



Bec Chat Lines from the Lido May 2022

The Pool / Hannah Petch

Letter from the Editor

By Hannah Petch: hannahpetch1@gmail.com

It's been an exciting past few weeks at the Lido, with temperatures warming up and lots of Easter festivities to enjoy, there's been a real buzz poolside.

On Easter Monday, the egg and spoon race took place with an exciting appearance from the Easter Dinosaur, as is tradition. Andrew Ingamells won the race. His choice of spoon was somewhat questionable, however, after a thorough investigation I believe the judges allowed him his win!

Coming up in May, we have the SLSC Summer Evening Aquathlon Series. You can enter one or all of the races in this series, suitable for all, whether you're a keen triathlete or you just want to have a go to see if you can do it. The four races are run under BTF rules (British Triathlon) and will have a BTF Technical Officer present.

Race 1 – 25th May
Race 2 – 8th June
Race 3 – 22nd June
Race 4 – 6th July

Entry is £26 per race, £4 SLSC member discount, £6 BTF member discount (you will need to show proof of membership). Head to the SLSC website for more info.

Happy Swimming!

Water Temperatures

The latest stats from David:

14th April: 10.5 °C / 50.9°F

16th April: 12.0°C / 53.6°F

20th April: 12.5°C / 54.5°F

26th April: 11.5°C / 52.7°F

Just as we thought we were heading into warmer temperatures...remember to always get out wanting more!

SLSC on Tour – 16 go to Loch Tay

By Susan Rentoul

At the beginning of March 2022 some intrepid SLSCers headed to Scotland by sleeper train, day train and car. One SLSC member, Clare McRobbie, moseyed over to Loch Tay from her new home in Dundee.

This was the third year that SwimWild's Alice Goodridge has organised the Scottish Winter Swimming Championships in Loch Tay Marina – the first year was in 2019, the second was just before lock down in 2020 (the six SLSC competitors who went had such a ball that they decided they MUST do it again) and after two years it was great to be back.

The SLSC team all arrived on the Friday – at various times of the day. And, of course, everyone had to have an acclimatisation dip. Plus, a great walk to a viewpoint high above the Loch – the area around Loch Tay is very beautiful, with snow still on the mountains to the north.

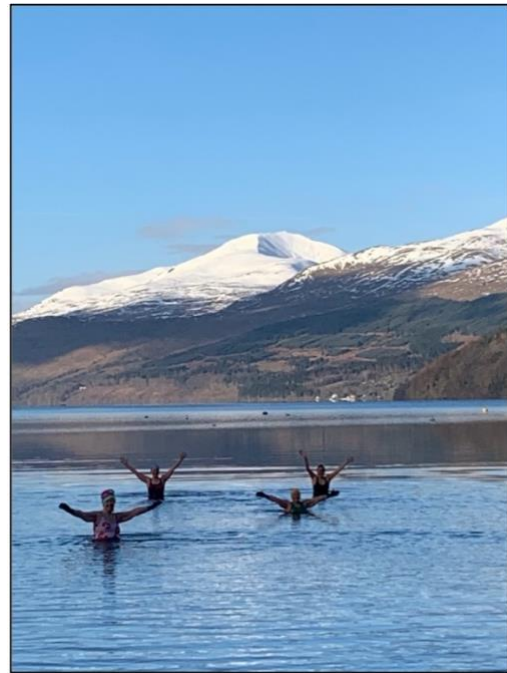
Clare had made a fantastic chilli for EVERYONE for the Friday night and we all squeezed into our rented cottage – with its outdoor jacuzzi (not everyone squeezed into the jacuzzi!)

On Saturday, the fun started with the 450m endurance, 50m breaststroke, 50m freestyle, 50m fly and competitive relay races. The SLSC team took part with gusto, helped by the SLSC rent-a-crowd cheering. The rent-a-crowd included Lizzy, Alan and Antonia – Lizzy and Alan got married at the Lido in the 2000s! – they now live in the Borders in Scotland and made the journey to Loch Tay to cheer the SLSC team on.

Medals were won! And were celebrated by the team at a great Scottish dinner in the village – Haggis balls and fish and chips – what could be better after a hard day's swimming?

