

The Lido

In the late 1920's the London County Council (LCC), encouraged by the success of the 6 Lidos they had already built, offered London boroughs the chance to build their own Lidos with a large subsidy from the LCC. Hackney first investigated the idea in 1928 and after some initial disagreement over where the lido should be situated (at London Fields or Hackney Marshes) an agreement was made between the LCC and Hackney Council for its present site on 9th July 1930.

London Fields Lido c. 1939

The original 165x66ft Lido was wholly different from what had gone before. It was the earliest surviving example of its style with an advanced filtration plant, a tiered water aerator (fountain), a large sunbathing area, a refreshment kiosk and a first aid room. Designed in house by the LCC (probably by Rowbotham & Smithson) along with its twin at Kennington Park, which was opened in 1931 (closed 1988). The cost of building at the time was estimated at £10,870. A bargain price even in those days. The Lido first opened in 1932 and remained open until the war. It reopened in 1951, the year of the Festival of Britain that celebrated recovery from the war, until its closure in 1988.

In 1963 the LCC was expanded by the government with their addition of the outer London boroughs, becoming the Greater London Council (GLC). At the time, it was denied that this was only a way to prevent Labour's continual control of London. The London suburbs had inexorably expanded into the surrounding countryside since the initial formation of the LCC in 1889.

The GLC was responsible for all London Lidos until 1973 when they were given to their local borough councils to run. In 1978 the younger children's paddling pool was added, which we were latter to discover was very poorly built. While at the same time the original fountain in the Lido was taken out, with the excuse that it was "to make an additional sunbathing area". An alternative reason that was whispered was that the water source for the fountain was diverted to the Paddling pool.

In the 1980's there were numerous cutbacks in government funding to councils. Because swimming and other leisure facilities (like municipal parks) are not a legal requirement for councils, it is one of the first items to suffer cutbacks at times of funding shortages. By 1986 Prime Minister Thatcher abolished the GLC, the services previously provided by the GLC were carved up between central government, the boroughs and a new set of London-wide bodies. Leaving a lack of integration of services and a further burden for the councils. Of the 68 Lido's and open-air pools in the Greater London area at the time, there was eventually to be only 10 surviving in use.

With only two full-time staff (most Lido lifeguards at the time were part time or casual) London Fields Lido was easy to dispose of. Its eventual closure in 1988 was due to a severe lack of funds brought on by Government funding cuts to most councils. This was a period when many council swimming facilities up and down the country were finding difficulties with funding maintenance, basic overheads and staffing. (See facsimile of original council report Appendix A).

To quote the LBH officers excuse in their 07/12/89 report, "The pool did not open in 1988 due to a shortage of staff available, triggered by excessively high vacancy levels in the indoor pools". While the outcome of this officers report was, "It is proposed that the pools and buildings be demolished and be put back to grass" and "The proposals in this report for the demolition are made in the present difficult financial position and the case for approving funding for the pool in future financial years will be difficult to justify against other projects providing an all year round facility". The council officers had produced a dismal, negative report, playing on all the existing weaknesses of this poorly maintained facility, with very low entry fee and its consequent low income. That was apart from all the youngsters who would "bunk in" over the wall.

The London Fields User Group, in concern formed a Lido sub-committee. We produced an alternative report for the council showing how during the very short season of its opening the running costs are comparable with those of the other Hackney pools and how the community could pay a vital part in running the pool.

By this time the larger, very popular and relatively close, Victoria Park Lido had been closed and bulldozed to make a car park. The London Fields User Group was furious at this report and started a campaign against the closure of the Lido. We found wide support for the campaign among the public and many of the councillors were canvassed for support. It was decided that we should write an alternative report to place before the full council. An alternative report was prepared by Mike Martin and eventually we agreed on a final draft. Permission was sought and granted to distribute our report to all the councillors and John Drummond one of our group was allowed 5 minutes to speak to the full council. John was later to become a councillor for Hackney. The council decided to halt any demolition and to call for a feasibility report. (See facsimile of our original report Appendix B).

