



## Newsletter of the Kenwood Ladies' Pond Association

### Welcome to the Autumn Newsletter

- Lucy Zanetti, Judith Perle and Cathy Peake

A lot has been going on this half year. Let's see what we have in the following pages.

### Wild Swimming Walks – Margaret Dickinson

KLPA members have been helping with the update of the Wild Swimming Walks book. We've enjoyed the company of women from the pond on interesting walks and refreshing swims. There have been a number of corrections found that will be part of the updated edition due out later this year. Thanks to all who have contributed by leading or joining a walk.

Margaret is working on a new Wild Swimming Walks book – Thames and West of London and she'd welcome any volunteers to help verify walks and swims.

If interested, please contact Margaret Dickinson [mdickinson@ndirect.co.uk](mailto:mdickinson@ndirect.co.uk).



- photo credit Lucy Zanetti ...whither we go



- by Laura McKendry

Laura Mc Kendry has provided us with some excellent drawings from her pond sketchbooks, more later.

We've had some good ideas come through for the up and coming celebrations. Why not join in and meet up on the days when there are merchandise sales, bringing your good selves and ideas. And if you have a recipe to try out for the recipe book... bring that along too! Or do get in touch, by emailing with the heading 'celebrations' before the end of December.

#### Dates for your diary

- December 21<sup>st</sup> – merchandise sale and meet up
- Christmas Day Swim
- New Year's Day Swim
- January 18<sup>th</sup> – Crisis Icebreaker event
- January 26<sup>th</sup> – Tea Party 3-5pm Holly Lodge Community Hall

The Crisis Icebreaker event for 2025 is being hosted at Parliament Hill Lido on Sat 18<sup>th</sup> January if you would like to take part [here](#) .

## KLPA Chairs' Newsletter Report

- by Pauline Latchem (Co-Chair) and Ruth Hallgarten (Co-Chair)

Welcome to the Autumn edition of the newsletter. It's been pretty mild so far, but we are now officially into Winter Swimming, with the rope in and the water temperature as we write at 8°. Cold water swimming has really taken off in recent years and the pond now sees a steady stream of women coming and going at all times, with peaks in the early mornings and at weekends. Further on, Carolina Bax shares a condensed version of her diary of swimming though her first winter.

The increase in the number of swimmers has put a huge strain on the changing facilities, plumbing and boiler, so there are more frequent breakdowns and the changing room is becoming unfit for purpose. The City are planning to rectify this and KLPA are working closely to ensure this does not impact negatively on the pond environment and water quality. We would hope to see more permanent outdoor changing space that provides shelter, whilst blending into the natural surroundings and we will keep members informed. Once the remedial works are confirmed, the pond is likely to be closed for around 2 months – we will endeavour to ensure that women only swimming is available elsewhere during the closure, hopefully at the mixed pond.

Socially we have held our regular monthly merchandise sales, a wonderful Equinox Breakfast event in September, and in October a pond meet up for swimmers to come and say hello, meet committee members and share any ideas or concerns. We want to make this a regular event, so the merchandise sales will become pond meet ups and chats.

Sadly, the annual swim and breakfast with male friends and partners, and swimmers from Highgate men's pond scheduled for the 24<sup>th</sup> November was postponed as the pond was closed due to gale force winds. We will reschedule. Thank you to committee members and volunteers who put so much enthusiasm and commitment into making KLPA

events enjoyable and welcoming. We also thank contributors to the newsletter, and Lucy, Cathy and Judith for their hard work in putting it all together. Take a break, fill up your KLPA mug with your favourite drink and enjoy reading it.



## Meet-Up by Ann Griffin (Vice Chair)

Wonderful winter sunshine spotlighted a patch of the meadow, for our first KLPA monthly meet up on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> October. A steady stream of swimmers braved the wet grass to gather on benches around a couple of picnic rugs and a table laden with snacks and an array of unclaimed lost property. As the water temperature was starting to drop and some were considering their first winter season, we shared tips and experiences at the pond, as well as re-homing some gloves and boots.