On Sunday, the 150m breaststroke, 150m freestyle and the dressing up relays took place. One notable swim was by Mick Hinde – his one-armed 150m freestyle was a sight to behold – AND he won silver! The Golden Oldies relay team battled with their golden capes in the water and managed to finish before racing to the HUGE hot tub!

More medals were won and, after thanking the organisers who did such a wonderful job, a long walk was in order before the sleeper train people made their way to the station leaving the day trainers to have one more night before heading home on the Monday. Clare and her husband, Edd, had a slightly shorter journey back to Dundee!





Mick, not enjoying himself at all, in the hot tub with Pip, Deborah, Ann, Clare, Sue and Bernie



The Young Guns relay team – Mick, Lorraine, Vanessa and Clare



The Golden Oldies relay team – Sue, Ann, Pip and Julie

Medals!



THE SLSC team – Charlotte, Bernie, Deborah, Ann, Julie, Pip, Clare, Lorraine, Sue, Vanessa and Mick

The SLSC supporters – Debbie, Lucy, Alan, Antonia and Edd

Sad News

We are sad to announce Len Allen has died.

SLSC's very own Olympic wrestler and Commonwealth Games bronze medallist, Len Allen, died on Monday 11th April 2022 at St George's Hospital following a stroke.

He would have been 90 years old at the end of May.

Len's funeral will be held at 11.20am on Wednesday 18th May at Northeast Surrey Crematorium, Lower Morden Lane, SM4 4NU. Wake to follow at Morden Brook Pub (TBC) opposite crematorium entrance.



Len at the Lido in 2018 wearing his official blazer from the Commonwealth Games in Perth in 1962. The bronze medal that he won at the games for welterweight wrestling displayed around his neck. He was very proud of the fact that he could still fit into the blazer 56 years later.

A Dip in the life of...Len Allen

A previous interview with Len by Flavio Centofanti (24/02/20)

"You've got to fulfill your full potential – everyone's got a talent for something."

I'm ashamed to say I've been coming to the Lido since 1994 and yet can still be surprised by the treasures it holds. Len Allen is an Olympian and winner of a Bronze medal in welterweight wrestling in the 1962 Commonwealth Games and has been a solid member of the Tooting Bec 'Outdoor Swimming and Physical Culture Club' (something else I knew little about) for 65 years! He comes every day at lunchtime to meet up with friends even if an injury stops him from swimming. These days, his group of friends – Roy Wise, John Wigglesworth and Dennis Smith – is getting smaller. But Len's magnetism is unmistakable. It was a real pleasure to interview the man who one of his fiercest opponents later called "a sportsman and a gentleman".



Tell us a bit about your early life and family.

I was born in 1932 in the East End of London. My family consisted of Mum, Dad and one brother. We moved out of London to the St Helier Estate – this must have been around 1935. I attended the local school (Tweedale) but was known as 'Number 10'! War was in full swing with bombs meant for the local hospital going astray and boys I knew were killed. A lot of school time was spent in the air raid shelter singing songs!

Tell us a bit about your career.

I started work at 14, a 7-year apprenticeship in lithographic printing. From the ages of 18 to 20 I was in the army doing national service. Then I went back into printing and worked with several firms in London.

What was it like being in the army just five years after the war had ended?

The Korean War was in full swing. It was a place I definitely didn't want to go. I was in a Field Survey Unit – we printed maps.

When did you first start coming to the Lido?

Back in 1955, before the days of gyms and sports centres, places where you could train with weights were very few and far between. I heard of this club at the Lido. It was not a swimming club but to be a member you had to swim through the winter. That's how I became a member of the Tooting Bec 'Outdoor Swimming and Physical Culture Club'.

Tell us more about this club.

Our club is quite small now and not very organised but at one time we had about 30 members. As well as the weights and the equipment, we had a strong judo section as well as boxing. We also had running races. I was the first to run the London marathon – the first London marathon in 1981. Actually it's quite embarrassing – I finished two places in front of Jimmy Saville. I shook hands with him but if I'd known then what I know now I would have boxed him one.