As ever the wheels of council bureaucracy kept turning slowly and this decision did not get carried to the demolition contractors. Shortly after this decision was made we were informed at short notice that the bulldozer would be at the Lido 7am the next morning. A small group of us turned up just in time to stand in front of the bulldozer and stop the demolition,

while another one of us chased off to get a local Councillor, Tony Allen to confirm the new council decision with the council officers and contractor. It was a very close call.

In the summer of 1992 a team led by Strategic Leisure Ltd. was appointed by LBH to carry out a consultancy study into the Lido. The team consisted of: Strategic Leisure Ltd. (management consultants); Gibson Hamilton Partnership (architects); Hoare Lea & Partners (consulting mechanical & electrical engineers); Brian Moorhead & Partners (consulting structural engineers) and Gardiner & Theobald (quantity surveyors). The feasibility study and report, costing over £9000, was completed for August 1992. Later that year an ugly corrugated iron fence was erected all around the empty Lido. This remained for many years despite our protestation.

The London Fields Lido sub-committee not satisfied with the procrastination of the council continued with the campaign. By 1994 they started collecting signatures on another petition for the re-opening of the Olympic size open-air swimming pool. In August a stall on Ridley Market, all decked out with pictures of swimmers and pools, balloons and swimming paraphernalia attracted many signatures. The stall was kindly given for the day by the Ridley Road Traders Association. Over 500 signatures were collected making a total of over 1000 signatures at the beginning of this campaign. The total of signatures grew and grew but to no avail.

In 1996 further government funding cuts reduced available money in parks down from £3 million p.a. 5 years before, down to £1.9 million. Parks and leisure facilities not being statutory became the first to loose funding. All this time the sub-committee was looking into alternative ways to finance this facility, outside of council control; all the development plans and proposals were turned down. Some children were using the nearby canal as an alternative open air pool in summer with the threat of catching Wiles disease. This valuable facility was still under threat of being destroyed. Eventually, we managed to extract a promise not to destroy what exists of the Lido

We went out and did a survey of local opinion and got a "thumbs up" from almost everyone. We had won the battle against the bulldozers and a halt on its destruction until an alternative plan could be produced. The results of the feasibility study confirmed the integrity and substantial quality of the basic buildings. The basic tank of the pool was pronounced to be solid with just the expansion joints between the three base slabs requiring re-corking with new mastic. We wanted to completely refurbish the Lido, making a lively multi-purpose complex. Giving it heated water; a fold out roof enclosure for the pool in winter or bad weather; possibly Solar Heating and a Sauna; a weight training gym; a hall for aerobics; a cafeteria and taking in the grassed area with trees to the West of the Lido to have a further sunbathing area with picnic tables. Among our many contacts we had support for various sport uses, including a sub-aqua club, canoeing, water aerobics and water polo.

Peter Stechman, who has great experience in the management of swimming pools in Camden and was a pool campaigner, assisted our Lido sub-committee, to produce a working programme for it's reopening. He came all the way from South West London to our meetings. Carol Drummond played a major role in co-ordinating the support for the pool and sent out hundreds of letters, to bring support, offers of pool plant spares, proposals, architectural plans and drawings.

In 1997 it became known that Hackney had benefited from a windfall from the National Lottery Sports Grants, potentially of several million over 2 years. Councillor Peter Snell notified us that this money had to be bid for and that we would have to get our ideas together fast to stand a chance of a Sports and Leisure development in London Fields. And so a meeting was called for January 7th. Peter Snell was responsible for most of the organisation and chaired the meeting.

The meeting was called to present the ideas of the London Fields User Group and its Lido sub-committee for sports and leisure development in the Park. Also, we had in mind the needs for local schools and other young people for better sports facilities. We wished to present these to as many local people as possible and hear their responses and comments. It was well attended with 30 members of the public, Councillors Peter Snell, Neil Hughes, Chris O'Leary and Philip Pearson, plus council officers Michael Gabe (Area Parks and Amenities Manager), Shaun Dawson (Assistant Director Education and Leisure), Ian Morgan (Parks Co-ordinator). Peter Stechman, our pool expert attended.

