

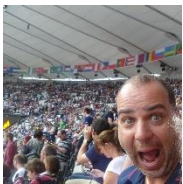
# Bec Chat

Lines from the Lido  
November 2021

October Lido Dawn / @slsclido

## Letter from the editor

By Richard Cudlip: [rjcudlip@gmail.com](mailto:rjcudlip@gmail.com)



Bec Chat is under new management! But before I introduce myself and get this edition rolling, we must say a **HUGE** thanks to Barbara Jennings for her four and a half years at the helm of the good ship Bec Chat. Little

did she know back in April 2017 that much of that time would be during a global pandemic! I'm sure we have all enjoyed Barbara's excellent good humour and will all join in to give our thanks for the time and effort involved in producing this newsletter.

It is with equal parts delight and trepidation that I take the reins of this publication. I hope I can reflect the fabulous community that is the South London Swimming Club, the Bec Chat vaults are certainly bulging with lots of contributions from our amazing members. This month's edition is designed to kickstart the newsletter as a monthly publication and I look forward to sharing some great stories with you all as we head into winter.

I won't bore you all with too much about myself, but it would be a little rude not to introduce myself in some way. Many of you will know me as 'Richard the Cabby' but in the last couple of years I have traded in my black cab for a job in golf. I now work at Royal-Mid Surrey Golf Club in Richmond and, for better or worse, am an expert on how member owned clubs operate. My day job is all about communicating with members and I hope I can bring some of those skills to this publication.

So on with the member content and I look forward to meeting as many as you as possible at the Lido itself,

or via your stories here. All new content is gratefully received at [rjcudlip@gmail.com](mailto:rjcudlip@gmail.com).

Stay safe,

## Hannaford Plate

by Ann Mills (nee Hannaford)

*The Hannaford Plate was a welcome return to the race calendar this year, but even more so was a visit from Ann herself. Ann was kind enough to send us a lovely update on the history of the plate itself and her remarkable efforts to be present at most of the races. With her permission, it is reproduced in full below.*



Simon Bucknall receives the Hannaford Plate / SLSC  
Facebook feed

### Ann Hannaford Plate 100 yards (one length race swum for in September)

This trophy was first swum for in 1984. But, sadly in 2020 we missed a year and what a year it has been. The trophy came to be presented after I was given a

life limiting cancer prognosis. Incorrect as it happens but, as I thought that my days were numbered Jim Eldridge suggested that I have a memorial in the form of a trophy at my favourite place of all time, Tooting Bec Lido. Since the silver plate was first swum for I have only missed two presentations due to surgeries. During the last 37 years I have returned from Scotland, Yorkshire and various canals and rivers on Britain's Waterways to present the silver plate to the winner. After Rod took me away from my beloved Bec nearly 30 years ago to marry me in Warwick we have been shepherd and shepherdess in Scotland, B & B owners in Yorkshire and water gypsies all around the UK on our live-a-board narrowboat. I have taught Yoga in Wimbledon, Tai Chi in Bridlington, Reflexology in Raynes Park and Relaxation on Banbury tow path. I was diagnosed with Chronic Leukemia in 2018 and had six months outpatient Chemotherapy. Retirement sees us growing old in Cambridgeshire whilst looking after a nervous rescue Staffie called Sherry and travelling all over in the UK (when well) in our motorhome called Betsy.

Last year in September the day after Doreen's (Fitch) birthday I was feeling unwell and had various tests and check-ups thinking that the CLL had returned as it is likely to at any time, but no, following a bone marrow biopsy in October I got a phone call to say I had Acute Leukaemia and had to start intensive chemotherapy treatment immediately as an inpatient at Peterborough Hospital. Rod and I were shocked and very distressed. Covid 19 restrictions dictated that I was alone in solitary isolation throughout my treatment. There followed an extraordinarily harrowing time during which on a couple of occasions I thought I might not see my home, dog or husband again let alone my lovely swimming pool. But all's well that ends well as the saying goes and with some serious setbacks along the way I did come through the four months in-patient chemotherapy treatment and at the last check-up I have been declared nearly disease free for now although seriously vulnerable for the next year or so.

