



Open swimming: One of the Hampstead ponds

## Stay safe! Top tips for cold water swimming

Last month **Jane Revell** wrote about the joys of cold water swimming in the ponds on Hampstead Heath. Here she gives some practical tips for anyone thinking of taking the plunge for the first time.

There's plenty of useful advice about cold water swimming online, so do a bit of research. I am no expert but here are some things that have worked for me. And remember, it's always wise to check with your doctor before taking to the water for the first time.

### Getting ready

Take regular one-minute cold showers to get your body used to the shock of cold water. Do this in the days or weeks before you actually swim. Have very short showers to start with (10/20 secs), in *cool* rather than *cold* water, and gradually increase the time while decreasing the temperature.

### Getting in and swimming

What you wear can make a difference. Although most winter swimmers just wear ordinary swimsuits (as opposed to wetsuits), many of us also wear neoprene socks and gloves, and a hat (rubber or pompom!), because your extremities tend to feel cold first.

But make sure your socks and gloves are easy to get on and off, especially off. You really don't want to be hanging

around in the cold after your swim, struggling to liberate your feet and hands.

Avoid diving in headfirst: get into the water gradually but confidently. Control your breathing as you enter the water; slowly breathe in through your nose and blow out through your mouth a few times. Then glide off and take your first strokes. Exhilarating!

Acclimatise. Have short, or very short, swims to start with, and build up progressively over time. Don't feel you have to swim huge distances. However short your swim is, it's going to do you good and make you feel great. Staying in too long will always make you feel colder afterwards.

### Getting out

Get warm quickly! Dry off and get your clothes back on right away, especially on the top half of your body and your head. It's sensible to leave your clothes ready, turned the right way out.

If you do feel at all cold, get your body moving: walk briskly, jump or do some physical exercise. Having a hot drink from a flask is a good idea too. Enjoy!

## Players return to stage

After two years being unable to perform to live audiences, the Guild Players return this month with a production of *Mary Shelley*, a drama-packed account of two years in the teenage life of the author who wrote *Frankenstein*.

The show runs at Finchley Methodist Hall, Ballards Lane, N3, from Thursday 31 March to Saturday 2 April at 7.30pm each night. Tickets are £10. More details from 07938 232027 or [www.guildplayers.org.uk](http://www.guildplayers.org.uk)

#### Notice of name change

I hereby declare that I will be changing my name from Khaliq Ur Rahman Mohammed, as shown on my official Indian passport, back to Mohammed Khaliq Ur Rahman, as shown on my original birth certificate.

#### The Archer online

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# Saddle up and travel to the ponds on two wheels

Are you ready to extend the buzz of swimming in Hampstead Heath ponds by getting there and back under your own steam? Or perhaps you just fancy a leisurely ride through tranquil streets to watch others braving the open waters. Either way, **Greta Brambilla** describes the best route to take.