In 18th Feb. 1997 another Public Meeting was called to support our bid. We had over 30 people attending. Ken Belton the consultant assisting in the Lottery Bid attended and gave us a realistic assessment of the possibilities for gaining what we wanted. The User Group gave full voice to the details of what we required from the Bid. We were informed that the Lido, in the existing economic climate, is most unlikely to achieve a positive bid, even with all the plans and improvements that have been proposed. Therefore, it is necessary to come up with both support from other groups and clubs and further proposals for this unique facility. Again we got nowhere.

A proposal was made to clean the Lido so that the space could be used for community events. And so permission was sought to have a clean up. Mark Williams and Lynda Thoroughgood coordinated the cleanup and distribute 3,000 leaflets around the area. The leaflet proclaimed "Come to the London Fields Lido CLEAN UP! This is a chance to have a look behind that corrugated iron fence by London Fields West Side and see what they have been hiding from us. We need volunteers to hack down the Buddleia Jungle that is now strangling the Pool. Sat. & Sun., 28th and 29th of June, from 10am. until we finish. A skip will be provided. Bring tools and appropriate clothing."

People were excited about the success of London Fields Lido CLEAN UP on the 28th and 29th of June. With nearly 80 people turning up on the weekend the Buddleia Jungle was cut down revealing the full extent of this Olympic sized Lido. The years of dead and rotting leaves were swept and shovelled up valiantly. One lady of 84 had brought her own broom from her tower block flat opposite the site, to give a hand. The skip provided was soon filled, while a pile of full bin liners grew rapidly besides it. Drinks and refreshments were provided by local people between helping with this project. A great bond of friendship and good will grew between everyone who was involved. One unknown Councillor complained about us getting permission to do this.

The following weekend, July 12th and 13th, found even more people who came to help. With the council shredder we were able to reduce all the boughs and branches to manageable chips, filling further skips. Over 180 people came along on the 4 days. It was a magnificent effort. But there was further rubbish to clear.

Mark and Lynda of the Lido sub-committee organised the 3rd community clear up. It took place on the weekend of November 1-2 in conjunction with National "Make a Difference Day". The event was again well attended, with over 40 people turning up to finish the job of clearing out the remaining rubbish left in the pool. The Media was well represented with Liz Earl from GMTV, the Hackney Gazette with another positive photo article, while Lennox Lewis's coach turned up to see the work done and the potential of the Olympic Pool. He thought that the opening of this Pool would be exactly what the Youth of Hackney required. A local Councillor who attended was surprised at the size of this facility and angry that it was allowed to get into such a poor state of repair. This reflected the common thought of all the people who had not seen it before. The weather stayed fine and the objective of completely clearing the Pool of 8 years of debris was finally accomplished.

With the pool cleared we now asked for the corrugated iron to be removed and the pool secured. So by Mar. 1998 the fence was removed, the windows boarded up and painted (blue) and razor wire placed at the top of the perimeter wall. The ground around the Lido wall has been cleared, showing bare patches where the piles of dead leaves that accumulated behind the corrugated iron and had killed off the grass. Rolls of turf arrived to lay on these patches. While a suggestion was made for drifts of narcissi to be planted on these areas later in the year. It was looking good.

The Lido began to be used again. We held an event for Yellow Pages/CVS "Make A Difference Day" on Wed. 29th July, in the Lido. This had tremendous support. Although Ken Livingston was reported to be attending by the Hackney Gazette, he was unable to make it on the day. In his place Annabel Croft, the TV personality, gamely stepped in to the empty pool dressed in a 1930's swimming costume. Our local copper, PC Edgar, generously assisted Annabel out of the pool later, which made his day. For a number of people this was their first sight of the large (Olympic size) pool.

Of course, the main reason for the effort was to keep up the good work that started the previous year, keeping the Lido clear of weeds and rubbish. They only managed to fill one skip this time. Carlos Cortez, an LBH officer, supplied 6 large brooms, plenty of gloves and paintbrushes.