Thank you to those who dropped in to meet us and made this a great success. We will be holding these each month to coincide with the merchandise sales, starting in January 2025 – as part of a year of celebrations to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the KLPA. Come along to find out what is being planned and how you can join in. These will be informal opportunities to share your views about what works well at the Ladies' Pond and what could be better. This helps the KLPA to lobby the City of London Corporation on behalf of pond users.

### Special Anniversary Logo - KLPA Limited Edition

The KLPA will be 40 years old next year! Let's celebrate this milestone, starting with a new anniversary logo to be used on limited edition merchandise, and at our birthday events. This will not replace our lovely existing logo but will be used extensively in 2025.

To start the year, we would like to commission new silicon swimming hats, in a variety of colours and sizes, and a cloth swimming badge to sew on swimming costumes just like the badges you may have earned in swimming lessons at school.

The Brief – We would like a 40th Anniversary logo, for use on a cloth badge and neoprene swimming hat, which captures the 40th Anniversary of our special pond with reference to one or more of the following: the history, community, spirit, ethos or the nature at Kenwood Ladies' Pond.

1. Your designs should be max size A4, it can be colour but needs to be able to work in black and white. Final image size - 60mm diameter (cloth badge), 80mm diameter (neoprene hat).
2. Maximum three colours (note the neoprene hat logo may be produced in monochrome)
3. Reference to KLPA and "40" and / or 1985-2025 should be included
4. Must be original design not subject to any copyrights
5. Any merchandise sales from the silicon hats or cloth badges will fund 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary KLPA social events
6. The winning design will become the property of the KLPA for unlimited use in the future for publicity and merchandising.

Prize – Win a lifetime membership to the KLPA plus KLPA hats and mugs. The top five short listed designs will be made into postcards. The ten finalists will have their logos published in the next newsletter and their designs will be added to the KLPA archive to become a part of our history.

All applicants must either be a member of KLPA or a member's daughter/granddaughter/niece if under the age of 16. To become a member of KLPA please apply [here](#). Annual membership is £5.

Keep it simple so that it can be reproduced easily in different formats/locations.

All entries must be received by the 19<sup>th</sup> of January 2025. Please send digital copies to [klpamailbox@gmail.com](mailto:klpamailbox@gmail.com) entitled celebratory logo . Should you wish to send a hardcopy please contact us on the above email and we will provide a postal address.

- Mary & Cathy

### Pond Choir – by Ruth Hallgarten



- photo of the 'Sing for the Water' event

In 2015-2016 an informal, no audition required, free choir evolved at the Ladies' Pond. We met and practiced on the upper meadow, led by a Choir Mistress. We rewrote watery songs, such as 'Swimming in the Rain' (AKA as 'Singing in the Rain')

It was a lot of fun and we performed at several events, including the Art Exhibition the KLPA facilitated at the Orangery at Kenwood House. We individually raised money and performed at the 'Sing for Water' event for Water Aid.

If any musical director in our membership would like to restart this choir, please get in touch through the KLPA mailbox. Any interested singers send a note. It would be lovely to have our own song for the events planned for the KLPA 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2025 and the Centenary of the opening of the Ladies' Pond in 2026.



**Chatathon 2024** - by *Pauline Latchem*



- photo credits to Pauline

Jane Smith led another Chatathon early in October. It was an overcast but dry day, perfect for a hike over the heath with swimming stops along the way. Around 50 women joined, and Jane gave us all gold ribbons to mark the Olympic Year. The ribbons gave us free access to the Lido and Mixed Pond for our first and second swims. The group wended its' way over the heath via Boudicca's mound where we circled and Jane stopped to share some of the history and myth before continuing to the Ladies' Pond for a final swim and breakfast of shared treats. Women put names to faces, got to know each other a bit, and new friendships were forged. Along the way a male walker asked me what we were doing - I explained that the Chatathon is an alternative to the Duathlon, that rather than race and swim competitively wrapped in our own bubbles, we like to amble and swimble and connect with each other socially, he commented that it was a brilliant idea, and that perhaps the men should do something similar and that it could be good for their mental health.



