



Newsletter of the Kenwood Ladies' Pond Association

Welcome to the Spring Newsletter

- Lucy Zanetti and Naomi Peck

We'd like to welcome Naomi Peck, new committee member, joining me in producing your newsletter. I'm very pleased to have Naomi on board, an old friend with great publishing credentials – so watch this space!

It's getting warm now, 17° today, some ducklings, some missing, a heron, the KINGFISHER and plenty more have been making themselves known to the swimmers. It's hard to believe that we can share our pond so easily with nature, these birds hardly seem aware of us.

Curious about the flora or fauna at the pond? The lifeguards, fountains of knowledge (if not busy), happy to tell you all about it. I wonder if we could persuade them to help us identify the birdsongs? This year there seems more of a chorus than ever. I've been told that a nightingale was heard on the heath over the last few days.

You may have noticed the colourful presentation boards by the lifeguards' room, along with the temperature notice. These are filled with fascinating observations and insights to life at the pond.



- Board for Imbolc by Jane Smith

Imbolc is the 1st February, also called Saint Brigid's Day, and is a Gaelic traditional festival. It marks the beginning of spring, and in Christianity, it is the feast day of Saint Brigid, Ireland's patroness saint. A reminder of the colder winter swimming season.

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH THE CELEBRATIONS ? You may well ask... the new committee will be updating us through the noticeboard. At the moment we have mooted: a fête in the Autumn including a diving display by our members, recreating the old photos, a mosaic, making flag bunting, a choir, a pond art exhibition, artist's residency, a small film festival, over to you all... and here's Chloe's great suggestion:-

Celebrations - Chloe Harbour

“Dear Ladies,

I have an idea for part of the celebration at the ladies pond on 21st September (tbc).

I would like to propose to those who would like to, to take part in a promenade ribbon twirling dance around the pond and the meadow.

I work with ribbons on a regular basis and they emulate moving water beautifully. It occurred to me that if we had about 20 people all twirling blue ribbons it would make a lovely image and be fun and celebratory.

I can lead the promenade and show people how best to twirl their ribbons.

To give you an idea of ribbons moving there is a short video [here](#). I think it would create a lovely happening.”

Thank you Chloe. If you have any ideas, do write to us at the email below, or tell a passing committee member. We look forward to receiving more fun ideas from you!



KLPA Chairs' Newsletter Report

- by Judith Perle (Co-Chair) and Sheila Fitzgerald (Co-Chair)

As the new co-chairs of the KLPA, we're delighted to be talking to you in this, the first newsletter of 2025. We hope that the year will be a joyful one, as we celebrate our 40th anniversary and prepare for



the Pond's 100th anniversary next year. But perhaps we should start by thanking the new KLPA officers and committee and all those who e-voted for them. We say 'new' but in fact the committee now comprises a healthy mixture of old hands, fairly new hands, and novices (to the committee, not to the pond!). All of us are committed to enhancing our beloved pond in a myriad of ways – from lobbying the City of London to organising social events and raising money to fund our activities. Please join in!

This newsletter contains some sad news (two obituaries of veteran members) but also reports on joyous events and outings, a tale of derring-do by one of our wonderful lifeguards.... And much more.

As a keen birdwatcher, I (Judith) am delighted to see a story about ducks on the pond. If anybody would like to write a regular (or occasional) column about the birds we all see (but don't all recognise), do get in touch.

It may be a cliché, but it is nevertheless true. A committee is only as good as the members it represents, so please, stay active, take part in events, and share your ideas and suggestions for a strong and vibrant association.... And, above all, keep swimming.

Winter Tea Party - Lucy Zanetti and Pauline Latcham

January's winter tea party had a joyful vibe. BE performed her song *Swim Through*: The song was released on the 23rd May and the video will be imminently. More from BE to follow and during the celebrations, maybe another performance?



Nicky Mayhew presented a potted history of the pond with a wonderful slide show of archive photographs put together with support from Fiona Willis.



