

A painting of a public swimming pool scene. In the foreground, a person is climbing a set of stairs leading into the water. To the left, another person stands on the pool deck holding a red lifebuoy. In the water, two children are swimming, and another person is partially visible in the lower foreground. In the background, two more people stand near a building with a staircase. The scene is set outdoors with trees and a fence visible in the distance. The painting style is expressive with visible brushstrokes.

LIDOS ALIVE

THE STORY OF OUR LIDOS

BOROUGHES OF TWICKENHAM & RICHMOND

Dennis Gilbert

WE EXPLORE LIDOS THAT WERE PART OF THE LIDO MOVEMENT IN THE 'BOROUGHs' OF TWICKENHAM AND RICHMOND

The heyday of the lido was an exciting time - in many places a holiday on the doorstep. In the case of recent renovations they have been updated to such an extent that they have been described as a mini-Med holiday.

Going to a lido was a fun day out; a place to relax and socialise. This book looks at what our lidos meant to local people.

www.LidosAlive.com

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Foreword

By Professor Jeremy Hamilton-Miller

Water has always been a fascination for man. Not surprising, as it is an essential for life, and indeed for the very origin of life. It is one of the “classical elements” proposed by Aristotle as making up all matter (the others being fire, earth, air and aether). Water has been found in all parts of the universe, wherever it has been looked for. Its simple structure – H₂O – belies its extremely complex properties, that are still not fully understood.

Besides being necessary for maintaining life, water has many uses for man, notably in sanitation, agriculture, fishing, transport, cooking, recreation, fire-fighting and industry. Many religions (e.g. Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Shinto) also have a special place for water in their practices and rituals.

The aspect of this remarkable substance that concerns us here is its use in bathing (i.e. in swimming pools) and bathing (i.e. in showers and bath tubs). The earliest records of immersing oneself in water are from Stone Age paintings, and much mention is made in Classical literature such as Iliad, Odyssey etc.

Adults, having a Specific Gravity of about 0.98, will normally float in water; swimming is the most popular recreational activity in the present day. Washing is important for health, a fact realised by the Greeks and Romans, who built private bath tubs and public baths in gymnasia (this word is derived from the Greek word γυμνος = naked). Taking a bath fell out of fashion to some extent in later times, as it was thought that opening the skin's pores would allow poisons to enter the body. Queen Elizabeth I is apocryphally said to have had a bath each month, "even if she had no need of it".

Britain was very far behind the Romans, the first free public baths being opened only in 1829, in Liverpool; this absence perhaps accounts for the (now highly pejorative, but at the time completely accurate) phrase coined by the author Edward Bulwer-Lytton in 1830 "the great unwashed". Change soon gathered pace, however, spurred by Parliament passing The Baths and Washhouses Act 1846: this enabled local authorities to use their funds in order to build such facilities. Previously, finance had been raised either by public subscription or philanthropic benefaction.

The preamble to the Act starts as follows: "Whereas it is desirable for the Health, Comfort, and Welfare of the Inhabitants of Towns and populous Districts to encourage the Establishment of public Baths and Washhouses and open bathing places ..." The latter three words perhaps herald the opening of the modern era of lido development; whereas previously it was common practice to swim or wash in rivers or lakes, now specific places

for this were to be provided.

In a pamphlet, *The Swimming Baths of London*, published in 1870 the author, R.E Dudgeon M.D, endeavoured to popularize Open-Air Swimming: "Swimming is an exercise at once healthful, pleasant, and useful. The full hygienic effects of swimming can only be obtained when it is practised in the open air, and in unpolluted water of a natural temperature". (*See the Addendum P. 52 for the full article*) ... By 1915, most towns in Britain had at least one public bath house.

Culture in the Victorian era was such that male naked bathing in rivers caused offence, especially when it might come into view by ladies. This may be illustrated by the following editorial from a London newspaper, *The Globe*, in 1880:

We have received from a correspondent a letter treating of an old subject of complaint, which may briefly be described as the Thames bathing nuisance. He calls attention once more to the fact that men are daily to be seen bathing in the river without any sort of dress, and what is worse, as he adds, without any sense of decency. The abuse on some parts of the river is so great that it has become practically inaccessible to ladies, and thus loses what might be, and ought to be, one of its principal attractions. These statements are, of course, not new: they have been made for several years past with increasing force, but, unfortunately, without much effect. In some places, as for instance, at Surbiton and

Reading, steps have been taken to provide proper accommodation for bathers by either building permanent dressing rooms, or railing off a part of the river, or at least insisting upon the use of some bathing dress. It is, however, becoming evident that some more general and effectual remedy should be found for a state of things that is scandalous in the extreme, and would never be tolerated in any other country in Western Europe. The Thames is a river differing very materially from country streams and lakes. It has now become a high road for thousands of pleasure-boats, which pass and repass in every direction throughout the summer days. There can be no reason whatever why the comfort and pleasure of boating men and their friends should be spoilt by the selfishness of bathers belonging to the least respectable class. It would not be difficult to establish bathing places, where a small charge might be made for admission: and in more crowded parts of the river such establishments would in a short time pay for their own erection and maintenance. But both here and in all places along the course of the Thames, the wearing of some costume by all bathers should be made compulsory. It would not, of course, be possible in all cases to detect and punish offenders; but a very great deal might be done if the police were empowered to arrest, and the magistrates authorised to punish summarily, all men found bathing without the prescribed dress". (*See another letter to The Globe and the editor's reply, 1886, in the Addendum P. 54 and P. 55*).

With regard to providing public baths, as always, there was the question of finance. *The Surrey Comet* in 1871 recorded these deliberations from responsible officers in Tedding-



ton: PUBLIC BATHING PLACE. Mr. Maxwell proposed that the highway committee be instructed to obtain plans for a swimming bath, and report upon the expense, and the most useful position in which to place the same. Having pointed out the evils caused by open bathing, and the benefits likely to result from the establishment of a public swimming bath, Mr. Maxwell said he had estimated the cost to the ratepayers at one-sixteenth of a penny in the pound, and if a small charge were made for admission he thought it would be self-supporting. Mr. Hutt seconded the motion, remarking that he thought they had for many years neglected their duty in this matter. Mr. Giles said he had never found any place yet where baths were self-supporting. At Richmond they had tried their utmost, and had even given tickets away, but people would not use them; he had found that baths were not appreciated, and did not answer this town. If they chose to erect baths, find towels and soap, and someone to rub them down, they would perhaps get a few persons to go. (Laughter) Before they expended a single pound for such a purpose he should like to have a public meeting of the ratepayers. Mr. Noyce remarked that swimming baths were in general use on the Rhine. They were not the slightest nuisance, and were available at all times. Mr. Hunt was rather in favour of the proposition, but could bear testimony to the truth of Mr. Giles's remarks about the failure of baths in Richmond. Dr. Selle said if they wanted to know whether there were any bathers they had only to go to the river side on a summer evening, and they would see a dozen or fourteen boys running about in a state of nudity. Mr. Steel, Mr. Gascoyne, and others, spoke about the site, but Mr. Maxwell reminded them that it should be settled by the committee. Mr. Maxwell

said the Teddington Local Board had resolved to construct a public bathing place, the cost not to exceed £1200. Dr. Hassall, on being asked to comment, said the subject was so important that he thought it would be superfluous for him to say anything respecting it. The motion was then put and carried.

