

one hundred yards

Your Tooting Bec Lido update from the South London Swimming Club

Celebrating the Lido's unique heritage

Tooting Bec Lido is to play a key role in a project to explore the cultural and natural heritage of Tooting Common.

Wandsworth Council has received initial backing from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the Tooting Common Heritage Project and will apply for a full grant later this year. The plan is to revitalise

some of the Common's best loved historical features.

The project is working in partnership with local community groups to restore heritage landscape and architecture, to uncover the history of the Common and to raise awareness of its rich biodiversity.

"You can take part by sending us information, memories and photographs."

As part of the project, the South London Swimming Club plans to highlight the historical features of Tooting Bec Lido. Most of this work will take place once the new Lido Pavilion is built (see back page) as the next stage in the Lido Improvement Project.

The club will also focus on historical research, the influential people responsible for the creation of "the Bathing Lake", how it has evolved over the past 110 years and the stories of those who have used the Lido.



You can take part by sending information, memories and photographs of the Lido to news@slsc.org.uk



Opening times at Tooting Bec Lido until 31 August – 6am to 8pm (last swim 7.30pm)
1 September to 30 September – 6am (or dawn) to 5pm (last swim 4.30pm)



Tales of a Reluctant Competitor

By David van Heel

"Daddy, I've been asked to sing with the school choir at Tooting Bec Lido in the opening ceremony of the Cold Water Swimming Championships. Will you be there doing the races?"

I love swimming. I've managed a good mile in the Lido *sans* wetsuit when it's been pretty cold – but for me that's definitely after Easter and well into double-figure temperatures. So we looked up the Cold Water Swimming Championships on the SLSC website and, to my great relief, I found the closing date had passed. Then my daughter and partner pestered me to email "just in case", and I received an alarmingly helpful response. And so I became the Reluctant Competitor, with just a wintery fortnight for practice.

No choice, then, but to get in and see if I could actually do it before the Big Day. Not for me the humiliation of a DNF ("did not finish")! But DNF it was on my first practice, when I thought walking around a bit would prepare me for the 5°C water. It didn't. After just two or three strokes of breaststroke I was out as fast as possible. The next practice was not much better, but there was some advice in the sauna afterwards – "Get straight in and stick your head under quick. Take a few seconds to get over the breathlessness. Then push off hard and go flat out." So I tried that the next

day – success!

The day after that I managed a width of freestyle in 20 seconds or so! "How easy it will be," I thought. "I might even win!"

Then came the last practice, on the eve of the championships. It didn't worry me that we had to turn the central heating up to full blast at home over breakfast. I cycled over Tooting Common on a beautiful winter's morning of bright sunshine and crisp frost, to be welcomed at the Lido by a very friendly lifeguard. But I was then told, "You'll have to swim in the deep end as there's too much ice in the shallow end. We can't even put the lane ropes out it's so dangerous." Somehow I managed my 3°C deep-end width, but not in a very straight line!

On the day – what an atmosphere! Some wonderful singing of "Tingling blue waters", combined with fantastic organisation and great family support, completely removed my lingering thoughts of backing out at the last minute. Before I knew it, my race was all over and I was in the hot tub. I didn't win (or come anywhere close). But what a great challenge, and I've been wearing my SLSC cold water swim cap with pride. Who cares about the summer races now? I'm already looking forward to Christmas, not for the festivities or the presents but for the races at the Lido!

"I became the Reluctant Competitor, with just a wintery fortnight for practice."



Water Swimming Championships 2015

My embarrassing dad!

By Patrick Smith

Tooting Bec Lido is the main place where my dad can be very embarrassing. Over the past six years, we have had to suffer the sight of him swim in weird, bright, trunks and even a mankini.

It all started on my seventh birthday. My birthday "treat" was to go to the Lido with a friend. Unfortunately, my birthday is at the end of November. I told my friend not to hang around or he would get cold and in a flash he jumped into the water, not realising it was unheated. He burst into tears and my dad had to pull him out. At least we got to have a curry for lunch afterwards.

"...his rear view was featured on the BBC website."

Next came a swimming gala in the Cheam leisure centre. It was all going smoothly until the parent-and-child race. Normal dads came out in their swimming shorts but then came mine. He was wearing his "budgie smuggler" Speedo trunks and proceeded to do warm up stretches before the one-length race.



Over the past years, he has had many different costumes. First came his lime green Borat mankini in the 2009 Cold Water Swimming Championships, which was somehow featured on Sky News, *The Sunday Times* and the ITV News. Just when we thought it couldn't get any worse, he turned up to the 2011 Championships in a Union Jack mankini, as captured in the *Metro*. Fortunately, he didn't wear a mankini this year but he did wear his bright Funky Trunks from Australia that are almost as embarrassing ...and his rear view was featured on the BBC website.



Hot and cold heroes from Tooting

SLSC members have braved extreme temperatures in and out of the water in amazing challenges away from the Lido. Here are just a few.



Bertie Portal

Bertie Portal took part in what is known as the "toughest footrace on earth", the 156-mile Marathon des Sables in Morocco's western Sahara. With

the temperature rising to 50°C, he completed four marathons and a double marathon over six days, carrying all his food, and raised £98,000 for terminally ill children.