Among the people attending were 2 of the 3 partners then running the Brockwell Lido, who were examples for anyone reopening a Lido on a business basis. Supported by Lambeth Council, they ran their pool profitably 3 months a year. All the way from Plymouth were two organisers for the reopening of their Tinside Lido. Another supporter from the campaign to reopen the Enfield Lido also attended. All of them saw the London Fields Lido as a viable public amenity and pledged their support.

Many others came along, including Councillor Hettie Peters, Sarah Vaughan Roberts of the Hackney Society, council officer Brendan Wells (Strategic Commissioner for Urban Regeneration) and Jackie MacKenzie (Renasi Regeneration).

By Aug. 1998 the Lido, which has been empty for 10 years and cleaned up by the community, then got squatted. Taking advantage of the community's hard voluntary work they lived in the changing rooms, using the Lido as an Entertainment Venue, charging at the gate. With amplified music, coloured lights, food and drinks for sale. A leaflet for one of these raves stated an entry charge to benefit "Reclaim the Streets". The handful of people actually living in the Lido (5 or 6 only) appeared to be merely a front for the people organising this Profitable Venue. The interior was certainly not how we left it. We were informed of the poor state that the Lido has got into since the squatters broke in and how buddleia has started to grow from the remaining root stumps, with piles of empty cans around from the raves.

Some of the squatters came along to our meeting. They assured the meeting that they did not want to destroy community property and supported its refurbishment. With the squatters in occupation at the Lido, the license giving to the User Group greater control of the facility could not be used by us for community events and was lost.

By 1999, with all our efforts worrying the council to see progress, the council had proposed another feasibility study. Matthew Lloyd, of Matthew Lloyd Architects, represented one of the groups of people who made a bid to act as Consultants for this Feasibility Study for the regeneration and development of London Fields. Another bidder was Jon Aldenton of The Environmental Trust. They were our preferred bidders as they both wanted to have full consultation with local people and users, and they had come to our meetings previously informing us of their projects. Unfortunately like

previous development plans for London Fields this Feasibility Study was not consummated. We are told that there is still money reserved for this study but somehow there is a lack of will to make a decisive decision to proceed.

Now Matthew Lloyd offers to speculatively produce plans and ideas in cooperation with The Environmental Trust for the future development of London Fields (including the Lido which is such an important part of this future for us). They are also skilled in obtaining funding from all diverse sources, from Europe to the private sector. The Environment Trust had been responsible in this way for the development of the Mile End Park. A development that has been widely commended as an imaginative transformation, based upon the ideas and initiative of the local people and users. We were delighted at the offer.

We were invited to hold a discussion with Matthew Lloyd Architects and The Environmental Trust. Mike, Lynda and Paul represented the User Group and Matthew Lloyd and Jon Aldenton made their presentation. Their proposal was to go into Partnership with the User Group for a Feasibility Study for the regeneration and development of London Fields including the Lido, with full consultation with local people and users, but on a speculative basis. We were told of the various imaginative projects they had both been involved with and how they were willing to begin negotiations with various officers in Hackney and possible sources of funding the project.

We held a meeting of the User Group to discuss these proposals. After a short discussion the meeting unanimously agreed to this partnership. At this difficult juncture in time, this was the only positive proposal that could possibly bring regeneration and development to fruition. We had nothing to lose and everything we had been asking for to gain. Our proposed Focus groups could then become advisory groups in the developments.

In April 2000, we were invited to a meeting by the council, held at Renaisi (the Hackney development agency). This was a meeting that that we had been trying to get organised for over a year, concerning the future development of London Fields. Mike and Lynda represented the User Group, with Jon Aldenton and Matthew Lloyd negotiating on our behalf with the council. We had a very positive meeting. Kevin Sugrue the head of Renaisi who offered support and said he would be willing to look for part funding of the Fields development, provided that we obtain permission from Hackney Council. We then had to arrange a joint meeting with Kevin Crompton the Director of Learning Leisure.