In the event, it seems that Teddington Lido (P. 32) did not open until 1931. (*Letter from a Teddington resident, 1902, in the Addendum P. 56*).

Obvious and common-sense suggestions to remove impropriety from river bathing – wearing of suitable costumes, and screening off parts of the river – gained traction and it was railed-off and fenced-in portions of the river that became forerunners of what we now understand as a lido.

Of course, a built pool containing filtered and chlorinated water, free from physical dangers, is more desirable than the use of a river, and in the early Twentieth Century architects enthusiastically took up the challenge to construct lidos around the country. The 1930s are regarded as the hey-day of the municipal lido; even the Government of the day (led by Stanley Baldwin) joined in, passing into law The Physical Training and Recreation Act 1937. This Act offered some financial relief to local authorities by making available Government grants for construction of “gyms, playing fields, swimming baths, bathing places, holiday camps and camping sites”. Lidos became extremely popular, not just for

swimming and diving, but for sun bathing, socialising, entertainments and people-watching. To a certain extent lidos may be regarded as fore-runners of today's Leisure Centres. Unfortunately, the 1930s ended with the outbreak of the Second World War, which led inexorably to the demise of many lidos, due to damage and lack of funds for essential maintenance. There was a brief post-war renaissance, but while swimming is now one of the most popular recreational activities, the indoor pool seems the order of the day.

However, there seems that there may an increasing reversion to the earliest practices of swimming in open water – so-called “wild swimming”. Those seeking to avoid the crowds, the smell of chlorine and the bland surroundings of purpose-built swimming pools, are taking to go into lakes and rivers instead. Such adherents now have their own magazines (Outdoor Swimmer, Open Water Swimming). There are of course possible hazards to wild swimming, such as lower water temperatures, dangerous currents and the possibility of acquiring water-borne infections, to be set against the more exhilarating aspects. An extreme form of wild swimming is exemplified by the cross Channel challenge.

Readers of this book might be surprised to learn how many lidos were built by our predecessors in what is now the Borough of Richmond upon Thames, and perhaps also be stimulated to help ensure the future of existing lidos around the country.

Paintings courtesy of Dennis Gilbert



Outdoor Swimming

Outdoor swimming is very popular today, as it has been in the past.

In 1890 Mr Harry Bodkin Poland, Q.C. wrote in *The Daily Graphic* “When I lived on the banks of the Thames, at Strawberry Vale, Twickenham, I used, at quarter-past seven every morning, to plunge into the river ... The great advantage of cold bathing is that it prevents you from “catching cold”. As the bathing season will be coming on, I will write you another short letter with some hints on bathing in general, in sea and river.”

It is clear from newspaper reports that locally nude bathing in the Thames was quite common about this time. For example, there are several cases of absolute shock-horror at the occasional glimpses that females might have got, and suggestions arising that some form of fencing be put up, and changing rooms built. Thus, the concept of a “lido”!

The postcard on the right - *Lansbury's Lido* - shows illicit bathers at the Serpentine in Hyde Park chased by a police officer.

In 1930 George Lansbury - later a leader of the Labour Party - who was keen to provide recreational facilities, oversaw the building of the Serpentine Lido Pavillion.



Mereway Bathing Place

Mereway Bathing Place, used as a lido between 1895 and the 1930s, was at the top of Mereway Road on the River Crane. It was a bathing place from the 1890s and used by Twickenham Swimming Club as well as the venue for school swimming galas.

Longford Journal 1910: In order to encourage the teaching of swimming among women the Twickenham Urban District Council has thrown open the bathing place in the Mereway at Twickenham for the use of women and girls on Tuesday and Friday of each month.

Cambridge Independent 1915: Over 45,000 persons of both sexes have used the Mereway baths place in Twickenham during the six months it has been open.

“My Dad and his five brothers learnt to swim at the Mereway lido although Dad probably wouldn’t have called it a lido. He mentioned someone with a long pole being around to help if anyone got into difficulties! That would have been in the 1920s.

Dad did try and explain exactly where that pool was at Mereway but I found it hard to visualise even though we lived very close by.” (*Brenda Whittaker*)



Boys and Girls Swimming Gala at Mereway Bathing Place

Bushy Bathing Place

As well as Hampton Pool, by Bushy Park, there was an outdoor pool in Bushy Park where local children used to play in the summer: the Children's Nook.

"The Nook is known as Porters Stream, this is the proper name for this stretch of water and it is the main feed or supply for Hampton Court's Long Water." (*Ray Brodie, Park Manager, Bushy Park, Royal Parks*)

"To the left of the road and close to the playground as you walk towards the Hampton Court entrance at the top end of Chestnut Avenue this body of water remains in the same place today. These days it looks like a rectangular wildlife pond about 100 yards or so in length. Back in the 1950s this was a regular swimming site for us kids as we hurled balls at each other and had competitions to jump in and make the biggest splash. Makeshift toy boats and yachts fought for space among the young swimmers and it sometimes resembled Cowes week at the Isle of Wight. The water was only a foot or two deep but what an attraction on a hot summer day. It's a certainty that today's health and safety brigade would have shut it down as soon as they saw it. But what fun!" (*Alan Winter*)



The Children's Nook was an outdoor paddling pool for more than 30 years

Bushy Bathing Pool (Upper Lodge)

