

NOT SWIMMING

Narration (Tot Foster): Learning to swim was important, it was dangerous living near water. John O'Neill.

John O'Neill: Because of the location of Hotwells on the edge of the river, people did get drowned and some of the boys in Hotwells got drowned. People were not forced into learning to swim but encouraged.

Pat Baker: Our poor Roy fell in as a little toddler when the kids threw in a chain and brought him in that way. Oh yeah. They survived.

Narration: It wasn't surprising there were accidents; you didn't need to pay to swim in the docks. Pat Baker, Derek Gay and John O'Neill remember.

Pat Baker: It was a playground swimming in the docks.

Derek Gay: My dad was a natural swimmer. Him and his brother used to swim in the harbour in amongst the ships, they used to get covered in oil.

John O'Neill: You used to be swimming in the river and finding rather strange objects which you had never ever known about float past you whilst you were swimming. We used to go swimming in the nuddy. The usual thing was to swim across to May and Hazel's old timber yard I think. But yeah I've been chased a few times. You could see the police launch coming down the river, so we were way out into the river so we swam back and we were going like crazy, no clothes on, and the police were only sort of yards away. So out we get onto Hotwells Road and this is a Saturday afternoon, we were covering ourselves up running down through the people. "Hello missus" someone said, "hello Tom, hello Jack", you're speaking to everybody or acknowledging everybody, anyway we got recognised. So before I got home, the police had already paid a visit, as I went through the door I had a smack.

Mike Britton: I probably can't swim.

Narration: Schools had a responsibility to teach kids to swim.

Mike Britton: I used to come to Jacob's Wells swimming, or in my case trying to avoid swimming. I never went to school on the day that swimming was going to take place and it was always the first lesson so I was lucky. I would leave home, climb up onto Brandon Hill, see the coach arrive, all the children from my class and at the end of their

lesson they would be coming out with wet hair, damp costumes and towels. I would come down over the steps from Brandon Hill and join the queue at the end. No one ever tumbled that my hair was not wet or my costume was not wet or towel.

Narration: That was Mike Britton, he still doesn't swim but his family on the other hand...

Mike Britton: Well my wife taught swimming and we have three daughters who all swam for England and Becky got into the GB team. And they now have children of their own and they're all in swimming clubs.