- Gillian Klein introduced by Ruth, former chair

Gillian shared her experience of swimming in the pond since 1965, giving us an insight into a long life at the pond with some funny anecdotes. This Spring Equinox Gill celebrated the end of her 50th year of winter swimming.

Individually, Nicky, Gillian and BE were wonderful. Taken together, the vibe was celebratory, uniting older and younger swimmers in their love of this special place that offers us all precious breathing space in a busy and sometimes crazy world.

We'd recommend coming along to any of the KLPA events where we have a chance to meet people in a warm atmosphere, often with tea and cakes!

Swim Through - BE



- photo credit Amy Reid

Back in November 2023, after a cold swim at Kenwood Ladies' Ponds, London-based independent artist BE found herself inspired by the quiet power of the women around her — diving into icy water, season after season. Empowered by their resilience and community, she penned what would become *Swim Through*, her latest single.

You might recall BE sharing a sneak peek of the track during her performance at the Winter Tea Party back in January. Since then, the project has grown into a nationwide celebration: over 60 women swimmers and collaborators — including members of the Paralympic Gold Medal-winning swim team and swimmers from the Ladies' Pond — have become part of the journey.

Swim Through is a love letter to swimming as metaphor and movement: a tribute to women who swim through adversity — both in water and in life.

With a music video featuring swimmers of the ponds set for release soon, BE invites you to be part of the wave. Add *Swim Through* to your playlists, and pass it on to your local swim circles and communities. You can listen to the track [here](#).



- BE on Spotify launch day

Pond Wisdom

We thought it might be nice to occasionally share some anonymous nuggets that have been uttered at the pond. If you have heard anything that made you smile and think “that should be shared..”, look out for a link to where you can send it, coming soon. Newsletter editors will check that comments cannot be identifiable and are in keeping with the pond ethos!

For starters – and echoing BE’s song’s message about swimming to overcome...

“If I’d stayed at home I’d have been in bed all day scrolling Tik Tok and feeling like shit. But I’m here and just swimming it out..”

For my mother and the love of the Great Lakes

- Sheila Fitzgerald

Water is the most feminine of elements, and the love of swimming – especially in natural spaces – flows naturally from mother to daughter. It certainly flowed from my late mother, Jean, to me. Growing up beside Lake Huron, one of North America’s Great Lakes, she swam every chance she got. As a girl in the ‘30s, when her parents forbid her from jumping into the icy, fast-running water, she’d pay her brother to push her in. Jean taught me to swim in those cold, clear waters; took me to beaches and rivers throughout my childhood; and, when I turned 50 and she was 84, swam with me in the Atlantic: never mind that she was in Florida and I was in Cornwall. Water forever connects us and holds us in its thrall.

My mother would have been 100 in November, and in August I’ll return to our home state of Michigan to swim in Jean’s memory, joining a 30-mile relay with three others, swimming from the mouth of Lake Huron down the length of the St Clair River. It’s part of a 411-mile relay to mark the sinking of the ship Edmund Fitzgerald and loss of her 29 crew members in the Great Lakes 50 years ago. (Canadian folksinger Gordon Lightfoot commemorated the tragedy in his song ‘The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald’.)

I’m much more a pond swimmer than an athlete, but this event felt too personal to pass up. Through my mother, I’m distantly related to the Edmund Fitzgerald that the

... continued.

ship was named after: our shared ancestors were an Irish immigrant couple who settled on the St Clair River in 1837 and raised six sons, all of whom became Great Lakes ship captains and builders — a tradition that continued for generations, right through to my mother's father, also named Edmund Fitzgerald, who ran a ship dry dock. Our family's connection to the freighter is a bit eerie: my first cousin Edmund Fitzgerald was born in 1958 within a week (and mere miles) of the Mighty Fitz's launch in Detroit; the ship foundered on November 10, our grandfather Edmund's birthdate.