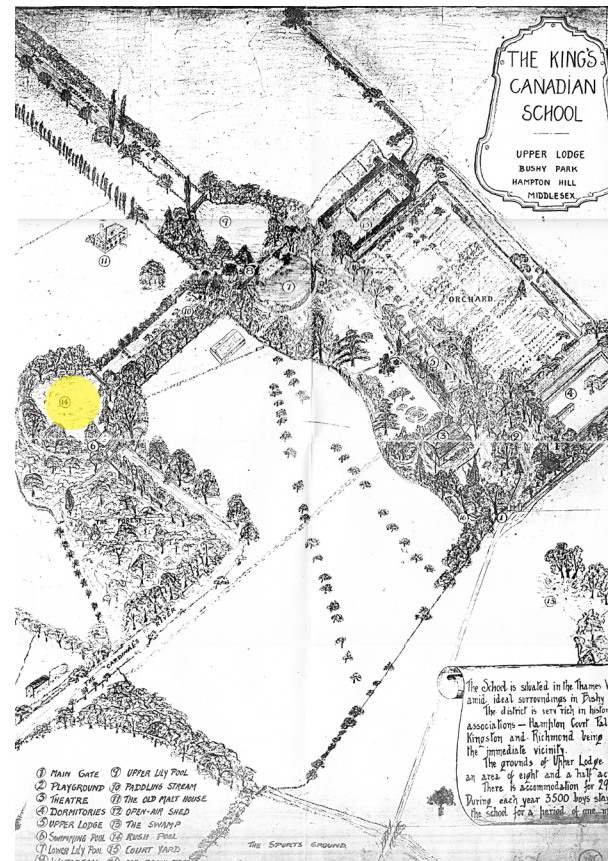
Bushy Bathing Pool, Upper Lodge in Bushy Park, was in use during the 1920s up until the 1940s.

The postcard on the opposite page shows Bushy Bathing Pool in 1930 and is reproduced *courtesy of The Royal Parks*.

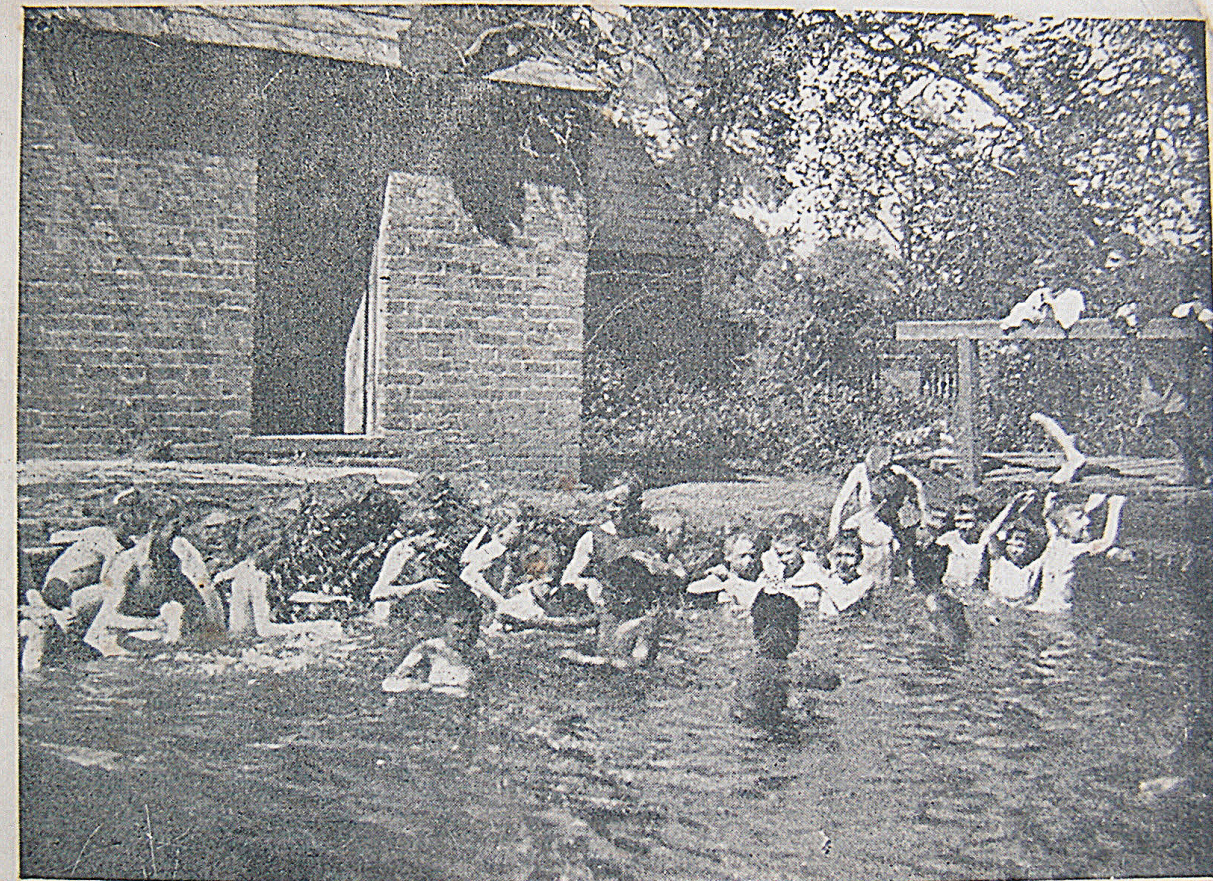
The map to the right of this page shows the location of the pool - *courtesy of The Royal Parks with thanks to Paul Evans*.

The King's Canadian Camp School for London boys, opened mid 1919 and provided open-air respite; 290 boys stayed at the camp each month, totalling 3,500 over the year.

Marked in yellow on map, right



KING'S
CANADIAN
SCHOOL,
Bushy
Park.



The
Bathing
Pool.

Hampton Pool

“Hampton Pool has undergone some changes since it was opened in 1922.

Hampton Pool was opened as a 25 yard pool. It was lengthened in 1939 to a 40 yard pool and pool filtration was added. In 1959 the pool was widened and the current building constructed. It was closed in 1981 along with Twickenham Lido.

After the pool was reopened in 1985 by the community - as a heated open air pool - it gained popularity. Only 7,000 people had been to Hampton Pool in 1981 but in 1985 over 25,000 people visited in its first summer season. Christmas Day opening was introduced in 1988 and the next year the summer season was extended to include autumn but in 1995 the pool opened 365 days per year. Christmas Day remains very popular with a record of over 1800 people swimming between 6 am and 1 pm!

In 2004 the pool was rebuilt and tiled, the building roof was renewed. In 2006 the building was remodelled and refurbished, in 2007 the gym was refurbished. And 2010 the changing rooms were refurbished.” (*Grahame Hadden, Hampton Pool Trust* www.hampton-pooltrust.org.uk).

