

## Memories of Cowbridge Swimming Pool

by

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Cowbridge Borough Council decided late in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century to build a swimming pool. Building costs were always the first consideration but fortunately local benefactors gave their support.

The swimming pool was formed in a deep pool in the bed of the river and over a spring. The bed of the river was excavated and masonry was built on either side capped with material stone slabs rounded on the edges. The deep end was about 5 to 6 feet. The stone diving station was about 7 foot from the water with two lower ledges about 4 feet high. There was a masonry pyramid with three platforms.

The changing and storage rooms were very primitive, being constructed in galvanised corrugated sheeting on a timber frame. On the Aberthin side there was fencing in a similar construction which was about 6 feet high.

The shallow end of the pool had 12" x 3" removable planks which were slotted into the stone walls. The pool tapered at the shallow end to account for the planks which were fitted with recessed iron handles. In the Winter the water ran freely when the planks were removed and then in the Spring the planks were refitted in the stone recesses. Then the mud deposits were removed by hand. It took three men about a week. the mud was then spread over the adjoining fields..

The Annual Subscription was 2/6 for boys and young men, but no mixed bathing. Girls were allowed about once a week. There was no swimming instructor.

A pensioner by the name of Mr Perry was employed as a part time attendant. He had lost an arm in a toll gate at Westgate. He was rather intimidating as a fearsome metal hook replaced his hand and wrist.



Undoubtedly the star of the pool during that time was little Billy Arnott who had very short arms and legs and was less than 4 feet tall and was renowned for doing swallow dives from the top platform. Billy was quite talented as he also had a 3 piece band for local dances in the Town Hall.

Richard Williams was the Headmaster of Cowbridge Grammar School during this period. He was a short stocky man full of fire. Once a week during the Summer Term he took groups of new boarders swimming. His method was unique! A short pole with a rope and hook was attached to the back of their black bathers. The boy stood in the water. Dick lifted him into the breast stroke position and then walked with the boy along the side of the baths. The headmaster was certainly not daunted by cold water. Most boys were self taught. Cowbridge Swimming Pool was a very useful asset to the town as it enabled a large number of boys of my generation to learn to swim.,