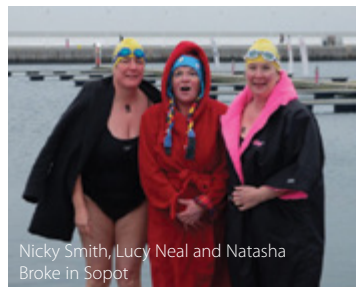
James Penrose took part in the 8 Bridges River Hudson Swim in the



James Penrose

USA, swimming 117 miles over seven days. Vicky Miller, Richard Dines, Chris Jordinson and Tom Van Every completed Channel crossings, swimming the 21 miles from England to France.

A team of eight doughty swimmers from SLSC braved freezing temperatures at the 2nd Polish International Winter Swimming Championships in Sopot, the "Brighton of the Baltic". The



Nicky Smith, Lucy Neal and Natasha Broke in Sopot

team distinguished itself in the ice-cold races with an excellent medal haul and the winners' trophy for the freestyle relay in the 201-250 age category.

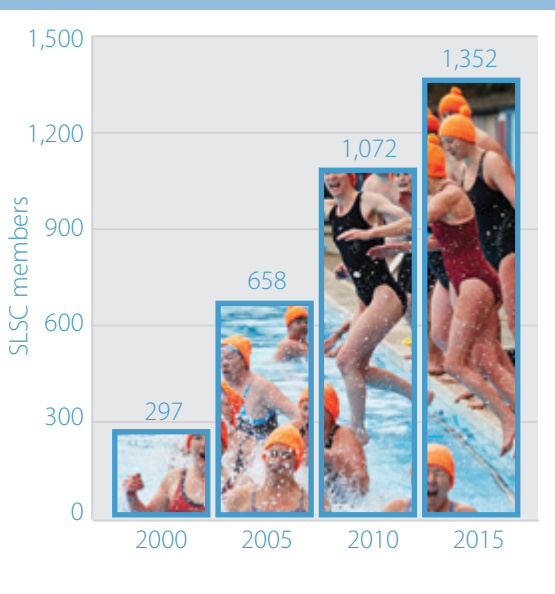
Good luck to all those attempting challenges this year.

How the SLSC has grown!

SLSC membership has more than quadrupled in the last 15 years, helping us to protect the future of the Lido.

The increase is partly a result of the Lido's greater visibility since the building of the shallow-end entrance in 2002. Previously it had been a secret retreat. The SLSC's centenary celebrations in 2006 and the World Cold Water Championships in 2008 also helped to raise awareness of the Lido.

Tooting Bec Lido is now enjoying a continuing surge of popularity, supported by the SLSC's commitment and dedication to promoting the pool, together with the steadily increasing interest in open water and cold water winter swimming over the last decade.



Who to contact



"If you have a comment or question about the running of the Lido, please speak to me."

**Karen Wells,
Manager,
Tooting Bec Lido**



"Want to know more about the SLSC or to get involved? Talk to any member of the committee – see the notice board."

**Giles Meyer, SLSC
President**

"We love to hear what our members are up to – send in your stories for 100 yards, Betty's newsletter and our website." **Margy Sullivan, SLSC Communications Manager, news@slsc.org.uk**



Down Stream

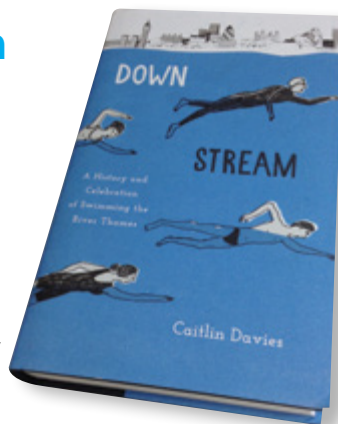
by Caitlin Davies

Review by Tim Sutton

To me the Thames has always meant dark water, thrashing propellers and Dickensian drownings, so Caitlin Davies' book about swimming in the river certainly aroused my curiosity.

Davies journeys from the Thames' disputed source to the estuary, recalling such famous swimmers as Charles II, Byron, Dickens, Benjamin Franklin, Bamber Gascoigne, Matthew Parris, Steven Berkoff and David Walliams. But it is the Victorian heroes who most impress: Lily Smith, who swam "to put a stop forever to all this twaddle about the weaker sex", Captain Boyton, "the Fearless Frogman", and his inflatable rubber suit and the London typist Mercedes Glietz, who escaped death when sucked under a barge.

Davies also revisits former swimming spots: Putney Beach, the Floating Baths at Pimlico, the Royal Waterloo Bath,



"The water is cleaner than it has been for 200 years, with swimming clubs and races flourishing."

Tower Bridge Beach, Grays "Pond" and the Gravesend Bathing Establishment, with its bathing machines and segregated swimming. Suitable attire for men was "nothing at all" (to the shock of pleasure boat passengers), but it was more complicated for women – in 1875 Agnes Beckwith wore "a swimming costume of light rose pink llama trimmed with white

braid and lace". There are tales of the Lords and Commons Race at Kew and the Millwall Cutting gala, with prizes of a shaving set or a "tête-à-tête tea service".