Huge thanks to Jane for both conceiving and organising the Chatathon - we hope it will continue as an annual event for many years to come.

**Halloween**



- contributed by these three witchy women



Jane decorated the pond wonderfully for Hallowe'en - swimmers got into the spirit of things with hats and witchy treats.

**Swimmers Worldwide Unite!** - by Judith Perle

A few years ago, I noticed a piece in the newsletter about the Fearless Fishwives – a group of wild swimmers near San Francisco. Since I visit my niece there regularly, I got in touch.... And since then, they have taken me swimming in the sea several times (braving the tides, which I would have no idea how to fathom) and offering warmth and friendship besides. They have made my trips to California so much more enjoyable.

Then this Spring, I read about Heini Heideman's winter swimming group near Helsinki. That is one of my second homes – my mother was from Finland, and I visit every summer. I swim in the lakes, of course (everybody does), but now I have a new swimming friend there. The photo below is from my visit with Heini.



That led me to think about the joy of finding like-minded swimmers when I travel – and that led me to think about creating a KLPA Wild Swimming Directory, that each of us could consult when we travel. Could we create a list of 40 entries, to celebrate our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year?

Can you help? If you know of a group (outside the UK) who would be willing to share contact details, perhaps a short description and maybe a photograph – please do email us. Put 'Swimming Directory' in your subject line.



- painting credit  
Laura McKendry



- postcard from another of those faraway friends

**NEWSFLASH!!**

Spotted by our eagle-eyed roving reporter (aka lifeguard Jane)

A yellow KLPA woolly hat proudly displayed on a hatstand in the window of a Shelter 'pre-loved boutique' (aka a charity shop).... next to a ballgown and a pair of satin shoes in Upper Street!! Since then, the hat has been 'demoted' from the window to an indoor shelf (see below).

Our thanks to Jane for spotting the hat, and to the team at the Shelter Boutique (159 Upper St).



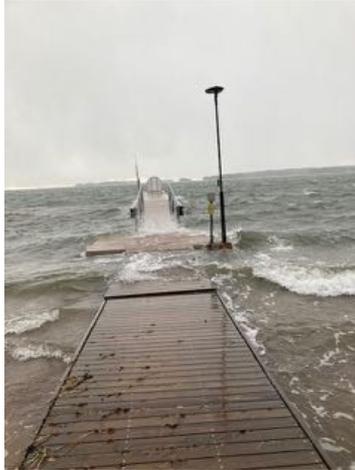
- photo credit Jane Smith

Any other sightings of KLPA hats in unexpected places? Send them in!

NB – One was seen on a plane to Berlin but I failed to capture it on camera. LZ.

**A Note from the North** - by Heini Heideman

Heini (see last newsletter) sent a report from Finland on November 22<sup>nd</sup>. They had similar or even harder winds than those that closed our ponds here this yesterday, today they had only snowfall!?

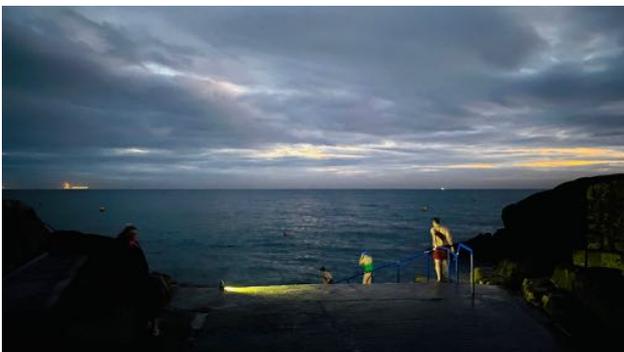


- photo credits to Heini Heideman

*Pictures from yesterday and this morning, yesterday we couldn't go on the pier, had to wade from the beach. We have never had such waves and high water!*

**A Note from over the Sea** - by Lucy Zanetti

Guess the location of this (very) early morning dip...



