



Special notice

Tooting Bec Lido closed for refurbishment until after the New Year

one hundred yards

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Tooting Bec Lido Centenary review from the South London Swimming Club Issue 9 2006

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

We wanted this centenary year at Tooting Bec Lido to be special, and wasn't it just! Crisp and refreshing in the Spring, balmy by July and what a treat in September, even the rain was warm. And so many successful and fun events, in and out of the water.

On the swimming front, we've had a very full programme of summer races. For the traditional Sunday morning series, 126 different individual swimmers took part, with the average for each race being over 30. This is a real challenge for the summer handicap and race team, but they've done an excellent job all summer, the cups being spread across the ages and abilities of the participants. The new children's series was a great success with many of them now joining the open

events too. Xanthe Maggs (age 9) was judged the most improved swimmer and became the first winner of the Children's Centenary cup. Of course many of our now 800 odd members are not racers, and thank you to them for graciously giving up the pool space during the races.

Fascinating history

The other centenary events include Tooting Bec Lido's fascinating history depicted through original photographs, letters and other documents at an exhibition put together by Janet Smith and shown at the Wandsworth Museum in the Spring. So many other events are shown here in pictures and reports, rounded off with the Centenary Art Exhibition in October showing work by artists inspired by the Lido

Hanging out at the Lido has been great this year. Picnics on the grass, artists at work,



Councillor Jim Maddan, Mayor of Wandsworth plants the Centenary Oak in the garden at Tooting Bec Lido

always something interesting to look at. Around the café, a new awning, more benches, and good food and service by Five Star Catering in their first year here.

So, to the future. DC Leisure won the new 8 year contract to run the Lido and other Wandsworth leisure centres. The Lido will be closed from now till at least the New Year, so no Christmas races for 2006

but the investment of nearly half a £million for relining of the pool and improvements to the surrounds. This constitutes a real commitment from Wandsworth BC and DC Leisure to prepare well for the next 100 years, which is really what our publicity work this year has been about. We look forward to continue our successful partnership with them both.

ART OF THE OUTDOOR SWIM

It was an inspired idea to celebrate the centenary by sponsoring a host of art events. The work articulated so many of the things that are special about being at the Lido. Those images delved deep beneath the surface to reveal the treasures that lie within the open water. Some of them are shown here.

Children's mural: Year Six at St Leonard's Primary School transformed the wall behind the Lido Café into an Atlantis vision of sunshine, sea creatures and mermaids.



Glimpse: Fio Adamson's graphite murals transformed the covered area with sketches of lido parts that we glimpse while swimming.



Slice: Steve Carey's underwater mirror added a ghostly sparkle to the deep end and transfixed swimmers with its gently flexing view of the life aquatic.



Water Music: Angie Brew made music using sounds of the lido, swimming, splashing, diving, jumping, breathing, playing, the trains, the fountain, inspiring the formation of the TUC, the Tooting Underwater Choir who with unfathomable success performed for the Mayor



Open Air Art: And a glorious flower rose up on the battered wall beside the pool! David Batchelor put together a broad range of members' work inspired by the Lido, in a pergola beside the café for Open House weekend in September.

Celebrating with a splash

A round up of the year's centenary events



DIVE-IN MOVIES

I doubt Tooting Bec Lido has ever seen anything quite like it. In its 100 years history, the Lido must have played host to many unusual sights. But it's hard to think that anything could have quite matched the change that came over the Lido on the last weekend of July. For three nights, as the last bather was ushered out at 5.30, the lido was transformed.

In the time it takes to say 'Tooting Bec', marquees were pitched, a barbecue and bar installed and at the far end of the 'field', a giant screen was rolled into view.

This was the setting for Tooting Bec Lido's Dive-In Movies, organized in association with Clapham Picture House, City Screens, Future Shorts and Cambridge Film Festival.

For three evenings, as night fell, hundreds of people, some with toddlers in tow, camped out, picnicked, and fell into silent thrall as the silver screen took over and Burt Lancaster in *The Swimmer*, Esther Williams in *Million Dollar Mermaid* and a thousand extras swam into history and our everlasting memories.

A magical experience for audience and volunteers alike. The steamy summer provided the perfect backdrop with only Sunday night's sudden chill reminding us of what used to be considered the 'normal' English summer. The gods smiled down; the stars

danced; the bathing belles poked gentle fun. And over 2000 people shared in an experience best summed up by the Scandinavian high diver in *The Diver*, swallowing from the high board to the water below and capturing for all of us something of the wonder and the beauty of re-engaging with our primeval inner selves in the simple act of swimming.

As Lucy's firework candles cascaded over her beautiful, final night cake made in the shape of the Lido, it seemed a totally fitting end to a totally unforgettable weekend.

Carole Woddis

COLD WATER SWIMMING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Over 300 competitors converged on the Lido in January to compete in the UK's 1st Cold Water Swimming Championships. Competitors came from the four corners of the British Isles, the USA, Finland, Norway, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Australia to do battle in temperatures spectators could only describe as "parky" and competitors as "refreshingly sharp".

30 gold, silver and bronze medals went to age groupers and teams who swam in individual races over 33 and 66 yards, and the freestyle and medley team events.



The Championships were inspired by the SLSC's contact with members of Finland's ice-swimming community and organised by a dedicated group of members who worked so hard to make the event happen.



CENTENARY RELAY

25 teams converged from clubs across London and the Home Counties to compete in the SLSC centenary relay gala. The freestyle relay comprised four person teams each swimming four times, and a medley relay was over the full Lido course. Yes, that meant one poor soul had to swim 100 yards butterfly – ouch!