Thames swimming declined as a result of war, indoor baths and pollution, but things are changing. The water is cleaner than it has been for 200 years, with harbour

porpoises returning, and swimming clubs and races flourishing again.

The river can be dangerous (35 to 45 drownings a year) but this has overshadowed its former glory as a place to swim. Davies'

book has inspired me to think beyond the Lido, and this summer I may also go Down Stream, avoiding those pesky swans!

Cutting, pasting, folding and painting

The SLSC's annual free art event will take place on Saturday 20 September from 10.30am to 12.30pm. This year there will be an origami lesson and a chance to make a collage of the Lido. If you have any old SLSC calendars, bring them along for your collage. All ages are welcome – children must have an adult with them.

Clare's our unsung hero

At the SLSC's AGM in March, club secretary Clare McRobbie was chosen from over 30 nominations to receive the Lipsey Cup for outstanding support to the SLSC. Apart from all the hard work she does as club secretary and social secretary, Clare is an enthusiastic member of the Dive in Belles and bakes the best brownies south (and probably north) of the Thames! Our heartiest congratulations to "wee Clare".



Cyril Wood

23 June 1923 – 22 December 2014



Cyril was an enthusiastic and popular member of the SLSC right from the time he joined the club in 1949. He and his wife Yvonne swam regularly at both Tooting Bec Lido and the Serpentine.

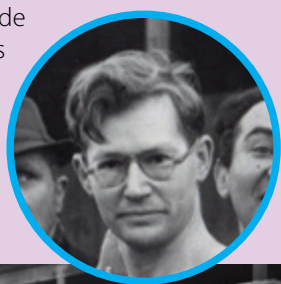
Even on his 90th birthday, Cyril took part in a 100-yard race at the Lido, and he was swimming in the outdoor pool at his and Yvonne's home in Thames Ditton until just a few months before his death.

Cyril was born in Balham, as was Yvonne. They attended the same school and Yvonne's brother, Jack Berry, was Cyril's best friend. Cyril was very musical. He learned the piano and played the organ at the Boys' Brigade Bible Class. As a young man, he worked as an organ tuner and throughout his life he enjoyed singing.

During World War Two Cyril served in India with the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. He and Yvonne married on his return to the UK and had two children, Helen and Graham.

Although swimming was his favourite sport, Cyril also played tennis and football and was a keen cyclist, walker and runner. He completed several marathons, and often ran with friends, stopping for a sing-song along the way. Whatever activity he took part in, and at every stage of his career, Cyril always made many friends, and he is sorely missed. Sunday mornings at the Lido are not the same without him.

Mima Patel



Club events

For details of all events, keep an eye on the Tooting Bec Lido notice board or visit www.slsc.org.uk

Fitness swim session every Thursday until 30 July from 7.30 to 8.30pm SLSC and Herne Hill Harrier members only.

Sunday races every week, 9.30am (9am from 5 July to 30 August) Handicapped starts, so people of all ages and abilities can compete*. Then warm up with coffee, cake and a chat.

Children's races from 31 May, 9.30am On five successive Sundays, with a cup for the most improved young swimmer.

Dip, dine and dance Friday 26 June, 7.30pm An evening swim, delicious food, music and dancing.

Summer evening races Friday 3 July, 7.30pm Mile, half mile and children's races. Bring a picnic.

River swim Friday 17 July, 5pm Ever fancied swimming in the Thames? Now's your chance.

109-length challenge Saturday 26 September, 1.30pm Swim a length for every year of the Lido.

**Swimmers can only win a trophy in a handicapped event if they have recently competed in at least three races.*

Public events

Water workouts

Every Saturday at 10am 45 minutes of FREE aqua-aerobics. No need to book, just turn up and join in.

Summer evening aquathlons Wednesdays: 27 May, 10 and 24 June and 8 July 1km swim and 7.5km run.

Children's aquathlon Saturday 11 July, 9am For eight to 16-year-olds with a parents' race at the end.

Relay triathlon Sunday 27 September, 7.30am 1km swim, 10km bike and 5km run. A fun, team event for all abilities.

Information: www.slsc.org.uk



Contact the SLSC at info@slsc.org.uk or phone **07985 141 532**

If you'd like to volunteer to help at any of our events, please email volunteer@slsc.org.uk

100 Yards team

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Work to start on Lido Pavilion

The building of the new Lido Pavilion at the deep end of the pool was finally approved by Liz Truss, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, at the beginning of May. This was necessary as the Lido is on common land and any building requires ministerial consent. Having met all the planning requirements, and with funding in place from Sport England, Wandsworth Council and SLSC reserves, we are now seeking tenders for construction of the Pavilion. Work is expected

to start at the end of the season with completion next summer. The Lido will remain open throughout and winter swimming will not be affected.



"The works should benefit the neighbourhood by providing enhanced recreational facilities."

Richard Holland, Planning Inspectorate



If you would like to join the South London Swimming Club, visit www.slsc.org.uk or ask the lifeguards for an application form.