- photo credit to Ed Bazalgette

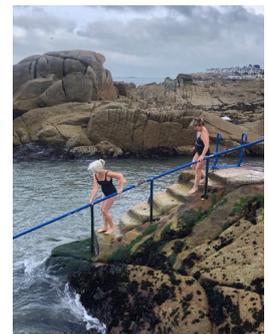
Some of you may recognise this spot from life – or the telly – with those Bad Sisters racing off to jump into the sea whenever they could. It's a bracing dip into the Irish sea with an ever friendly bunch of strangers shooting the breeze, keeping an eye out for each other. At any time of day there were people here, so in my experience swimmers are never alone. The four points of entry are around the promontory, of varying ease, starting with the beach at Sandycove, off the the back of the harbour wall (steps), around the corner at Caverner's, more steps, or finally at the Forty Foot with rocks to dive off, or for me, steps with a hand rails, tricky if the swell is big, but oh! the sea, gorgeous, being lifted by the crestless waves, swimming effortlessly, the sea life.

Sometimes there are seals (to be ignored) or jellyfish (to be avoided) or occasionally distant dolphins, but mostly just buoyant, salty water and the views. It's deep but not 40', apparently it's 20' at high tide. The stonechats hop along the rocks and the cormorants dive, popping up unexpectedly nearby.

There are many special spots to swim in along Dublin Bay, all of those I've swum in are lovely.



- photo credits to Lucy Zanetti



So yes, to the left here, it is the Forty Foot at Sandycove, Dublin Bay.

It's always good to receive tips from swim spots you've enjoyed, and even better if you have someone there keen to share their experiences, so keep them coming!



Newsletter of the Kenwood Ladies' Pond Association

## **My First Winter** - by Carolina Bax

*Swim 3 - 23 July 2023 - 18.5c*

Perhaps it's mad- but I'm going to try to swim through winter. The Whatsapp group has greeted this possible resolution with extreme enthusiasm.

*Swim 7 - 6 August 2023 - 18c*

The sun came out today, the heron posing at the edge of the pond, as I enjoyed some gossip snippets. I love watching first-timers guided by lifeguards to swim from one ladder to another. It feels like sharing a secret.

*Swim 11 - 10 September 2023 - 21.5c*

Arrived at 7:30am to avoid the heatwave crowds. I star-fished in the water, gazing up into the bluest of skies. Somewhat teary (it's been a hard week!) I met a woman called Rose, journaling in the meadow. Just before her, I joked to another swimmer, breast-stroking past a snoozing duck, about my 'job break-up'. She was going through a real break up - sobering! These meetings matter... I felt a little lighter when I left.

*Swim 16 - 14 October 2023 - 17.5c*

A perfect day, golden surroundings, so autumnal. I was the last to leave, one of three this afternoon, our multicolored heads circling endlessly. Stripping post-swim, a small green line appeared above my chest - algae.

*Swim 17 - 17 October 2023 - 15c*

Met Pauline very early for a lift - we arrived moments after opening, the pond both intimate and bustling with the morning regulars. The days are darkening too. We watched dawn from the water, colours changing slowly above us.

*Swim 20 - 1 November 2023 - 12c*

Repairs underway - we have all flocked to the men's to enjoy the diving board. I'm neoprened up for the first time. It rained very heavily- but still caught a glimpse of the gleeful smiles around me. As it poured, passersby looked on, incredulous. I felt like shouting - "Come on in! You'll feel so alive!"

*Swim 21 - 10 November 2023 - 10c*

The ropes are 'in', our swim capacity halved. Consuelo joined me - we had some excellent chats water-treading. An undressing tutorial was enjoyed

by all afterwards - particularly key was the emphasis on hot water bowls!