On Friday 26th of May, Mike and Lynda attended a meeting called by our Partners Jon Aldenton and Matthew Lloyd. This was also attended by Danny Clark of Sport England, the lottery funding distributor; Christine Double the Project Manager of North and East London Sports Network; John Hodson of Renaisi and Andrew Westcott and Keith Hellen of Hackney Learning & Leisure. The meeting was called to discuss the possibility of using our Lido as a 50 metre training pool and obtain sports funding. We could not get into the pool directly but viewed it from above from the tower block nearby.

Christine Double said that the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) had identified a national shortage of 50 metre training pools. There is not one left in the whole of the northeast London quadrant. We were told a few local authorities in the area were looking for funding to build a new 50 metre training pool from scratch for the proposed Olympics Games in London. Picketts Lock, on the River Lea at Edmonton, was one possible site for the London Olympics at the time; but had negative attributes with the reported dioxin fallout from the nearby Edmonton Incinerator. The Hackney Marsh area has been proposed as another possible site for the Olympics. Hackney had an Olympic sized pool and was doing nothing with it. Christine saw great potential in our Lido site but London Sports Network did not do funding, it only assists in the development of sports.

Ken Livingston the new London Mayor at the time was said to be interested in the Lido for training as part of the proposed 2012 Olympic Bid for East London.

Lynda had been investigating and comparing swimming facilities in the London Boroughs and had also been doing a survey on the transport connections to London Fields. This helped to place the meeting in a perspective. Showing London Fields to be in easy reached by bus and train from virtually any part of North and East London. This all reinforces the arguments to use the Lido as the North East London swimming training centre.

The Hackney Council officers first told us that they were about to make an appraisal on the future development of the London Fields Lido. This, they said "would be a proper assessment this time". Knowing how we have been given the run around so often in the past we took this with a pinch of salt. Eventually they informed us that the reopening of the Lido would be raised on the 30th of May in a report about the possible closure of the Haggerston Leisure Centre. The report calls for an Options Appraisal Study for Haggerston. But all the options given, from the sale of the site (a grade II listed building), to the possible reopening of London Fields, are fashioned to depriving the people of Hackney of Leisure Facilities. Anyway, the officers of our almost bankrupt council admitted they could not afford to refurbish Haggerston in the report. So they certainly couldn't reopen London Fields, which on previous costings would cost more than the £395,000 quoted for Haggerston.

This shows the options appraisal as an expensive sham, as they have no funding for any option. Because of this, the Shoreditch New Deal Trust are proposing the obvious and asked the council to allow them to run the Haggerston Pool for

local people; pursuing non council funding. We supported the SND Trust proposal for Haggerston as the only realistic option; but could not accept the equivalence given with London Fields, which is in a totally different league in quality swimming terms.

We had been asked to wait for this pseudo report up to the end of the year. It was obvious to us that this was another non-option. We had been through empty promises before. The last time we promised 5 feasibility proposals 2 years ago, from various organisations. The 2 best proposals were chosen but not proceeded with in spite of the funds being available at the time.

The Environment Trust and Matthew Lloyd Architects, were supporting us on a no win - no fee basis. Our only other option at the time was to form a Trust in the hands of local people, with funding coming from charities and other sources. We hoped to get more support from our Councillors to bypass the stubborn blocking tactics shown by their officers.

By Nov 2000, Keith Hellen, one of the officers responsible for analysing the possible viability of reopening the London Fields Lido, reported their positive proposals had gone through committee, and has been passed. The report was favourable to the refurbishment and upgrading of the Lido facilities using the former council yard next to the pool for some of this development. It was proposed to retain the 50 metre pool, primarily as a long swim sub-regional training facility for the North East London quadrant (one of 4 for London proposed by Sports England). This would still leave plenty of time and space for leisure swimming.

There were also proposals for an all weather sliding roof and possible dry training area suitable for other sports. Ian Hook, the newly appointed Director of Community and Learning (formerly called Learning and Leisure) was then discussing with KPMG, the top accountancy and finance advisers, about sources of funding. But, all these proposals and reports amounted to nothing while Hackney Council was economically bankrupt.