One resident remembers: “Hampton outdoor pool closed in 1981 when both my children



*Brenda Whittaker's sister, foreground
Hampton Pool, 1959*

were very young but following a campaign by local people it was re-opened under new management in 1985.

The campaign raised £60,000 – including grants from the Greater London Council and Hampton Fuel Allotments.

I remember the lido was a very popular place for children to meet their friends and have picnics by the pool. Hampton was the lido of choice as the Twickenham open air pool had closed.”

Brenda Whittaker remembers; “I used Hampton Pool a lot when I was at secondary school in the late 1950s and early 60s. My Grandad worked there distributing the clothes baskets after he had retired and I got in free!

Hampton Pool had its changing cubicles along one side and the baskets were handed in and were collected when finished swimming. I don’t remember there being much of a grassy area at that time, and it certainly wasn’t heated.”

*Brenda Whittaker’s ‘Grandad’
Hampton Pool, 1959*



Carrie and Marshall Lees moved to Hampton in 1968 “Our main years of visiting the pool, were from the mid 70s. – and usually only on hot days!”

“We were all hugely saddened when Hampton Pool closed. The children were by then aged 16, 14, 11. During the next year it became a topic of conversation over supper. Most outraged was Susannah by then nearly 12 who declared she would write to Mrs Thatcher – and did so! She received a reply to the effect that it was a matter for the Local Council.

At this point Marshall decided to take action, and formed the Hampton Pool Group (now the Hampton Pool Trust) from local volunteers. Once agreement had been obtained from Richmond Council, to run the pool as a charity other volunteers were sought. The campaign was amazing – fundraising, restoration, and above all seeking advice on management. A decision to heat the water was made very early on, and one that has never been regretted.

The Pool was reopened in May 1985, with an official opening in June, by Duncan Goodhew, the Olympic swimmer, and attended by the Mayor, MP Toby Jessell, Local councillors, and a triumphant public. It was the happiest occasion, and a steel band played throughout. It rained! Who cared?” (*Carrie Lees*)

Palm Beach Lido (Tagg's Island)

New Princes Restaurant, a prestigious cabaret venue in Piccadilly had taken a three-year lease on the old Karsino casino on Tagg's island in the Thames near Hampton Court, and after refurbishment, re-opened as The Palm Beach on 8 May 1926.

The intention was to convert this island into a miniature version of Palm Beach, Florida by placing thousands of tons of sand, palm trees, sunshades, beach chairs and a fleet of motor-boats, punts and canoes for river merrymakers.

A quotation from the *Nottingham Journal* 28 April 1926 stated "I am not surprised that there is protest against the proposal to turn Tagg's Island at Hampton Court into a mini Palm Beach."

A short film of the Palm Beach Lido from 1926 can be viewed at www.britishpathe.com.

The photograph on the right shows swimmers enjoying the short-lived lido; it closed in 1928.



Richmond Bridge Lido

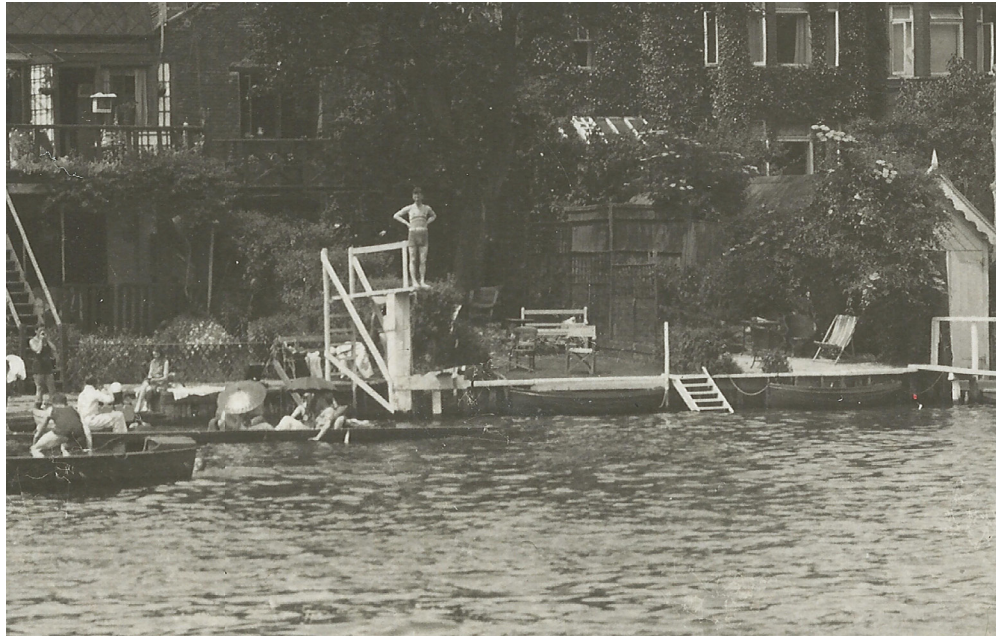
A hot summer in 1929 encouraged the building of a temporary lido in the River Thames for bathers to enjoy the water. This part of the River Thames was dominated by the beautiful bridge built in 1777 from which this picture was taken. Around the bridge all manner of boating craft could be hired for pleasure or sport and a fine selection were moored around the lido. The least energetic could hire a boat for a gentle cruise or row up and down the river and enjoy the peaceful countryside of Surrey, rich in parks and gardens.

“The reprinted image (at right) shows a wonderful example of a 1929 natural lido in the river between Richmond and Twickenham. Very much a Heath Robinson job by the look of it with diving board to the left and a waterslide to the right. I would imagine that today’s health and safety spoilsports would shut something like this down immediately.” (*Alan Winter*)



Hampton Wick

Below is a photograph of the swimming pontoon with diving board - and diver - which was moored at Burgoin's Boatyard, Lower Teddington Road, Hampton Wick (behind what is now Salamander Quay). The photograph was probably taken in the 1930s.



Marble Hill Lido

This postcard which was published in the 1960s shows adults and children at a then regular swimming place at Marble Hill towpath in Twickenham. "These steps down to the river are still there and can be found by the entrance gate to the park that has the famous black walnut tree on the right.

My mother and her brothers learnt to swim at this place back in the 1930s.

There was a pontoon made of wood and old barrels moored in mid-river between Marble Hill and Ham Fields and this was a popular swimming spot in the 1930s.