*Swim 23 - 25 November 2023 - 8.5c*

I now love the redness on my body when I emerge. I love how powerful I feel for the rest of the day. I love learning about coots and moorhen and crayfish, watching the seasons reflected in our trees and paths - muddy, iced over, hesitantly blooming.

*Swim 24 - 2 December 2023 - 4c*

Winter party at the Lido - the temperature halved in one week. On the way home I sat on the overground, giddy, dressed in four layers, thinking how odd it was to go from swimming in the dark, breathing cold breath out, jostling semi-naked, to being clothed and warm.

*Swim 26 - New Year's Day 2024 - 7.5c*

A distinct sense of cheer despite the icy weather. The lifeguards put up a Christmas tree; Jane played old school tunes on her portable radio. I watched New Year's dippers slip in, 'old-timers' share cake on the bench, a determined 10 year old swim after her mother, in her Christmas wetsuit. It felt natural today to climb down the ladder after a month away.

*Swim 30 - 18 February 2024 - 9c*

Today was a momentous swim. I bumped into Rose and Pauline, and as we looked out onto our misty 'unswimmable half, we caught a glimmer of blue and squealed simultaneously. A kingfisher sighting!

*Swim 35 - 3 March 2024 - 6.5c*

Lovely late winter swim today, though I forgot my boots and had to swim with bare feet. It will be strange to fully 'set them free' come spring.

*Swim 36 - 13 April 2024 - 11.5c*

I now think my favourite swims are the 'mid-teens'. They have the challenge of winter to look forward to, but the knowledge of shorter swims, and the nostalgia of warm swims where towels are surplus, but the pond is much less quiet. This in-between time is so precious.

*Swim 39 - 6 May 2024 - 14c*

The ropes are out. Light rain over the pond today, the first few chicks following their mothers happily. Gloveless and sockless for the first time in months. It feels like it's been forever - in some ways it has. I can't believe I made it through winter!

**Imagine a naturally filtered outdoor swimming pool...this time in Yorkshire-** *by Mary Powell*

Over the last few years, the KLPA has kept members informed about the East London Waterworks Park Project in Lea Bridge Road, and that project is currently trying to see off a rival planning application for the site. We will keep you updated on progress here, where free to access open water swimming is proposed.

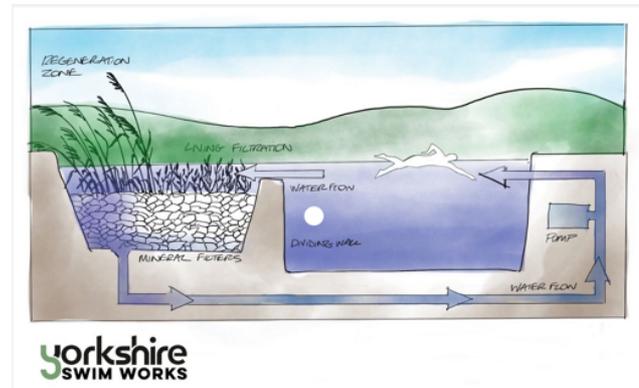


Initially in 2021 this community-based project was founded with the aim of purchasing a disused waterworks on Thornton Moor near Oxenhope to create a natural outdoor swimming space. They worked closely with Bradford Council (which made a grant of £4,500 for a feasibility study) and following wide community engagement went on to raise raised £65,000 through crowd funding in just 10 days. In 2022 they became a Community Interest Company. Unfortunately, at a public auction in 2023 they were outbid for the site by a private developer. The crowd funding donations were refunded but the project went on. A further grant of £10,000 was obtained in 2024 to carry out further feasibility studies, business planning and identification of alternative sites. Eventually a disused reservoir at Kettlewell, between Keighley and Bingley was identified. Negotiations for a long lease with Bradford Council, which owns the land, have commenced. Yorkshire Swim Works is now carrying out further community engagement and fundraising, to work towards a planning application for the site. They are hoping to start works at Kettlewell Reservoir in 2025.