At the beginning of the first lock down when all the pools closed I was fascinated to see a u-tube film showing how an elite swimmer was continuing to swim and train in a tiny pool in his garage. He attached a tether from the wall to a belt around his waist and swam for over an hour on the spot through all the strokes. Magic, or so I thought. In May 2020 I decided to give it a go and so sent for a little 2 x 3 metre above ground pool that just fits on my garden patio. When it arrived, we put it all together and very excited filled it up. I loved it. So good to be in water again even in so small a pool but disappointingly I could not get on with my home-made tether as the motion gave me vertigo. Nevertheless, my little pool gave me much pleasure

until I became ill. Rod insulated it with bubble wrap and made a polystyrene lid for it to prevent it freezing. His work was repaid as when the outside temperature dropped below freezing the pool water was a 'balmy' 6 - 8 degrees. Well done Rod. I really enjoyed my dip every morning, not sure what the neighbours thought of it as I tiptoed through the garden wearing my SLSC hat.

I had to stop swimming in September last year and it has been a long ten months at first in hospital then being too poorly to swim and then waiting for the all clear from the Doctors to have a dip again. Although my garden pool has given me much pleasure and helped me feel a bit better I did wonder if I would ever be back in the sea, river, lake or my lovely Lido again. Well, here I am, typing this update and making a plan to attend on Sunday 12th Sept. Woohoo, I can hardly wait.

Tooting Bec Lido accompanied me to all of my five hospital stays as the first thing I hung up in my room was my SLSC calendar, my hat and Lido pass went under the pillow. During the dark days it was the promise I made to myself that I would get back here and would swim in these blue waters again. I was very poorly when I finished treatment and apart from wanting all the mirrors covered so I couldn't see myself I put away my swimsuits, hat and drying robe as well. I could not imagine ever being able to swim again neither having the ability and strength or the confidence to be in water on my own.

My hair has grown back and is curly (for now) and I am at last allowed in an outdoor pool. I started back in my little garden pool with Rod's help. Then alone for a dip, then to float and then to swim four strokes. When I get into the cold blue waters on Sunday I'd like to do a whole width. Wow, won't that be good.

The quotation on the Ann Hannaford plate reads:

"Be courageous in all things, that your life may be full of joy".

I have been sorely tested and my courage failed me sometimes but, if I can find it in the high sky and the blue water of my Lido on Sunday then my life may be full of joy again. I cannot wait to see your smiling faces and know that I made it 'home' to the Bec.

With Love,  
Ann Mills (nee Hannaford)

# Lido Shuffle Poetry Corner

*Huge thanks to Jonathan Buckley for organising the 2021 edition of the Shuffle, with a fantastic array of talent on show. He is pictured in full flow below with a selection of the poetry that was recited on the night following;*



## **Lockdown Blues** by Alastair Cowie

(with apologies to W. H. Auden)

Shut all the pubs, send everybody home,  
Take no more dinner bookings, on the telephone,  
Cancel the quizzes, and with barman's cloth  
Cover the hand pumps, let the beer go off.

Unplug the jukebox and the slot machine,  
Lock up the door and enter quarantine.  
Put signs up on the doors and overhead:  
We're closed: you'll have to go on Zoom instead.

You were my refuge and my place of fun,  
My Rose and Crown and my Rising Sun,  
A place to laugh, to chat, to play a favourite song,  
I thought I'd drink in you forever: I was wrong.

Pint glasses are not wanted now, wash up every one,  
Pack up the dominoes, cancel The Sun,  
Throw out the open wine and unserved food,  
For nothing now can ever come to any good.

## **Why** by Tracey Elizabeth Downing

Why do you swim  
I'm really intrigued  
Is it for fun  
Or to battle fatigue  
Do you do races  
And swim really fast  
Or maybe you're slower  
Like me and come last  
Do you wear a wetsuit?  
That clings to your skin  
Or a costume that's tight  
As you're no longer thin  
What about goggles, flippers and hats  
Dryrobes or towels  
Whatever feels right

One thing I know  
That has brought us all here  
Is moving through water  
It's beautifully clear

## **Lido** by Alastair Cowie

When I am at the bottom of the well,  
Perspective lost, horizons out of sight,  
The small still circle of the sky is dull,  
No prospect of the sun's redeeming light,  
I step up to the glistening water's edge,  
And peer across the shining sheet of glass,  
And stretch, and curl my toes around the ledge,  
And breathe. And let the moments pass.

Anticipating icy loss of breath,  
The sense is both of fear and yet of calm,  
The tiny whispered quiet risk of death,  
The readiness for shock and then for balm.  
Just like the baptist at the river side,  
It is a choice, a mastery of fate.  
The benefit is that I must decide  
to make the vital dive, to change my state.

The coil, the spring, the stretch, the plunge,  
The actions from the choice unfold,  
An icy torrent grasps the lungs  
And drives me to outpace the cold,  
Until emerging once again  
For air, for life, I reach for space  
And easing from initial strain,  
I settle to a steady pace.