Swimmers in this long relay are raising money to help preserve historic Whitefish Point Light Station — the most important beacon for vessels in Lake Superior — via donations to the Great Lakes Shipwreck Historical Society. I can't imagine a more fitting tribute to my mother than swimming in her beloved waters to commemorate the heroes of the Edmund Fitzgerald and help keep Great Lakes mariners safe.

Swimming with a Gadwall - Liz Valentine



- photo with permission from lifeguard

Many waterfowl migrate from more northerly climes where they breed to spend the winter in Britain. In November 2024 Hampstead Heath birders were excited to observe Wigeon, Gadwall and Pochard as well as the more commonly found Mallard, Tufted Duck and Shoveler on several of the ponds. Gadwall were seen on the Vale of Health, Viaduct and Thousand Pound Ponds but I was surprised when, in December, Jane (Smith) told me there had been one on our Pond. A few days later I was even more surprised and delighted to have my first experience of swimming with one.

Gadwalls are dabbling (as opposed to diving) ducks, which frequent shallowish, freshwater ponds and lakes with plenty of vegetation. They eat stems, leaves and seeds and will sometimes steal duckweed from Coots. The male has a subtle pattern of grey, brown and black ('vermiculation'). The female is somewhat similar to a female Mallard but lacks the distinctive blue 'speculum' (wing bar). Both male and female Gadwall have a black rear end and a white speculum. They are amber listed, i.e. it is a species of concern but not critically endangered. Some breed in southern England but the population is greatly increased by those overwintering here.



- Mallard duck by Maggie Jennings

In Memory of Liz Meadows and Hilary Paddon

- Nicky Meyhew and Pauline Latcham

It is time for sad news. We lost two pond elders in a short space of time last March.

Liz Meadows, whom many of you may recognise from Ruth Corney's fabulous photograph of her wearing Pearls at the Pond, died last March after a long battle with Parkinson's Disease. It is many years since she was able to swim regularly, but she will be fondly remembered by many swimmers and Olga Way shared great memories of Liz at the Winter Tea Party.



above Hilary
left Liz, Swimming in Pearls
by Ruth Corney

Hilary Paddon 1935—2025

We are sad to say goodbye to Hilary, one of the oldest swimmers at the Pond. Born in Wallington near Croydon to Cornish parents, Hilary maintained strong connections to Cornwall, where her grandfather was a lifeboatman. A natural linguist with a degree in Spanish and French from King's College, London, Hilary's passion for learning led her to learn the Cornish language in her retirement and promote Cornish Culture through City Lit and the London Cornish Association. As a young woman, her career path took her to the British Museum, the British Council and the United Nations, where she worked as a translator in Senegal. After setting up her own business as a translator, proofreader and tour guide, she also worked with the Government of Cameroon and in Ghana with the International Alliance of Women. Later she taught English as a foreign language in London. She settled in Highgate in the early 1980s where she lived for 20 years and started swimming regularly at the pond and served for a time on

the KLPA committee. At 60 she gained her brown belt in karate. In 2004 she moved to sheltered accommodation at Whetstone but even when her mobility declined she continued to visit the pond, by bus and mobility buggy. Poignantly, she swam on the morning she died, just a few weeks short of her 90th birthday.

Swim free, Hilary - your light will shine on in the memories of those who were privileged to meet you.

Morning Swim

- Maxine Kumin (late American poet)

Into my empty head there come
a cotton beach, a dock wherefrom

I set out, oily and nude
through mist, in chilly solitude.

There was no line, no roof or floor
to tell the water from the air.

Night fog thick as terry cloth
closed me in its fuzzy growth.

I hung my bathrobe on two pegs.
I took the lake between my legs.

Invaded and invader, I
went overhand on that flat sky.

Fish twitched beneath me, quick and tame.
In their green zone they sang my name

and in the rhythm of the swim
I hummed a two-four-time slow hymn.

I hummed "Abide With Me." The beat
rose in the fine thrash of my feet,

rose in the bubbles I put out
slantwise, trailing through my mouth.