The natural swimming pool to be formed in the disused reservoir is described thus:

*“The repurposed Kettlewell Reservoir will provide around 2000m2 of swimming water. A natural swimming pool is made hygienic without the use of chemicals. Swimming water flows through biological filters before reaching a*

*regeneration zone – where carefully selected aquatic plants and mineral gravel layers help to cleanse the water, providing a wonderful habitat for wildlife.”*



It will be somewhat smaller than the Ladies' Pond which is about 3500m2, and will be partly organised into lanes, as well as a more relaxed swimming area. This business plan does involve charging to swim unlike the East London project however and one of the facilities planned is a sauna. The intention is to rewild the site, and to run sustainable businesses on the site including a lodge. It will be accessible via local public transport links.

More information about the project can be seen here <https://yorkshireswimworks.com/>. This is an interesting project and hopefully the business planning model will ensure that swimming can be kept as affordable as possible. It is encouraging to see the local authority supporting this project. There is something about former waterworks emerging as sites for rewilding and open water swimming which seems very fitting, given the current degradation of our waterways being caused by the water companies.



**In memory of Vicky Joseph** - by Nicola Mayhew and Lucy

We are very sad to announce the death of Vicky Joseph, a much-loved and respected member of the Ladies' Pond community and former committee member of the KLPA.

Vicky was an extraordinary woman in so many ways. She was a campaigner and activist for a variety of environmental and other causes and, following the tragic death of her son Guy, founded a charity in his memory and worked tirelessly raising funds to help and support children in Nepal.



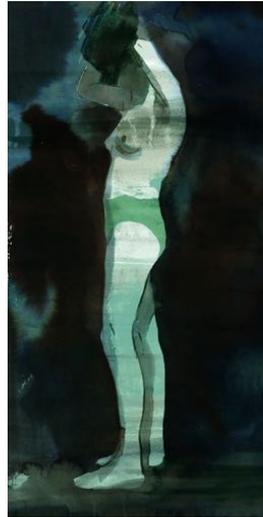
She was co-editor of the KLPA newsletter with Lucy Zanetti from the summer of 2020 and took on the task of updating the news bulletins on the KLPA website from December 2020 to August 2023. Above all she was a warm and vibrant personality and a good friend to many other pond swimmers through all weathers.

She will be greatly missed by many of us at the Ladies' Pond and we send our heartfelt condolences to her husband and family who have lost a loving wife, mother and grandmother.

Rest in peace Vicky.



**Pond Sketches** - by Laura McKendry



I'm an artist-illustrator and, alongside my paid work, I've been working on a personal project about the pond.



The project is ongoing and has evolved since it began in September last year, to become something more about the stories of the women who swim there, rather than, as I had originally intended, a representation of the space itself. Every woman I've drawn has shared their reason behind their pond ritual and so often this is borne from grief, ill-health, relationship difficulties etc. As you know, the pond offers a sanctuary for all of us in different ways. My intention is to continue to work on this for many more months, I would continue to welcome more women to get in touch if they would like to be part of the project.



## **Beyond the ponds: Wild swimming and yoga in Wales** - by Rachel Herring

I spent a sunny weekend in May combining two of my favourite pastimes, outdoor swimming and yoga at a River Flow Yoga retreat in Glasbury (near Hay-on-Wye). The weekend was led by Graham (yoga teacher) and his husband Matthew who ensured we were fed with delicious homemade vegetarian food and that post-swimming cake was in plentiful supply. There were eleven women (men are allowed!) on the retreat, staying in a former chapel which is comfortable, homely and full of art (Matthew is an artist and some pieces are his work). At the heart of the living space is a long table which is where we not only ate but chatted, getting to know each other over copious mugs of tea (great range of teas).