Serenity is hard to find.  
Our modern urban life, it seems,  
distracts, dismays, disturbs the mind.  
We need to find the time for dreams,  
the chance to cleanse our minds, and to,  
through quiet rhythmic exercise,  
refresh, reflect, restore anew  
until we, once again, are wise.

And here amidst the daily grind  
In autumn, winter, summer, spring  
At quiet common's heart we find  
A quite uncommon secret thing:  
An infinitely fresh surprise,  
A space exempt from worldly rules,  
Beneath the broadest, bluest skies,  
A special sacred swimming pool.



Thanks to Em Fleming for the suggestion of including the following from Charles Roskilly, written in response to men having to cope with a mixed Lido back in 1932!

## The Swimmer's Warning

**THE SWIMMER'S WARNING**

In days of old, at Tooting Lake,  
(Deny it if you can),  
Away from toil, from care, from home,  
A man could be a MAN.  
For FREEDOM was the watchword then,  
And FREE MEN gathered there,  
While hearts were young and hopes were high  
In Tooting sun and air.

Alas! One day the L.C.C.,  
Those mighty powers that be,  
Said "We'll improve your bath for you  
And do the whole thing free."  
They built a big filtration plant,  
The sides like glass did shine,  
And after many a month, behold!  
A super Serpentine!

So now we have our comforts and  
The water's always clear.  
We've Rules and Regulations, too,  
With penalties severe.  
Within a nasty wooden hutch  
Swimmers remove their clothes.  
Without a permit signed and sealed  
A man can't blow his nose.

We can't do this; we can't do that,  
The L.C.C. say "No."  
We can't dress here, we can't dress there,  
In cages we must go.  
The lake was built for honest men,  
But we're becoming slaves.  
The L.C.C. rules swimmers though  
Britannia rules the waves.

Beware the swimmers awful wrath;  
One day we'll sound the call.  
With shouts of joy, through streets of blood,  
We'll march on County Hall.  
We'll tear the place down stone by stone,  
We'll throw it in the sea;  
We'll burn all regulations, and  
Once more we shall be FREE.

C.S.R.

## In Celebration

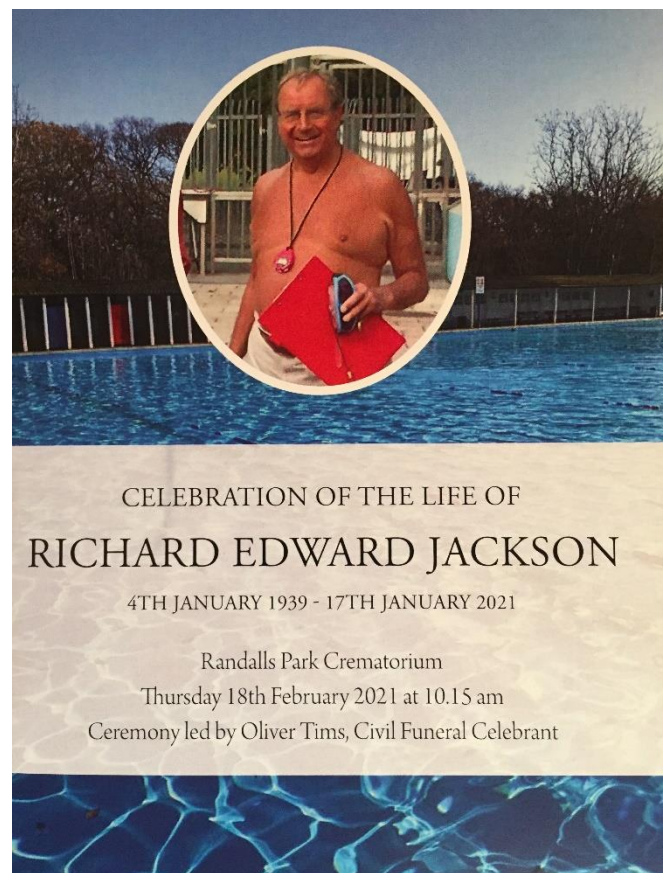
*In these most of difficult of times, we have lost many dear friends of the Lido. Ours is a wonderful community and these special people have all been a huge part of that.*

## Richard Jackson (1939-2021)

Many thanks to Rosemary Beaver for sending the attached photo from the order of service of Richard's funeral earlier this year. Richard was our Summer handicapper for many years and a man who, from all accounts, lived and breathed swimming. We thank him for his service to the SLSC community, and if anyone would like to make a donation to the hospice that supported him during his final days you can do so here;

[https://www.love2donate.co.uk/inmemory/identify\\_name.php?bc=301](https://www.love2donate.co.uk/inmemory/identify_name.php?bc=301)

You will need to search under Richard's name to find the relevant donation page.