I spent many hours both day and night in the 1950s and early 60s fishing with my dad and brother from these same steps on the Marble Hill towpath." (*Alan Winter*)



Teddington Lido

Teddington swimming pool was originally an outdoor pool built in 1931; the photograph opposite shows Teddington Pool on the opening day. The pool closed in 1976 and was rebuilt as an indoor pool.

“Teddington Lido was on the same site as today’s indoor swimming pool although it took over quite a bit of the play area. Now covered, the baths has a gym and disabled facilities - plus a swimming club at which my children were founder members.” (*Brian Holder*)

“Teddington pool was where I first learnt to swim in the 1950s. It was open air and was always freezing as the sun never seemed to reach the water and obviously not heated. On the far side was tall tiered seating. Teddington didn’t have anywhere as I remember to eat so it was mainly about a swim. Then when my girls arrived I took them weekly as I wanted them to swim and enjoy it at a much younger age than I had.” (*Brenda Whittaker*)

“I worked at the National Physical Laboratory from 1961 into the 1980s. For the first ten years I worked with someone who used to go to the Teddington outdoor pool every lunch time from when it opened in the Spring until it closed in the Autumn. He would swim and then sit on the poolside and eat his packed lunch.” (*Michael Bangham*)



A Twickenham resident remembers:

“I used to take my children to Teddington pool after it had reopened as an indoor pool – around the end of 1970 and the beginning of 1980. As well as the main swimming pool there was a small pool for learners.

My neighbour recalls that he went to Teddington when it was an outside pool in the 1970s. On Sunday afternoons in the summer he would spend two to three hours there meeting friends and socializing.

He said there was a snack bar where he bought crisps and sweets and tea, coffee and colas were available.

His main recollection was that it was “a good opportunity to meet and chat up girls.”

The photograph to the right shows the outdoor pool during 1931



Twickenham Baths

Twickenham outdoor pool was built on the site of Richmond House overlooking the Thames. It was the second Richmond House which was smaller than the original house that had stood on the site for around three hundred and fifty years.

Richmond House was demolished in 1927 and following a petition by residents an outdoor swimming pool was built in the style of its time and at the beginning of the heyday of the lido movement.

A transcript of the opening of Twickenham Baths from the Richmond and Twickenham Times can be seen in the Addendum on P 57.

The pool was closed in 1980 for refurbishment but was never reopened.

It is interesting to note that Minutes from the “Bathing Places Committee” dated 24th October 1889 document a decision to create a lido on Twickenham Riverside. The sum of £585 was set aside to create a lido on Eel Pie Island. In addition £1,700 was set aside to install a footbridge connecting the Embankment to Eel Pie Island.



One of the participants in the Lidos Alive project says that her husband still talks fondly of the lido in Twickenham and says it was a shame it had to close.

One of those who learned to swim in the Twickenham swimming pool in the early 1970s wrote: "A very special memory, and such a shame it went to ruins. As a schoolgirl, I used to walk past the derelict pool on the way to the river, and look through a hole in the brick-work. I would see the pool overgrown with plants".

A member of the Teddington Swimming Club, who also trains at Hampton Pool remembers swimming in Twickenham outdoor pool; like others, she would pack a picnic and spend a whole day there.

Brenda Whittaker was a regular visitor to Twickenham lido for many years and spent whole days there when the weather was good.

Brenda remembers "Twickenham Lido was a beautiful Art Deco pool, unusual in that it was deep in the centre, shallow at each end. The diving boards were obviously in the centre and there was a slide either side of them. It was a big pool in length and width. The walking area around the pool was spacious and at each end was a stylish cream fountain (like a modern wedding cake where three layers sit one on top of another). In one corner there was a paddling pool and up some steps, a cafe. People could sunbathe

at either end of the pool. The changing rooms were spacious unlike modern cubicles!

The building was Art Deco, a long building with Crittal windows. It always felt stylish and spacious inside.

I remember pushing my pram to Twickenham pool and after paying would go back round the corner and someone would open a big gate and let me in as there were far too many steps in the building for prams to cope with!

On that last day Twickenham was open my sister-in-law and I arrived for the day we thought; we paid our money and then after about an hour or so we were told that the pool was closing and we were slow to realise that that was the last day ever it was to be open. A very sad day!!" (*Brenda Whittaker*).

After Twickenham closed Ian and Brenda Whittaker used to go and peer at the pool through the fence surrounding their beautiful Art Deco pool; it was also known for its stunning staircase. They said it was such a waste – it was always packed when the sun was shining.

Becky Horsbrugh and Julie McCarthy were also regulars at the Twickenham outdoor pool. *Becky* writes: "One of my fondest memories as a child in the 1970s was visiting the out-

door pool at Twickenham. Many a summer afternoon was spent after school there. I remember my mother would pick me up from Trafalgar School and my brother from Chase Bridge, laden with our swim things and a snack to have by the pool. The lido would be packed and you would always bump into people you knew. I can't remember much what it looked like, but I do know it was one of the favourite places for us to all hang out. What seems strange from my memories as well from that time is the weather always seemed great! I remember endless summer afternoons at the lido; the queues that would form outside, hot, sunny weather and a place that was such a great getaway."

Julie remembers "We used to go to Richmond and Twickenham lidos in the 70s. We would spend the whole day there, taking a packed lunch. I revised for my A Levels whilst, at the same time, topping up my tan during the amazing summer of 1976! I have a picture of posing at the pool that summer. What a shame it closed ... like so many over London including those that I went to as a child in NW London ... Roundwood Park, Kingsbury, Sudbury Town and many more ..."

Twickenham lido was derelict for thirty years but the site has now become Diamond Jubilee Gardens – the old pool is marked out in concrete – and a concrete diving board remains on the edge of where the pool once gave pleasure to so many people of all ages.



Richmond Baths/Pools on the Park

Richmond [indoor] Baths at Parkshot opened in 1882.

Before the Second World War (1939-1945) Richmond Town Council was planning to build an open-air swimming pool and sports pavilion in Old Deer Park but postponed the £35,000 scheme in September 1938.

In 1966 Richmond Baths were finally replaced in Old Deer Park by what became known as “Pools on the Park”. This combination of indoor and outdoor pools, a Grade II listed building, was the work of Leslie Gooday.

At this time lidos were in operation in Twickenham, Hampton and Teddington; Richmond seems to have been late to join outdoor swimming, apparently missing the heyday of the lido movement.

