



LIDOS ALIVE



The Lidos Of Twickenham

Foreword

Today's memories are tomorrow's history: for example, we learn from the experience of our parents about the Second World War, from our grandparents about the First World War, and so on. It is therefore very appropriate to draw together memories of local history by means of interviewing members of the public who have had actual involvement (or who have heard directly from others) in certain places that have now disappeared. The addition here of some historical background makes for a more coherent whole that helps to bring the past to light.

Such is the endeavour described in this booklet, outlining the third local "Memories" project undertaken by the Richmond Environmental Information Centre, all supported by grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Lidos not only comprised iconic features of architecture between the Wars, but also provided previously unattainable opportunities for exercise and recreation as well as social interaction. This research has uncovered several previously unrecognised bathing places enjoyed by earlier generations in the Borough, and is illustrated by archival photographs, accompanied by reminiscences from those who remember. There is something very special about being able to say "but I was there", and such voices are heard in the following pages.

Jeremy Hamilton-Miller

The Lidos of Twickenham

The Lidos in blue are in this booklet. All those listed are available to see on the Lidos Alive website www.lidosalive.com

1863-	Outdoor Swimming
1895 - 1930s	Mereway Bathing Place
1920s - 1950s	Bushy Bathing Place (The Nook)
1920s - 1940s	Bushy Bathing Pool (Upper Lodge)
1922 - 1981	Hampton Pool (by Bushy Park) <small>Hampton pool was reopened in 1985</small>
1926 - 1928	Palm Beach Lido (Taggs Island)
1929 - 1929	Richmond Bridge Lido
1930s	Hampton Wick Lido
1930s - 1960s	Marble Hill (outdoor swimming)
1931 - 1976	Teddington Lido
1935 - 1980	Twickenham Lido
1966 -	Richmond Baths (Pools on the Park)

Outdoor Swimming

Before the advent of public baths and lidos people on the Twickenham side of the Thames swam wherever there was water: the Thames itself, the River Crane and smaller pools of water, for instance in Bushy Park. Once again, today, outdoor swimming has become very popular.



An interview with Simon Griffiths, publisher of *Outdoor Swimming* can be seen on www.lidosalive.com

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. The bathing place was used by Twickenham Swimming Club and the venue for school swimming galas.

“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! Have you come across any photos of that pool? 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. That would have been in the 1920's".

(Brenda Whittaker)

" 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".

(*Longford Journal 1910*)



Bushy Bathing Place (The Nook)

As well as the official Hampton Pool by Bushy Park there was another outdoor pool where local children used to play in the summer:

"The Nook is known as 'Porters' Stream. This is the proper name for this stretch of water; 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. This wonderful postcard brings back some good childhood memories for me." (Alan Winter)

Hampton Pool

“Hampton pool (by Bushy Park) I used a lot when I was at secondary school in the late 1950’s and early 60’s; 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)

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

Hampton Pool was opened in 1922 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, as a heated open air pool, by the community 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. In 1988 Christmas Day opening was introduced 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 1,800 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 and in 2007 the gym was refurbished; in 2010 the changing rooms were refurbished.”



(Grahame Hadden, Hampton Pool Trust)

www.hamptonpooltrust.org.uk

“Hampton [outdoor] Pool, which opened in 1922, closed in 1981 when my children were very young but following a campaign by local people it was reopened 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 lido had closed.”

(Teresa Read)

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 on the left 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)

Teddington Pool

Teddington outdoor swimming pool was originally a lido built in 1931 and closed in 1976. It 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 1980’s.

For the first 10 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 pool-side and eat his packed lunch.”
(Michael Bangham)

Two Twickenham residents remember:

“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’“.

Twickenham Lido

Twickenham Lido was built on the site of Richmond House overlooking the Thames - the second Richmond House, smaller than the original house which 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 Art Deco style of the time and at the beginning of the heyday of the lido movement. The pool was closed in 1980 for refurbishment but was never reopened.

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. The grandmother of another contributor was one of the original swimmers who swam at the opening of the pool. An email from another Twickenham swimmer described spending a lot of time at Twickenham lido as a child and said that even when it closed a friend swam there to train for swimming the Channel, even though it was snowing and the water looked green!

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 school girl, I used to walk past the derelict pool on the way to the river, and look through a hole in the brickwork. I would see the pool overgrown with plants”.

A member of the Teddington Swimming Club, who also trains at Hampton Pool remembers swimming at Twickenham when she would pack a picnic and spend a whole day there; she is very keen to preserve our heritage.

