

SWIMMING

Gloria Winter (read by Lori Streich): All my family swam at the baths and I took my daughter there swimming, from when she was about three months old. She loved it and she would scream if I took her out of the water. Lift her out, scream, put her back, stop screaming. I had to get someone to help me get her out of the water, I'm so pleased that the group are restoring the baths for the people of the area, so much has been destroyed and I'm so pleased that the swimming pool is going to come back.

Narration (Tot Foster): The words of Gloria Winter. Even after forty years since it closed, much of the original workings of the swimming pool are still in place, hidden. Jeff Mogg has come to see them. His father, Tom Mogg, worked at Jacob Wells for more than twenty years ending up running all the baths in Bristol.

Jeff Mogg: The boiler house, it's fantastic. And this is the main water tank from Jacob's Wells.

Judy Goldsmith: Your dad modernised, we did have huge coal boilers here. All these pipes, they are original.

Jeff Mogg: Yeah and that would have brought the water to flow through to the swimming pool and then into the filtration plant and then back again.

Narration: The swimming pool was used extensively by schools. Liz Darcy and Julie Hardy.

Liz Darcy: I went to St George, Brandon Hill. So we came every week with the school, I can remember we had to kneel down along the edge and the teacher inspected our feet for verrucas. I enjoyed coming to the baths, so we did the personal survival, jumping and diving, most of us learnt to swim. We didn't quite have the knitted swimming costumes but they were very heavy, as you got out you had to haul your costume with you, not elegant.

Malcolm Hussey-Yeo: I was at Hotwells School and once a week we used to walk down the Hotwells Road, crocodile file, down to the Jacob's Wells swimming pool and that's where I learnt to swim.

Liz Darcy: I remember having lessons, swimming here. The man was rotund let's say, with grey trousers and white shirt open necked with braces and his sleeves rolled up. And he used to make us go round the edge on the bar and then he used to poke us with this, well I would

describe it as a boiler stick. Oh god, this is why I don't really like swimming.

Narration: Malcolm Hussey-Yeo remembers teaching methods too.

Malcolm Hussey-Yeo: Mr Barnard had a unique way of teaching people to swim, which was a canvas strap on what was a long length of sash cord. You would stand in the middle of the pool and he would put the canvas strap under your arms and then gradually pull you in and you would start doing breaststroke and you could do it eventually without the strap and you could swim.

Jeff Mogg: Wow, yeah this is the underside of the swimming pool. You put the warm chlorinated clean water in the shallow end and all the dirty bits went to the deep end, went down and got sucked out. And that is the main inlet to the swimming pool down there. This is the shallow end.

Narration: But people did come to swim for fun too. Liz Darcy, Clare McKeown and Malcolm Hussey-Yeo remember.

Liz Darcy: We knew everyone in the area, so there would always be a crowd of us swimming, often we would go back to a friend's house for toast and tea afterwards on a Sunday morning.

Clare McKeown: Well my best friend lived up the hill from the baths and her dad was the headmaster of Bristol Grammar School and so it was probably her nearest baths and so when we went swimming together, we went there. I do remember some quite hyperactive boys being in there and being a little bit scared of them, and I also remember this story of going in and at one of the attendance calling me carrots and somehow there came to be this apocryphal story in our family that I pushed him in the pool because I was so cross, because my hair was not carrot coloured but it was auburn. I do remember he looked like Popeye though.

Malcolm Hussey-Yeo: We also used to come here on a Saturday morning we loved it so much, but we always tried to come back in but the attendant always recognised us and refused entry. I will always remember him as being a very sort of militaristic chap, he had a little pencil moustache which looked very sort of sergeant majorist and he was very strict.

Narration: And when you got out, the fun didn't stop.

Liz Darcy: I remember changing on the side of the pool. If you caught your wet body with the curtain you would drag the curtain open and then everybody in the pool could see you.

Malcolm Hussey-Yeo: Somebody bet me that I wouldn't show my bare bum through the curtains, so being a bit of a lad, I did. But of course Mr. Barnard happened to be the other side, he threw back the curtains said "right you, you're barred" I think it was about four weeks I couldn't go swimming and I had 500 lines, so that was a bit of a lesson.