The first of four swims was a short stroll from the chapel in the River Wye and we were supported by a local guide, the water was warmer than I had expected but the current meant that although I was swimming steadily, I did not actually move far! We had the added treat of a mobile sauna parked up nearby, so we alternated dips in the river with nipping into the sauna. Energised and warm we changed into our yoga gear and headed to the nearby village hall for a session focusing on restoration and breathing practices.

Saturday morning began with Vinyasa based yoga practice, followed by breakfast, then a drive into the Welsh countryside and short walk across moorland to a gem of a swimming spot- Pant y Llyn lake near Builth Wells. It was a glorious day but we had the 8 -acre lake to ourselves and although there was bit of weed to negotiate (there was always a swim guide) it was possible to swim across the lake and enjoy the view of the surrounding hills. We headed back to the chapel for lunch and had a free afternoon which I spent in Hay's numerous bookshops. We then gathered for a yin yoga practice before dinner and later we strolled down to a different swimming spot on the River Wye for an evening swim in the beautiful waning light and as there was less of a current it was possible to swim further.

On the Sunday morning, following Feet Up yoga (new to me and fantastic) and breakfast we had our final swim in a lake on a camping site on a working farm), which again we had to ourselves. A 'mindfulness' walk at Begwyns was the perfect way to draw the retreat to a close - as we walked up the hill to the 'Roundabout' (clump of trees encircled by a wall) we were guided by larks - brought 'The Lark Ascending' by Vaughan Williams to mind. Not only did Matthew prepare us a lovely lunch before we set off but there was cake for the journey home. After a great weekend I left feeling restored and energised.

## **Sketches** - by Laura McKendry



**Remembering Janet Richardson** - by Chris Jude



It is with deep sadness that I'm writing to let you know that Janet Richardson, a regular Pond swimmer since the late 80s, died on Wednesday, 30th November after a long illness. Her children Victoria, Aaron and Zoe and her grandchildren were with her when she died.

Janet made her final swim at the Lido three weeks ago. But The Pond remained her first and constant love. Always an early morning swimmer, Janet would arrive with the wonderful Maisie - a black terrier with a brindled chest - lay out Maisie's rug on the same bench every day and after peeling off layer after layer of clothing, she'd take her joyous, solitary swim.

Fierce, feisty passionate and deeply kind. Janet had an extraordinary capacity to empathise with others. She was an unfailingly kind and compassionate friend.

She was a bold and courageous challenger and righter of wrongs. Her passions were education and mental health - she was a prison visitor at Broadmoor. She campaigned tirelessly against nuclear weapons and was a Greenham woman through to her core.

From Janet I learned boldness, how to say 'no' and what it means to demonstrate moral courage.

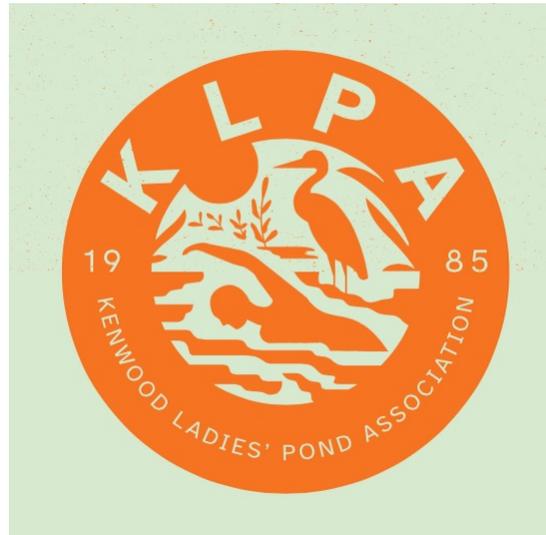
Our coldest swim was one November off the coast of Jura. We came home cold.

Janet ran me a wonderfully hot bath, the bath was huge, the water brown and peaty and up to my chin. She brought me a hot whisky. She cooked. We ate our dinner in front of the fire.

Celebratory, always generous, Janet.

Janet, best and dearest friend.

Chris Jude



With that we draw to a close and look forward to hearing more from all our members in the good times to come.