## Betty Freddi (1928-2021)

*By Carol Woddis*

Betty Freddi who has died at the age of 93 was a legend. In a world where the word has come to be used all too freely, if anybody could be said to encapsulate the meaning of the word, it was Betty.

Born in Camberwell, Betty became one of the most well-known sights in local swimming circles over the past decades, being a dedicated cold water swimmer

at not just one but two swimming pools – Brockwell and Tooting Bec Lido.

Only taking up swimming in her mid-30s, Betty nonetheless became an original ‘Brockwell icicle’ (along with Margy Sullivan and others) until it was closed in 1990 by Lambeth council. She then moved to Tooting Bec and more or less stayed there, initiating amongst other things the SLSC (South London Swimming Club)’s monthly newsletter. After the death of her beloved husband Bruno (who would ferry her back and forwards to Tooting), she became a more regular sight once more at Brockwell.

Nothing seemed to diminish Betty’s appetite or enthusiasm for swimming, even after she had suffered a heart-attack and when her sight was failing her badly. Thanks to kind friends, Betty still remained a popular feature of early morning swimming at ‘TBec’, and in later years, could be seen at Brockwell, steered across from her house just across the road from the lido, as chatty and positive thinking as ever.

Impervious to the chill, taking life in her stride – she had three children – and always a keen church choir member, she will be sorely missed at both pools, loved equally for her indomitable spirit, curiosity and interest in everybody and everything and for her broad smile. As one friend put it: ‘she was so much fun.’

## Cabby Corner

*Ok, I know I said earlier that I am a former cabby but you don’t ever really stop being a black cab driver. And technically, I do have still have a Taxi License. You can’t drive the streets of London for nearly 13 years without accumulating a few stories about London and it’s people. If you’ll tolerate them, I will reproduce occasional ones from my old blog here .....*

## I’m from Tooting

*By Richard Cudlip*



my street - with the mighty Crown House in the distance

I’m not. From Tooting that is. But it’s where I’ve lived for the past 10 (now 23!) years and hope to carry on living for many years to come. Like many a Londoner, I have a slightly mongrel accommodation history. Born near Victoria coach station, brought up mainly in Lower

Morden, now resident in Tooting. And in between an assortment of sarf London addresses that include (but are not limited to) Battersea, Camberwell, Wimbledon Chase and Wandsworth Road. But fate, and cheaper house prices, brought me and Mrs Cabbie to Tooting, somewhere that I have since found out holds a few Cudlip connections.

My great Uncle Fred lived here for well over 50 years after his medical discharge from the war. It’s possible (but not confirmed) that he was born in Tooting as well, it certainly seems that his dad lived here at some point. Fred was a typically (for his generation) enigmatic figure who always seemed to pop up at family get togethers but generally kept himself to himself. When he died a couple of years ago, I found out all about his war record, something (of course) he never spoke about. I can’t remember which unit he was originally in, but he ended up in the paras after an incident with a stolen tank. Apparently, after a few jars, he’d persuaded his sergeant to have a bit of a spin in a tank that, strictly speaking, wasn’t theirs to play with. He’d then been given the choice of a bit of jail time or transfer to the paras. He chose the latter. He’d only been in the paras for about three weeks when he parachuted into Arnhem, got cut off from his mates and then literally, walked into a landmine. Left for dead, he was rescued by the Germans and eventually ended up in the Western Eye Hospital. It was from there that he moved to Tooting, after being encouraged to discharge himself due to his continual trips to local boozers with fellow patients. I’m not saying that Fred liked a drink, but the only times I saw him in Tooting he was always on his way IN to the Tooting Progressive Working Men’s Club, never on the way out. I hope he’s found a decent watering hole now.

My Mum also lived in Tooting for a while, although the exact details seem a little hazy. It’s one of those bits of family history that parents like to drop into the conversation in a casual manner every now and then.

Just a quick word about the title of this little piece before I go. I happened to be at home watching daytime TV some years ago (the perils of being self-employed) and got drawn into watching some sort of debate about multiculturalism. I don’t remember the show, or who was host, but I do remember one Rastafarian guy. Questioned, in the style of Paxman v Dizzee Rascal, about his heritage and roots his reply was simple and somehow perfect, “I’m from Tooting!”. To him, and we can all learn a lesson here I think, nothing else mattered. Not where he originally came from, or where his parents came from, but where he is right now. Wise words indeed, and all in all, I’m delighted to say I’m from Tooting too.