London Fields User Group and the Environment Trust visited London Fields Primary School on Monday 7 July to discuss difficulties with pool provision and access to sports in the area. This was organised by Lynda Thoroughgood, followed by the children drawing and colouring Olympic Flag of all nations to celebrate sport. This was in preparation of our event on the Fields. Headmaster, Ken Glazier, gave his full support to the proposals and lent sports equipment for our event. Mr Glazier pointed out that "London Fields School used to have four swimming lessons per week and a morning swim club - sadly, lack of facilities, meant that there is now only one lesson".

On Saturday 12 July 2003 we held the special event on London Fields in support of reopening the Lido. We called this 'SwimTime @ London Fields'. This was organised by Lynda and helped by Robert Spender of the Environment Trust, who had done so much ground work in writing the Lido proposals. The colourful flags were displayed with various events for the children. We had produced plans for the Lido's development with our partners, The Environment Trust, Matthew Lloyd Architects and Market Sports who had joined us as the management side of the equation. The purpose of the day was to show the potential of the Partnership's plans for reopening this valuable community asset. While an architects model of the scheme was on display. This model was later displayed at the Hackney library, Mare Street. (See SwimTime report Appendix C).

The extent of the community involvement and overwhelming level of support on the day showed how much residents and users of London Fields wanted their pool back. Over 1000 people were introduced to the plans for our Lido. Among the most popular activities were the heavily subscribed guided tours of our Olympic sized Lido site, with agreement of the squatters in there. 160 people were shown around. It was a real team effort. There were many volunteers, local organisations and council officers to thank for making the day, and we received a number of apologies and good luck messages from Council members, local community figures and partners who were unable to attend on the Saturday.

Haggerston Pool and the London Pools Campaign were there to publicise their activities: "People might think we would be in competition…but these are projects to benefit the community and to ensure facilities for all" said John O'Callaghan. He continued, "Everyone was very supportive of our campaigns and we fully support the plans to reopen the London Fields site - it's a good plan".

We organised a further meeting at the London Fields Junior School at Westgate Street (facing the Fields) on October 7th as a further introduction to this 50m Lido and the role of the London Fields User Group. A model of the design of the Lido was on display.

Ken Glazier, head teacher of London Fields, opened the meeting by telling of the difficulty in teaching swimming (part of the required curriculum for junior schools) and how reopening the Lido would solve this problem for many local schools. The children would be able to walk to the facility instead of hiring expensive transport and losing teaching time.

Mike Martin, the Chair of the meeting, gave a brief history of the User Group and the part they played in saving the Lido. Jon Aldenton of the Environment Trust, one of the proposed developers, went into further details of what developments were possible now. Brian Brinkley, an Olympic medal winner for swimming spoke about the extreme shortage of 50m pools in Britain. He compared the 17 remaining 50m pools in England with the 18 in Paris alone. Brian showed us his

medal and also answered questions along with his swimmer friend Paul Lazarus. We then had a break for refreshments, with a video show and people were invited to write down questions.

This was followed by a Question and Answer session with the proposed developers, Jon Aldenton of the Environment Trust, Matthew Lloyd of Matthew Lloyd Architects and Mike Martin of the London Fields User Group. Danny Russell, a regular swimmer in the audience, told us of her experiences with Market Sports the proposed management group for the pool. She had used 2 of their pools and expressed how well they were run with reasonable prices. We were pleased that around 70 people attended.

By Apr 2004 we heard that the council had rejected the Environment Trust proposals. We had had a long association with our partners. We had been discussing about park developments with the Environment Trust (an ecological developer) since 1996. This was when we heard about their work with the Mile End Park development. We had also been discussed proposals with Matthew Lloyd Architects since 1998. While Market Sports had given our Lido sub-committee management advice, as long ago as 1994.

We have seen the plans and read their costed rebuilding proposal for a 50m pool with gym (£2.1M), along with detailed management plans. We were delighted that they would be able to build and operate at no capital or revenue cost to Hackney Council. See the Environment Trust report (Appendix D). We had been through many months struggle to try and convince the Council to allow the redevelopment of the London Fields Lido. But we would have required their permission and a lease before we could start. We felt this was a real loss to the community and felt very dejected.