In 1989 Richmond Council was discussing the possibility of providing a pool/ice rink complex on the site of Pools on the Park. This would be financed by a community benefit, an S52 (later superseded by the S106) arising from the redevelopment by the London and Edinburgh Trust of the ice rink site in East Twickenham (the ice rink was the focus of www.icerinx.com, an earlier Heritage Lottery project).



Council documents, that were not revealed to the public, suggested that there were difficulties regarding the lease with Waterslides plc, the company which had four sets of flumes (water slides) in Pools in the Park, known as Wild Waters.

It was suggested that reducing £22.5M (the value of the S52 agreement) would facilitate the planning process for the ice rink development. Eventually, a smaller sum was agreed, that was spent on Pools on the Park. There was wide belief among the public that a new ice rink would be built,

Information about these matters was circulated by Richard Meacock, who spent the last years of his life campaigning to keep an ice rink in the Borough.



The outcome was that Waterslides plc went into administration and Wild Waters closed on 28 October 1989; the S52 money was invested in Pools on the Park.



Richmond upon Thames College

An International Perspective on the Lido - Architecture Students from Richmond Upon Thames College design a lido for Twickenham as part of the Lidos Alive project.

Noris Obijiaku

One of the themes in students' work is the importance of proximity of a new lido to the river. This lido plan has a glass window looking out on to the Thames; the other side of the lido has coloured glass doors. The traditional Scandinavian use of wood is incorporated in lamps and seating as well as the use of the original fretwork seen at a visit to the Thames Lido in Reading.

Will Pereira

This plan is influenced by the traditional Polynesian architectural style. Wood and stone are used and a mixture of straight and curved lines, as well as a fin. A replica of a Polynesian mask could be used as a door within the lido.

Junaid Sheikh

Traditional Japanese architecture and hot springs in mountain areas are the inspiration for this drawing - organic in style rather than rectangular. The river is on one side so there are views of the river and the pool on entering the lido. Materials are tiles, ceramics and wood; traditional Japanese sliding shoji doors are an important feature.

René Ballesteros

This plan aims to make the most of the view of the Thames; a natural feature that was not a part of the design of Twickenham Baths. The idea behind this plan is modern with a natural look. Green tiling was proposed for the pool area to give a green effect to the colour of the water.

There is also a stepped terrace model; a more organic design of the pool allowing for enjoyment of the water and social interaction.

Nadia Abdulkarim Ali

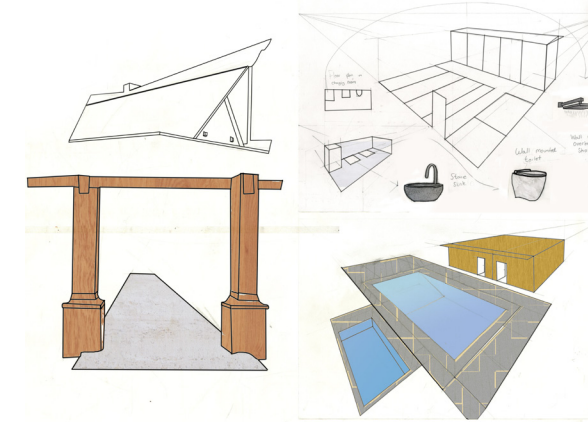
This design is based on a Roman Bath but is modern and minimalist. The pool is surrounded by wooden panels but marble is the main material used. There are waterfall taps at either end of the pool which contribute to the water supply. Stone is used for the changing rooms and sauna so everything blends.

Leen Khalifa

This design is influenced by the W hotel in Dubai; an infinity pool on the sea to be translated to a pool on the river. The lido is very modern inside: glass and black marble - no wood is used. Geometric designs are used for fixtures and fittings.

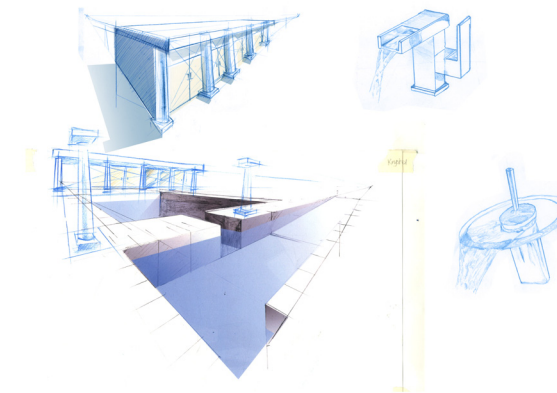
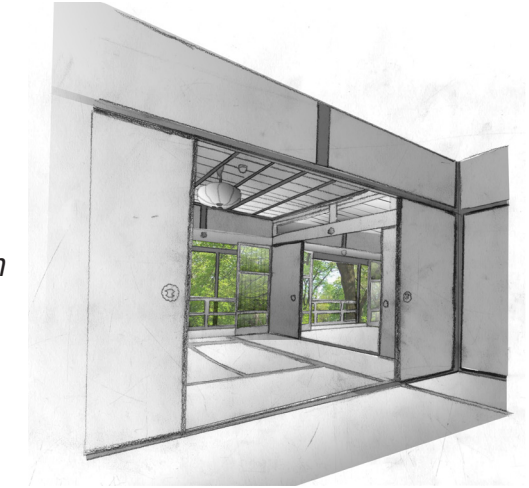
Krystel Marinas

This designer likes columns using Bath as an inspiration. It has a classical look outside but is more modern inside. The doors of the changing rooms could be made from a frosted plastic material. It was suggested that the designs for taps and other fittings could be part of the architectural style.



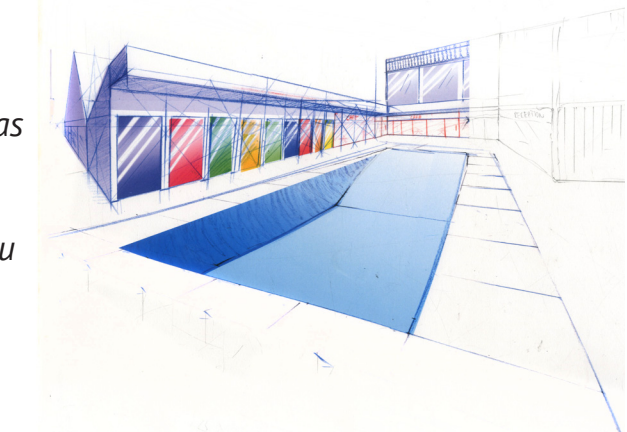
*Will Pereira
(Left)*

*Junaid Sheikh
(Right)*



*Krystel Marinas
(Left)*

*Noris Obijiaku
(Right)*



The End of An Era?