How many members have you got now?

Actually the last couple of years we've grown. Quite a few women have joined and a couple of men. We welcome new members.

How has the Lido changed over the years?

The pool is much cleaner than it used to be. In the winter it was never filtered at all. It was thick brown water with things crawling about and they emptied it just once a year. This was in the 50s and 60s.

Tell us about Len the wrestler – how did it all start?

On resuming civilian life in 1953, I heard about this wrestling club in Norbury so decided to give it a try. I was not an immediate success – you win a few you lose a few, you make sacrifices, you have disappointments and if you're lucky you come out on top in the end. I was lucky.

Tell us about the highlights of your wrestling career.

By 1962 I was representing England in the World Championship in Toledo, USA and in the Commonwealth Games in Perth, Australia where I won a bronze medal. The last honour I wanted was to become an Olympian – this I achieved in Tokyo in 1964.

What gave you drive and determination?

It's the desire to fulfil yourself. As a sportsman you've only got a short span of time, after that you've got to find something else to do. But you've got to fulfil your full potential – everyone's got a talent for something – because you only get one chance and once it's gone, it's gone.

What about the mental challenge?

When you go into competitions, you do get nervous, there's no two ways about it, but you get used to being nervous – it's all part and parcel of it.

And despite the competition, did you make friends?

People who are your fiercest enemies become friends later in life. I'm still in touch with some. Albert Aspen for instance from Bolton. Also Joseph Malexi from Hungary, great chap. One of my fiercest opponents was George Farquhar, a Scotsman. He hated and wanted to kill every Englishman. I met him in five championships – he won two, I won two and we drew one. In later life, George was in charge of the National Scottish team and they came down to London and as he was introducing me to one of the up-and-coming wrestlers he said "This is Les Allen – he's a sportsman and a gentleman". I was choked up, for him to say that after all we'd gone through. It still gets me now.

Any other memorable moments?

At the 1964 Olympics I was in the dining hall. You get a lot of people asking for your autograph. This little boy comes shuffling along with his tray and says: "Do you mind if I sit next to you?" He asks me questions about myself and after a while the conversation dries up, so I thought I'd better ask him some questions, so I said: "So what are you doing here?" and he said: "I work for my local newspaper". "Did you ever do any sports?" I asked him. "Oh yes" he said "I was an athlete [...] in the 1936 Olympic Games." "And how did you get on?" "I won four Gold medals." I knew straight away who it was. We had a long conversation – he explained to me that his name wasn't Jesse, it was John Charles (J.C.) Owens. So that was the highlight of the Olympic Games for me!

Is professional wrestling very different?

I don't knock them. It's entertainment. They practice doing what they're doing. People love it, my Mum used to love watching it. What we did was 'Olympic Freestyle Wrestling' – it used to be called 'Catch-as-Catch-Can' in this country. In France they called it 'Lutte Libre'.

What advice would you give to your 19-year old self?

I don't believe in having regrets. You've got to do things while you can. I cycled across America – from San Diego to Brunswick, Georgia – at the age of 68. Now I'm pleased I did it. There were about 20 of us and I was the only Englishman there. It was a nice feeling of accomplishment. Before that in the 1980s – it was the year of the miners' strike in fact – I cycled from John O'Groats to Land's End with Greg Jaskiewicz. That was good too, though we both fell off our bikes!

What do you enjoy doing most now?

I work out in the gym every day, I try to improve as a musician playing the trumpet and flugelhorn (I've played with Jonathan, Vince and Jawad) and I swim at the Lido, which is still a great place in spite of all the changes.

What do you get out of your music playing and do the neighbours complain?

Immense pleasure and yes they have done!

What is your most treasured possession – your medal?

Well yes but the most important thing is my health.