At that time, after 16 years campaigning since its closure, we had looked for all sorts of alternative ways in which this unique Hackney facility could be brought back into use. We had worked with many different experts, architects and Councillors as well as with previous feasibility studies. We have been in consultation with the local community and the various community groups about their varied requirements.

It was Nov 2004 when we heard that the council had decided to spend £2M to rebuild the London Fields Lido and bring this valuable facility, retaining its 50m pool, back into use. The fact that the council had so many problems with their other pools, particularly the Clissold Leisure Centre fiasco, obviously had nothing to do with this decision.

We were invited along with other swimming organisations as a local stakeholder in early November, for consultation with their architects, experienced swimming pool architects, who have designed pools all over Europe - S&P Architects and Interior Designers - <<http://www.s-parchitects.com/>>. We had prepared a list of proposals with a plan and were able convince the other stakeholders at this consultation to support us. (See our proposed plan Appendix E). The council's policy for community consultation amounted to one 2 hour session. They said they hoped to build the pool to open by spring 2006. And then we were left in suspension for months while the plans and decisions were being prepared.

The original council proposals appeared to be a return to the "original feel" buildings and layout but with heating. While a temporary winter roof would be an imperative for school use in term time and all year use. We were getting concerned and propose a consultative committee consisting of all the interested parties. (See our e-mail to Mayor Jules Pipe and Jessica Crowe Appendix F). This consultation never did occur. We asked local schools to support the roof proposal.

Eventually we were informed that the plans had been agreed and that the winter roof would be added the year following the pools completion. The total with the roof estimated at £2.5M. And when we did eventually see the plans (kept in the dark by the council as usual) at the end of Sep 2005, we found them dated Feb 2005 and were relived to discover that the architects had included practically all our proposals.

The Lido didn't get started at the proposed start time of Sep 2004. In fact it didn't really get going until Dec. There were various delays. See council Cabinet report for 29th Mar 2005 (Appendix G). And it certainly wasn't ready for the spring. In July 2006 we were told of further delays caused by the discovery of large quantities of asbestos on the site. Every one speculated how they could suddenly discover asbestos so late in the construction. We later discovered it was underground lagging around some of the old pipes. Finally our Lido reopened on Thu 26 October 2006.

The new pool is 17m x 50m, 2m at the deep end and 1m at the shallow end, slightly smaller than the original 165 x 66 ft (50.3 x 20.1m). The reduced width is to accommodate the reinforcing required for the seasonal roof that should be available for 2007. The water is level with the poolside and heated to a comfortable 25°C. The poolside café along with the parkside café (a roller shuttered window by the new entrance), are fully fitted and are due to be opened in 2007.

The new Lido Oct. 2006

We are now asking for our other proposal to be implemented:

A. Adding the grassy strip to the west of the Lido as a sunbathing overflow and picnic area, with about 6 picnic tables. This will probably be vital for a busy summer session. It was also proposed to have about 2m of paving in the set back section with benches against the Lido wall. While the panels in the brickwork would be ideal to enhance the lido by displaying public artwork murals. It definitely needs the high security fence we proposed as any youngster at the moment could climb in with ease.

B. And to build a keep fit and sports training building that would work so well with the Lido on the park yard next door. The health suite should offer sauna, steam room, solarium and treatment room. The gym area fitted with top quality cardiovascular and resistance equipment along with ample free weights. Also an aerobics area that can be used for various free exercise, such as yoga, Ti Chi, Pilates, dance etc., also allowing space for community occasions. It could fulfil everything for any sport or someone just wanting to keep fit for life.

C. Using a geological heat pump to use the earths free energy. This would be simple to add to the existing set up and consist of a pump, like a refrigerator pump but working in reverse, to circulate fluid through black pipes under the ground to extract natural ground heat and to add this heat to the water for the pool. <<http://www.heatpumpnet.org.uk/>>

Sources

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- www.c20society.org.uk/docs/publications/reports.html
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- www.playedinbritain.co.uk/