Like Twickenham outdoor pool we have seen that lidos were lost all over the country. A leisure activity that was part of the social fabric of many communities just disappeared leaving happy memories of sunny days but also leaving a large hole in community life. Many lidos fell into disrepair; some were saved in later years, especially more recently with the revival of interest in outdoor swimming. Lidos, such as the Thames Lido in Reading, have been renovated after years of dereliction.

Danson Park Lido in Bexley, Kent 1936-1979 was a lido situated in a park, originally the home of a merchant in the 1760s. Like lidos everywhere this lido was a place to take the family, especially on public holidays, where parents could swim and relax on sunny days and children could play in the water fountains - characteristic of many of the lidos.

Billy Butlin was a promoter of outdoor swimming and outdoor swimming pools were a feature of his holiday camps which were very popular around the middle of last century.

Some lidos were on the sea front. A good example of a lido integrated with the sea can be seen today at Camp Bay in Gibraltar, an Overseas Territory of the UK.

Of course, with the increase in holidays abroad our lidos became less important as fami-

lies took advantage of package holidays and went off in search of the sun.

However, the days of children - all over the country - spending time at the local lido with their friends have gone. Other pastimes have taken the place of outdoor baths and those living in places such as Hampton, where the pool was saved by the community for community use, should think themselves very lucky that they still have their outdoor pool.

Teresa Read

*Camp Bay Lido,
Gibraltar*



ADDENDUM

“The Swimming Baths of London” 1870, The Hackney and Kingsland Gazette

In a pamphlet of some six-and thirty pages the author [R.E Dudgeon M.D.] endeavours to popularize a plea for Open-Air Swimming Baths. He says: “Swimming is an exercise at once healthful, pleasant, and useful. The full hygienic effects of swimming can only be obtained when it is practised in the open air, and in unpolluted water of a natural temperature”

And again he says: “Every town which aspires to be considered at all perfect in its sanitary arrangements should possess ample swimming baths in the open air”

“The healthful effects of swimming in cold water in the open-air result from the peculiar exercise, the temperature of the surrounding mediums, and the exhilaration of the spirits it causes. Before entering the water, and each time of having it, we enjoy an air-bath, the beneficial effects of which are not solely or chiefly dependent on the temperature, but mainly owing to the actual impact of the atmospheric gases, and of the light, and possibly the direct rays of the sun upon the skin.”

Further on Dr Dudgeon asserts, more enthusiastically than pleasant: “He who passes through life without learning to swim misses one of the purest pleasures life affords, and deserves to be drowned in a six-foot pond.”

In speaking of the Thames as an open-air swimming bath he says: “London itself, with a population of three millions, is now without any regular open-air swimming bath. A noble river runs through it, but in spite of the gigantic works for interrupting and carrying off the sewage, the Thames is still such a polluted stream that no one with all his senses entire – especially those of sight, smell, and taste – would venture to bathe in it below Teddington Lock. It is true that one sees in summer many boys disporting themselves on its grimy bosom between the bridges, and I have even seen some enjoying a douche at the outfall of a sewer, but such feats will be more admired for their temerity than imitated for their propriety; and the Thames from Richmond downwards must still be considered as unsuitable for bathing.”

After describing the various bathing establishments in London and its suburbs (omitting, however, Albion Hall, Dalston) he dwells on the great healthful advantages to be derived from open-air bathing – proposes their introduction in special lakes at Victoria and other parks – and urges women to become bathers: “When speaking of the advantages of swimming in the open air, I have not meant that these advantages were limited to the male sex. On the contrary, I am strongly of the opinion that swimming is an exercise equally, if not more, adapted to women as to men. Men have their hundreds of games and occupations that keep their muscles in constant and varied play. From those women are practically debarred, and the exigencies of society limit their exercises to but few, and some of those can only enjoyed by the wealthier classes. Their bodies are generally

of less specific gravity, and so float more easily in water, whether fresh or salt. This being so they sooner acquire the confidence necessary to make good swimmers. Then, as the water sustains the whole weight of the body, and as they are no longer restrained by the bands, bones and laces of their dress, they are free to bring into full play, without fatigue, all those muscles which have hitherto been kept in thrall by the milliner's devices."

We refer our readers to the pamphlet itself for further information; but we shall be glad to learn that the advocacy of the enthusiastic author has more rapidly brought to a successful issue the establishment of swimming baths in London.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF THE GLOBE, 1886

SIR- In reference to Thames bathing it does not seem to have occurred to any of your correspondents that the remedy against the nuisance complained of is a police regulation, strictly enforced, making the wearing of the caleçon obligatory upon all males over the age of 14. All foreigners use them. Even Englishmen who have lived much on the Continent feel shocked at the totally unnecessary and indecent nudity of bathers in England. The adoption of the caleçon is urgently needed on the Thames and in our public schools, where the indecent exposure of the person I have felt to be nothing short of a scandal. Let me anticipate the extremely virtuous Englishman, inaccessible to new ideas, who is sure to reply by saying that I am not over squeamish, and no prude.

I am, Sir, CALEÇON [author's note: a present-day translation of caleçon is "boxer shorts"]

THE EDITOR'S REPLY

An indignant correspondent uses the proper phrase when he styles the indecent bathing which disgraces the Thames "an intolerable nuisance". Intolerable and insufferable it is that our noble river should be rendered unfit, in many parts, for respectable folks to frequent. It is not, either, as if this were one of the cases in which "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" imposes annoyance on the minority. Quite the contrary: the objectionable bathers form merely a small minority of those who take their pleasure on the Thames. Neither is it that any one desires to suppress the liberty of bathing. But that can be carried on without those acts of manifest and often wilful indecency which form the subject of our correspondent's complaint. There is no need to describe these disgraceful proceedings; all who have ever gone up the river as far as Windsor at the present season will be able to fill up the picture for themselves. For this hateful nuisance is of long standing. Year after year the public have clamorously appealed to the authorities for relief, but instead of growing better matters are getting worse and worse.

