



In the swim

By Daphne Chamberlain

What makes an enjoyable visit to a swimming-pool? Cleanliness, maintenance and staff are most people's priorities. As the Finchley Lido users' co-ordinator, John Hajdu does have to report broken toilets, hairdryers and showers, malfunctioning lockers and cleaning issues, but says that work is carried out very quickly to rectify the problems.

Intriguingly, though, the Over 55s Users Group which John co-ordinates developed for a different reason. He noticed that nobody seemed to talk to anyone else. Most of the other regular swimmers were Seniors too, and he thought it might be nice to get to know each other. Eventually his campaign to greet and chat got going. John put together an email list, and people began to exchange news, check up on those who missed a few sessions, and welcome newcomers. Then they invited the Lido managers to meetings to discuss different issues.

Making waves

Their unofficial club became an official over 55s Users Group when, in 2007, Greenwich Leisure, who manage the pool, planned to raise the annual concessionary rate of £60 to over £200. John organised a petition and a letter, which resulted in Over-55s' season ticket holders being able to renew annually at the same price (plus a small inflationary increase), for as long as they continued to swim at the Lido.

Now the group meets every three or four months, and John also has one-to-one access to the pool managers. He told us that broken and sagging lane dividers were replaced at the users' request, and the group point out swimmers who are using the wrong speed lanes to the staff, who immediately take action. Every term John is shown the schedule for school visits, which he circulates among the members.



John Hajdu outside Finchley Lido Photo by Caron Westbrook

He says, "We now have a happy relationship with management and staff, who are grateful for our feedback and co-operation".

Glory of the old Finchley Lido

Readers continue to send us their memories of Finchley Lido. Here, Jake Eiseman-Renyard remembers the pool in the 1980s and 1990s.

Having been taught to swim at Park Road Pool in Crouch End, Finchley Open Air Pool was the second pool I ever used. It was like a day at the beach here in Finchley: the kids' pool being flat at one end, the wooden changing huts and people spreading out on the grass with towels to sunbathe and picnic. From here, you could see into the tennis courts next door; in the summer, there were always people playing there.

The kids' pool had quirks including lion fountains spouting water, and a waterfall display shaped like a staircase (where I occasionally saw a cat walking across the top). There was a concrete pipe by the pool with 'wheels' painted on, to look like a steam engine: probably not an original feature.

I was about seven when I first used the main pool. This also had fountains at one end, more conventionally-shaped this time. There was an exit-only path to the turnstiles, leading past a little wooded garden, which I preferred to leave by as it was so scenic.

Even as a kid, I wasn't pleased with redevelopment proposals. We'd all heard talk of an indoor pool; we didn't want an indoor pool. The whole point was this pool was outdoors, and many locals saw no sense changing a good thing. Sadly, the lido was closed in 1992, and by 1996 the site was redeveloped into the Great North Leisure Park that we have today.

Although my first job was at the multiplex cinema there, I still wish the old lido had stayed. I know this will probably never happen, but I dream of buying up the site one

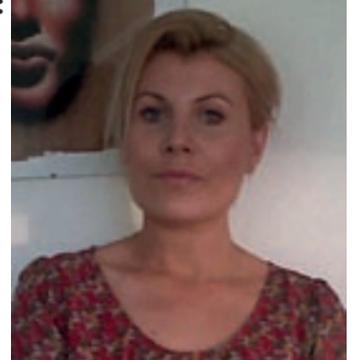
day and rebuilding Finchley Open Air Pool, restoring it to its former glory.

Every penny counts

Justyna Riley, of Leslie Road, is taking part in the Cancer Research 5km Race for Life on 27 May and she's hoping for your support. She writes:

I'm a mum of eight-year-old Leon and eight-month-old Alice. This will be my third race for Cancer Research. I have decided to raise money for the charity because my mum suffered from cancer. Also I think that it is very important to help others and their families. It is a great cause and can help to find new ways to prevent, diagnose and treat cancer.

I'm hoping to raise more money than ever before and would like to ask the local community to help me to achieve my goal. Please support me by going to my profile and donating money at www.raceforlifesporsome.org



Justyna Riley is running for Cancer Research.

[g/justynariley753](https://www.facebook.com/justynariley753). All the money goes directly to Cancer Research and every penny counts. Thank you very much for your support and kindness.

Green fingers but white cauliflowers

By Sheila Armstrong

When winter turns cold, bitter winds blow and snow threatens, what is a reporter to do? Go south, of course. This ARCHER reporter was happy to turn in a southerly direction even though the destination was only Regents Park.

At the end of January, North London gardeners, allotment holders, and anyone who could hold a fork or shake a stick turned up in their droves to a recording of the popular Radio 4 programme *Gardeners' Question Time*. It was chaired by the evergreen Eric Robson who was ably supported by a panel of well known gardeners, on this occasion Chris Beardshaw, Chistine Walkden and Bob Flowerdew. The whole thing got off to a good start with a delectable buffet served by The Royal College of Physicians who hosted the event.

Brassicas have long been

a preoccupation with certain members of *THE ARCHER* team, so when the opportunity to ask a question about how to keep your cauliflowers white arose this reporter was at the front of the queue (answer: you bend the leaves over the curd or flower so no light gets to it). As well as questions from the audience from pomegranates to plants for shade, other items included superfoods, a report from a recent plant-hunting trip to Chile by Christine Walkden and the regular feature "weather for gardeners".

All this was recorded with minimum fuss by two technicians, the producer Howard Shannon, the panel and the long serving chairman with efficiency and good humour. We were additionally lucky to be in the Royal College of Physicians, one of the few modern buildings on the Outer Circle in Regents Park, designed by Sir Denys Lasdun in the early 60s, and not normally open to the public. A great evening all round.

Holy Trinity Church Church Lane, East Finchley Church of England

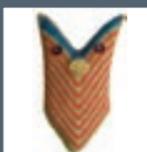
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