOTION!**

ESSAC *Committee 2007/08*

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PR event, similar to those held in March & April of this year should be organised for this coming September. In the mean time the next opportunity for the club to promote itself is at the “Escape 20 years” party, planned for the 21st of June. During this event the club will be offering try-dives to kids, in the escape pool and I am hoping that Wim will produce more of those posters, so that we can plaster them along the walls.

Finally I would like to thank all my fellow committee members for the hard work they have put in, this past 12 months, in the interest of our club.

John Nolan
Noordwijk, 6 June 2008