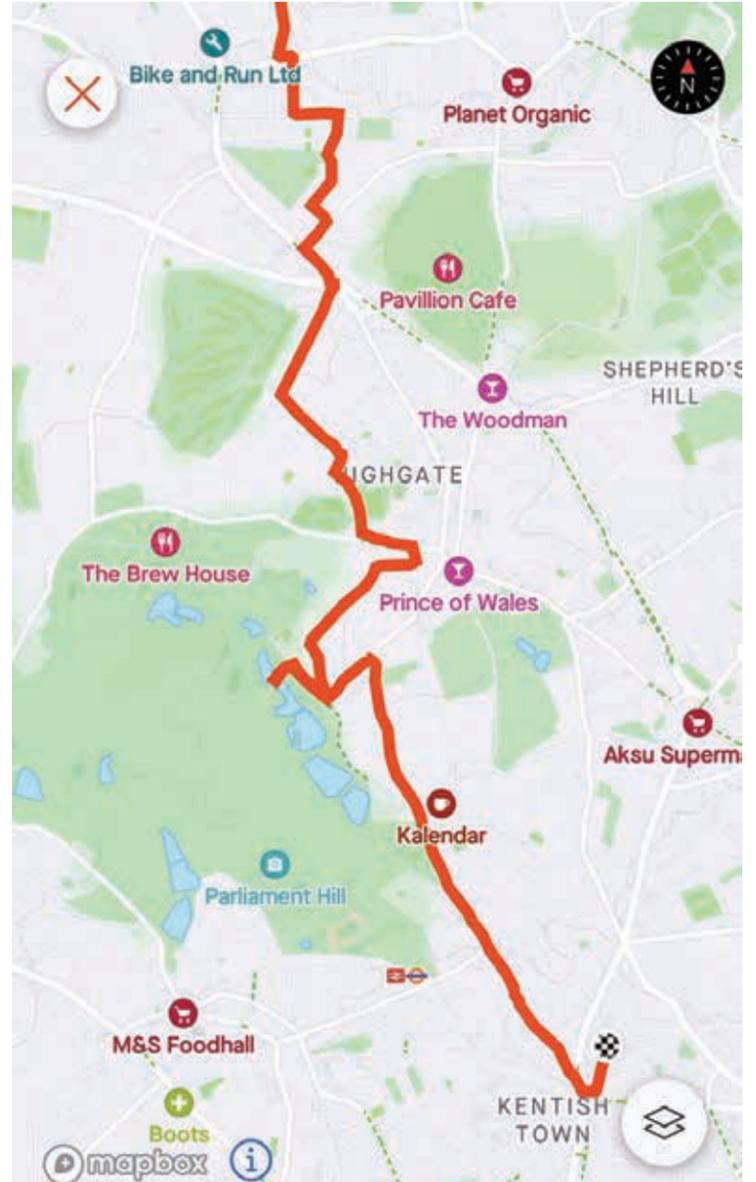
This time, we're enjoying a long leisurely journey to the beautiful, tranquil Hampstead Ponds (and back). The whole ride should take no more than an hour and a half. At this time of year I'd advise packing your most insulated swimming gear, even for your feet and hands – you'll probably need it!

Starting from Fortis Green in East Finchley, head down Springcroft Avenue, then left onto Southern Road. Dismount at Indigo Walk on the right and walk down onto Fordington Road. Follow that to the right, turn right at Woodside Avenue, then cycle over the bridge and turn left onto the Great North Road (or walk the short distance) to reach the crossing over the A1 to Sheldon Avenue. Cycle up the gentle slope of Sheldon, then take a left down peaceful Denewood Road, one of my favourite stretches. This is still uphill but manageable. At the end, turn right and then left, past Highgate School.

You will then reach Hampstead Lane, where you turn left for a short but steep section up to Highgate. Before reaching the village, turn right into The Grove and a short distance down on the right hand side you'll see a hidden entrance with a gate into Fitzroy Park, which is a right of way for cyclists.

Keep your hands on your brakes as you follow this idyllic private road all the way down to the Heath, then follow the directions either to the women's pond (sharp right) or men's pond (straight on).

Brave a refreshing open water dip if you can manage



Cycle and swim: The route to the ponds and beyond

it – you'll be invigorated for the rest of the day, I promise! Make sure to get dressed quick and jump back on your bike to regain some warmth.

Now head back to the end of Fitzroy Park where you can retrace your route home or alternatively take a right onto Merton Lane, then down West Hill to pick up a cycle path into Kentish Town for refreshments and then a ride home through Tufnell Park and Archway.

## Sustainability always starts small

By Chris Stavrou, of N2United

The N2United February gathering was its first of 2022, and drew local residents, interest groups and businesses again to the East Finchley Constitutional Club for a meeting focussed on sustainability.

Maxine Klein, of No2PlasticsN2, discussed strategies to avoid the use of plastics, including opting for a shampoo bar to eliminate the need for plastic bottles. Maxine also explained the Five Rs of plastic reduction, those being Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repair and finally Recycle.

Emma Frampton, who has started the Bin There, Donate That project to reduce waste by donating your unwanted items to local collection points in East Finchley, spoke passionately about how unwanted items lying around your house might actu-

ally be wanted somewhere else.

Emma is looking for help with researching organisations that need our unwanted things, and also in finding local shops that will act as collection points for them.

Refill service People's Pantry has been running since August 2021, and co-founder Lisa Jones discussed how they remove the dependence on single-use plastics. Their repurposed milk float Ernie is at Cherry Tree Wood on the first Saturday of every month, where you can get household and pantry essentials ready to

refill from gravity and scoop dispensers.

### Get involved

If you want to get involved with East Finchley's environmental sustainability journey, visit [N2United.co.uk](http://N2United.co.uk), or join our next meeting.

The focus of our next meeting, on Thursday 10 March at 8pm at East Finchley constitutional Club, will be support and collaboration between community groups and local business and will feature updates from current projects, including the upcoming East Finchley Festival.