My bones drank water; water fell
through all my doors. I was the well

that fed the lake that met my sea
in which I sang "Abide With Me."



Visitors from Belgium - Isabel Soenen

It was great, swimming in your ponds, it is really, really nice. Such a wonderful place. You are very lucky!

Thanks for welcoming us - and you are always welcome in Ghent for a swim.



- Ghent Swimmers in the Mixed Pond. I am the one with the green hat ;)

We are six friends from Ghent, Belgium, and proud members of the swimming club SOS Happy Bear. We swim in our local pond all year round, and after watching the beautiful Netflix film *The Ponds*, we knew we had to come and experience your ponds for ourselves!

In early March, after a long, grey winter, we were treated to three days of glorious sunshine in London. We eagerly took a dip in the Mixed Pond, as the Ladies Pond was unfortunately closed for maintenance. What an experience! The stunning surroundings, the unique local atmosphere, and the warm welcome we received made it

truly unforgettable. We loved it so much that we came back for another swim the next day!

Now we have the perfect excuse to return: next time, we -Isabel, Roos, Ann, Muriel, Tinne and Katrien - will be swimming in the Ladies Pond! See you soon!

Met vriendelijke groeten
Isabel Soenen

Swimmers of the World Unite! - Judith Perle

In our last newsletter, I suggested that we create a 'directory' of swimming groups around the world, to help us all connect with like-minded wild swimmers when we are away from home.

I must admit that the response wasn't overwhelming - disappointing, if I am honest. So - I am putting the call out once again. If you know of a group of swimmers (ideally wild swimmers, but we are broadminded, and can include pool swimmers too), please do ask them if they would like to be included.

Could we, I wonder, get together a list of 40 groups for the KLPA's 40th anniversary this year? We already have a relationship with groups in San Francisco, Australia, Chicago, Belgium, Finland and the Netherlands.

Where else?



Swimming at the Mixed Pond one by one.... [notice noticed by one of our swimmers!]

KLPA hits Margate by Storm! - Beth Feresten



As part of the KLPA 40th Anniversary celebrations, 26 KLPA members travelled by train for a day out in Margate.

The highlight was a swim in the Walpole Bay Tidal Pool, a first for many who joined. The water temperature was 9.5 degrees, with a strong sea breeze and plenty of sunshine to welcome us for a wonderful swim in the tidal pool. The Walpole Bay Tidal Pool was opened in 1937 and is believed to be the biggest tidal pool in the UK (encompassing 4 acres).

Many enjoyed a visit to the Turner Contemporary and lounging on the deck with views out to sea. Fish and Chips was the lunch of choice with a dessert of ice cream that few could resist on a sunny beach day.



For those wanting to give Margate a go, it's an easy train journey from London and if you fancy doing a walk, there's a 6.5 mile walk from Margate to Broadstairs in the *Wild Swim Walks* book with plenty of options for swimming along the way.



- photos above by Sarah Saunders



The consensus was that the group would like more outings and to perhaps do one for each season. If you have any ideas of where the KLPA could travel to next, please submit your thoughts to klpamailbox@gmail.com.

The Next Swan Story - Imogen Sharp

It's a little known fact that, if you're a swan, and you land in the lower meadow at the Ladies' Pond, there's no run-way, so you need to be helped to the pond for take-off.



Thanks to brilliant handling by lifeguard Kim, this one got into the air. The swan was so relaxed. All in a day's work for the lovely lifeguards - thanks so much! For the swimmers, it was Friday morning entertainment - and amazement.

"It's never nice to see animals in distress," said Kim "I'm always happy to assist them when they need help."

She learned how to handle a swan many years ago when a conservation ranger showed her and fellow lifeguard Nicola how to handle a goose or a swan when they tried to enter the bird sanctuary pond through the fence on the lower meadow. "The birds didn't understand that their body is significantly larger than their head, so they can't get through," Kim explained.

We're so lucky to have such expert and caring lifeguards, to preserve the human sanctuary that we all enjoy at the Ladies' Pond.