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

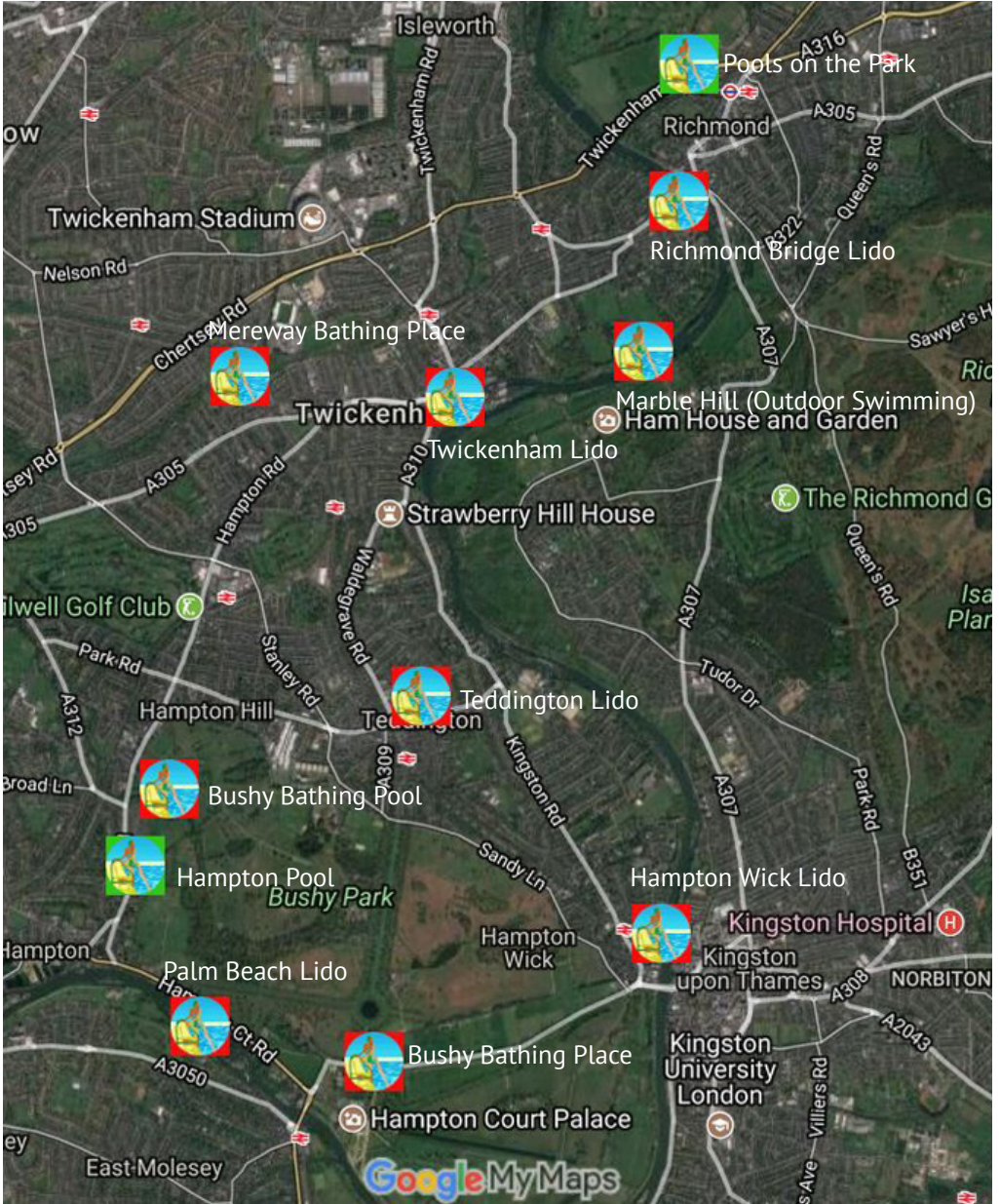


Brenda remembers “I do remember buying Wagon Wheels and hot Oxo to drink at Twickenham in the Fountain café.”

“Twickenham Lido was a beautiful Art Deco pool, unusual in that it was deep in the

centre and shallow at each end. The diving boards were 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 [coloured] fountain (like a modern wedding cake where three layers sit, one on top of another). In one corner 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!”

Our Lidos



See the interactive map at www.LidosAlive.com

Acknowledgements

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Photographs

Cover	Twickenham Lido, 1960s © Russell Wilfred
Page 4	Marble Hill, 1960s courtesy Alan Winter
Page 5	Mereway Bathing Place, courtesy Twickenham Museum
Page 6	Bushy Bathing Place, 1931 courtesy Alan Winter
Page 8	Hampton Pool, 1959 © Brenda Whittaker
Page 9	Richmond Bridge Lido, 1929 courtesy Alan Winter
Page 10	Teddington Pool, courtesy Twickenham Museum
Page 11	Teddington Pool, 1931 courtesy Local Studies Library
Page 13	Twickenham Lido, 1960s © Russell Wilfred

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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