If decency be not compassable by other means, why not fence in portions of the water, here and there, with wooden screens sufficiently high to hide bathers from those on the shore? Something of the sort is done in Australia, we believe, to keep off the sharks, but were the Thames infested with these fish, the authorities would probably remain as blind to their presence as they appear to be to the abomination of nude bathing.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF THE SURREY COMET, 1902

PUBLIC BATHS. Sir,—I quite agree ... that a public bathing place is absolutely necessary for a large and growing neighbourhood like Teddington, and I do not think the Council could do better than provide such place. At the present moment bathers have to go to Kingston or Richmond in the winter months, and in the summer time bathe in the river above Teddington Lock. This is not at all a suitable place in many respects, owing to the number of boats that pass up and down. It may be all very well for those who can swim, but for those who cannot it is very dangerous, as the depth varies from 4ft. to 10 or 12ft.

The so-called recreation ground could well be utilised for this purpose, and if such a place were excavated like Broom Water, this would be a grand place for swimming, and proper swimming bath could built for winter time. It is most necessary to be able to swim, and for a riverside place it should be indispensable. The deaths from drowning are on the increase, and this year we have read of many instances where life could have been saved had spectators even had knowledge of swimming. There are many school boys and men in Teddington who would learn to swim if a good place were provided. The great want of money has been the cause of our not having a proper bathing place, but I think if subscription tins were opened one should find that it would have hearty support.

Yours faithfully. A. BRADBURY. 2, Linden Villas, Cedar Road, Teddington. Sept. 22, 1902.

The following is transcribed from Richmond and Twickenham Times, May 11 1935 - the opening of Twickenham Baths

SWIMMING POOL OPENED

Jubilee has come and gone. Twickenham has rejoiced not with sound of trumpet, a blaze of colour, or with the emblems of loyalty in beflagged streets as some towns have done, but with a week of festivities in which old and young, rich and poor, have joined. These included the opening on Saturday afternoon of the bathing pool, in which over a thousand bathers took their first dip on Jubilee Day, services of thanksgiving in the grounds of York House and the Parish Church, school processions, fun fairs and teas, and a miniature river carnival, with fireworks off Orleans Gardens and coloured lights near the ancient Ferry.

Silver Jubilee celebrations at Twickenham began with the opening of the swimming pool, and the people realised it, for the first thing to get the applause of crowd was not the references to what the baths would mean to the health and vigour of the people, but to the fact brought out by the Deputy Mayor that it was 25 years ago, when the King and Queen ascended the throne that Twickenham began to talk of the need of a bath, and that this was a real silver jubilee celebration.

Mayors and Mayoresses from Twickenham, Richmond, Barnes, and Heston and Isleworth,

with their chains of office glittering in the sun, made an imposing spectacle from the balcony overlooking the bath, and the speeches broadcast by Mr WR Emery BSc, and his running commentary on the races and diving which followed made the afternoon memorable.

By pressing an electric button, the Mayor set in motion the machinery by which a thousand gallons per minute pass through the filtration plant and back again into the bath purified. The next minute, Mr WC Gammon, the baths superintendent, had been the first to enter the bath after the official opening to give an exhibition which at once marked him out as the man for the job.

It was a full and ambitious programme which followed, in which the local swimming club, which now has over 400 members, and the Southern Counties Amateur Swimming Association had combined, working in cooperation with Major H Beresford-Barber and the hon. secretary of the local swimming club (Mr JT Hiney).

Mr EH Temme, the only man to swim the Channel in both directions, was unable to get down in time, and it was a happy circumstance that the honour of being the first to enter the water should fall upon the baths superintendent, who has been largely responsible for the perfection seen in the finishing touches made at the bath. Miss K Larson (London Diving Club), Mr Stanley Bell (Windsor Swimming Club, English breast-stroke champion,

and an international), Mr John CP Besford (European back stroke champion, and the only British swimmer to gain a title at the Magdeburg Games last year), also gave exhibitions, and afforded Twickenham an opportunity of witnessing the finest swimming and diving ever seen in the town.

Four front-line English swimmers, one of them an old Twickenham girl of the Archdeacon Schools, Miss Edith Baker, gave exhibition swims of two lengths, Miss Baker demonstrating the new American “butterfly” breast stroke.

The Highgate Diving Club brought down a team of internationals for an outstanding display which was full of thrills. The team included JB Ray (springboard champion of the British Empire), TJ Mather (firmboard champion of the British Empire), PH Beveridge (English representative at the Empire Games), F Hodges (champion boy diver) and CD Tomalin, who has won second place in two British Empire diving contests.

In the water polo match Plaistow United beat Cornhill SC by three goals to two, Mr Temme gaining the winning goal when the score stood at 2-2. Centymca Swimming Club gave a display in life-saving to the accompaniment of a commentary by Mr Bullard.

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During the week large numbers of school children and general bathers have visited the bath, on Monday over 1,107 entering the water.



*Architecture students from Richmond upon Thames College at the newly renovated Thames Lido in Reading
(see their ideas for a lido in Twickenham on pages 46 - 49)*

Photographs

Cover – Our Lidos © Dennis Gilbert

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Swimming in the River © Dennis Gilbert

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Outdoor Swimming © Dennis Gilbert

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Bathers at the Serpentine courtesy Alan Winter

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Mereway Bathing Place courtesy Twickenham Museum

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The Children's Nook courtesy Alan Winter

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Map of Upper Lodge Bushy Park courtesy Paul Evans,
Bushy Park

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Bushy Bathing Pool, Upper Lodge courtesy Paul Evans,
Bushy Park

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Swimmers at Hampton Pool, 1959 © Brenda Whittaker

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Working at Hampton Pool, 1959 © Brenda Whittaker

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Palm Beach, Tagg's Island courtesy Alan Winter

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Richmond Bridge Lido, 1929 courtesy Alan Winter

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Swimming at Hampton Wick courtesy Paul Barnfield

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Swimming at Marble Hill, 1960s courtesy Alan Winter

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Teddington Pool courtesy Local Studies

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Teddington Pool, 1931 courtesy Twickenham Museum

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Twickenham Lido, 1960s © Russell Wilfred

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Twickenham Lido, 1960s © Russell Wilfred

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Pools on the Park courtesy Jo Pond

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Sketches courtesy Richmond upon Thames College

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Camp Bay Lido, Gibraltar © Berkley Driscoll

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Architecture students at Thames Lido, Reading

© Berkley Driscoll

Page 62 Dennis Gilbert in his studio © Berkley Driscoll

Acknowledgements

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LIDOS ALIVE

Lidos Alive aims to look at the lidos in the ‘boroughs’ of Twickenham and Richmond (which became the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames in 1965) – those which have evolved over time and those lost. There has not been a new build lido in our borough since the 1960s.

The word “lido” (pronounced LEE-doh) is a public open-air swimming pool or bathing beach.

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