Honours were taken by two rather useful teams from Eton College, with strong competition from Spencer, Guildford Lido, Otter, Battersea Jacks, the SLSC, Wandsworth SC, Serpentine, Croydon Amphibians and numerous scratch teams of Lido fans and friends.

EVENING AQUATHLONS

This year saw the first annual aquathlon series, run over four summer evenings. Each involved swimming 11 lengths and then running 4 1/2 miles around Tooting Common. The evening's extended light made

the Lido a perfect place to host these events and each one was a sell-out. Across the series 96 athletes – young and old, accomplished and first timers – competed for medals and for the overall title of leading male, female and veteran.

Plans are being hatched to re-run this series next year and to host a big aquathlon event as part of the pan-London aquathlons that are run by the British Triathlon Association.

100 YEARS, 100 LENGTHS

Channel swimmer Nancy Douglas proposed that a fitting send off to the Lido before its closure would be to run solo, duo and relays with competitors swimming 100 lengths! Hundreds of club members signed up for it – swimming the 5.7 miles either individually or as part of a team.

Eight swimmers completed 100 lengths individually, 7 duo teams, and 7 five-person teams. Well done to all competitors, and to the 100 SLSC members who celebrated the day by being part of the 100 x 1 length relay. The day ended with fun, fizzy, cake and fireworks, to say goodbye before renovations started.



Breaking the ice?

Margy Sullivan is Norwegian. Russian men like wearing tutus. Simon Murie owns a leopard skin thong. The things you discover about people as a member of the 35 strong SLSC team in Oulu, Finland, for the 2006 World Ice Swimming Championships. We assembled with nearly a thousand competitors, to plunge into a 25 metre freezing pool cut from the Baltic Sea, to swim for the honour of

calling ourselves World Champions. The water was minus 2 degrees, kept from freezing by tiny jets that kept the surface moving. The air temperature was minus 16 degrees. The SLSC team had a terrific first day. There were several medal winning performances, Lucy Neal – our first medal triumph – was surrounded by the press as she took silver. Others followed, with Carly Newman, Sarah Hamer and Rose Levien all swimming terrifically to beat opponents from Russia, Latvia, Australia, Ireland and even Lebanon. It was a great opening day and spirits were high. It seemed rude not to drink some. With the following day's international freestyle relay to come, it

seemed logical to keep the training up. Dancing until 5am was on hand for those who wanted to fit in a final cardio session.

As the morning sun shone, the carefully selected National Freestyle teams gathered poolside. Australia were favourites and clearly had pedigree. Great Britain too had a chance at gold. The rules stated that if each team could muster a single passport from one of the four swimmers then full residential status was accorded to all. No one minded that Margy became Norwegian, the organiser's Finnish husband became Lebanese, Gavin White represented Newfoundland and that the Irish team weren't speaking gaelic. The Finnish and the Russians took first and second, with ex-Olympians among them, and Team Australia nicked third place from Team GB.

Finally, each nation presented a water-based performance to celebrate the championships. The SLSC team donned sensational Carmen Miranda outfits and thanks to Margy's choreography and DJ Egg's mixing, a second prize was awarded – beaten only by the Russian tutu clad men. It was a truly celebratory weekend: people from very different places came together to celebrate a shared passion, where competition wasn't top of the agenda – just simple pleasures of enjoyment shared amongst new friends.



A picturesque night at the Tooting Bec Lido: swimmers and their guests floated 100 candles, which lit up the water at the annual summer barbeque and races, commemorating the centenary in a tranquil vision of lights.

Tooting Bec Lido wins Golden Goggles 2006

London has lost 58 lidos and has just 12 places left to swim outdoors. London Pools Campaign sent out a team of swimming detectives to check out the state of the city's lidos and ponds. Research was gathered, and the Golden Goggles Award was presented to Tooting Bec Lido, voted "best outdoor swim in London". Peter Robinson, Assistant Director of Leisure at Wandsworth Council received the award, presented by Alastair Campbell.



Doggy Paddle Dash!

On a cold March morning 101 SLSC swimmers set a new world record for the largest doggy paddle race. TV crews and other media covered the successful attempt, which was made to a chorus of barking. The first swimmers to arrive at the other side were the Barker siblings! True genius, even if the Guinness Book of Records decided not to register it.

OTHER PLACES TO SWIM THIS WINTER...

Serpentine Lake, Hyde Park
Open every day 6am – 9:30am.
Join the Serpentine Swimming Club for £20

Christmas Day Race 9am
Parliament Hill Lido, Hampstead Heath
Open 7am – noon. £2
Hampstead Heath – Ladies' Pond and Men's Pond
Christmas day races at 11am for men and women at the Men's Ponds
£70 season ticket gives you access to the Lido, Men's and Ladies' Ponds, otherwise £2

Hampstead Heath Mixed Ponds
Open 7am – 3pm, Open only to Hampstead Heath Winter Swimming Club, join for £10
Charlton Lido, Shooters Hill, SE19
Monday – Saturday 8.50am – 10.15am. Tuesdays and Thursdays from 7.30am. Sunday 10.30am – noon
Informal gathering on Christmas Day
Hampton Open Air Heated Pool
Opening times Information line: 020 8255 1116, £4
Open Christmas Day 8am - noon
Oasis Sports Centre (heated), 32 Endell

Street, WC2H 9AG, £3.45
Monday – Fri 7.30 am – 8.30 pm,
Weekends 9.30 - 5.30
London Fields Lido (heated), London Fields Westside E8, Opening November for 6 weeks only. £3

While the Tooting Bec Lido is closed DC Leisure are allowing SLSC Lido Pass holders (green passes) to use its other pools at Leisure Centers at Tooting, Balham, Putney and Latchmere, but some of these leisure centres are also undergoing renovations. Please check.

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