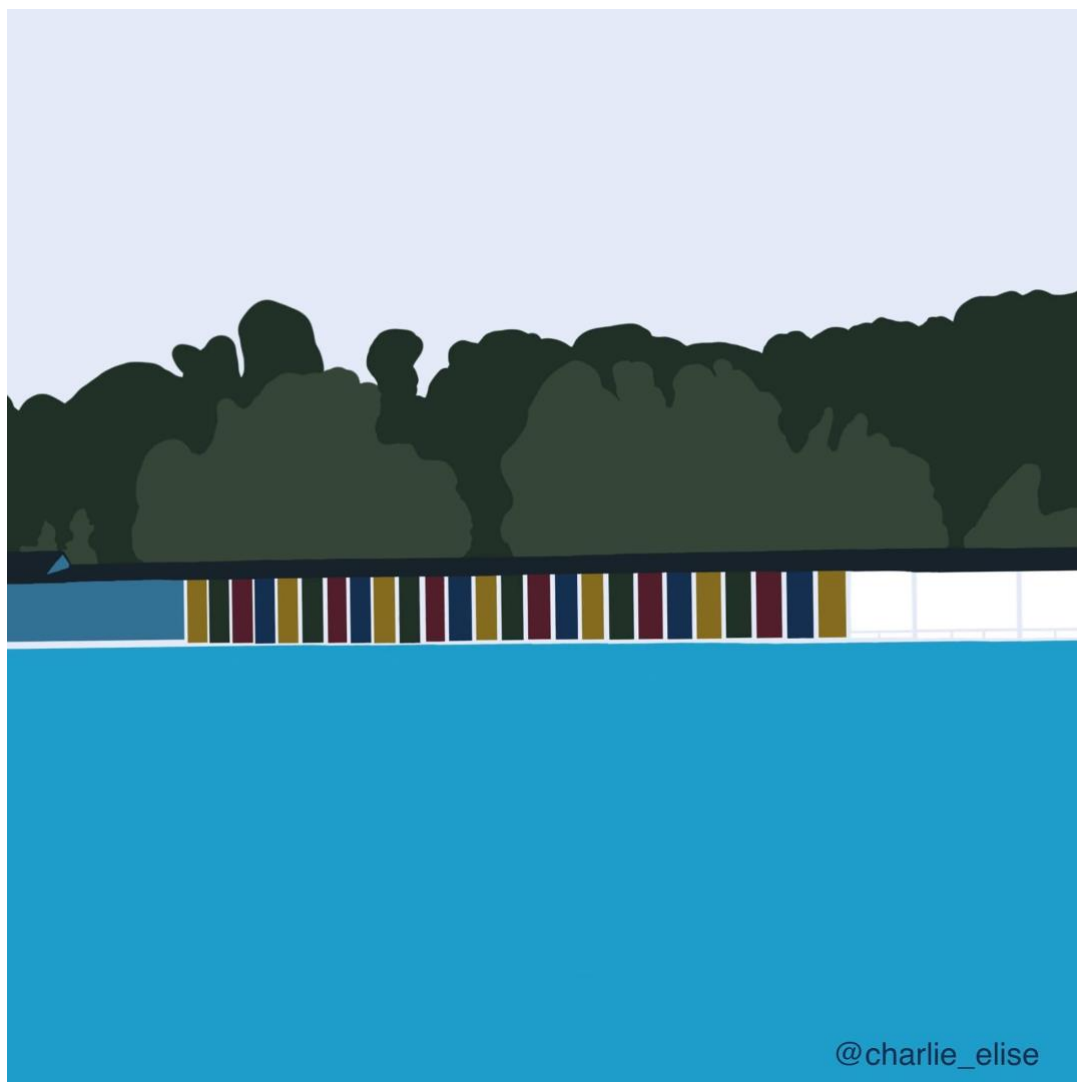
I know you like poetry. Can you name a favourite poem?

'Laugh and the World Laughs With You' by Ella Wheeler Wilcox. Also 'The Highwayman' by Alfred Noyce.

What's been your motto in life?

You only get out of life what you put into it.





*Digital Picture of the Lido / Charlie Eastabrook
Charlie is sadly leaving us on the 6th May – she'll miss the Lido terribly but the Welsh Sea calls!*

DICK WITTINGTON AND HIS AMAZING GOOSE



Tickets
available
on the SLSC
website
soon

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SAVE THE DATE!

Promenade performances on **17, 18 and 19 June 2022**

At **Tooting Bec Lido**