

How It Started

Photo: Tyldesley Historical Society



Caleb Wright

When Caleb Wright conceived the idea of a public swimming baths for Tyldesley, he developed his plans and placed them before the Local Board. There was little opposition to them, and it was placed in his, and W Ramsden's hands to arrange for a plot of land suitable for the purpose.

The Hon. R.S.W Cotton willingly gave one statute acre, but in consequence of a change in the lawyers it lay in abeyance for about three years.

When Caleb Wright had got things settled, he put the whole correspondence before the Local Board.

Strong opposition then arose and when Caleb Wright moved a vote of thanks to the Hon. R.S.W Cotton for the gift of the land, an amendment was proposed that the land should not be accepted. A vote was taken, and the motion was carried by a majority of one. After this, the Board became divided and they went by the name of Bath and Anti-Bath Parties.

The Bath Party obtained plans, and advertised for tenders for the erection of the baths, but not without the strongest opposition that the Anti-Bath Party could possibly bring to bear. At subsequent meetings the Bath Party always carried their motions by the casting vote of the chairman.

The baths were eventually erected by the Local Board on land given by the Hon. R.S.W Cotton at a cost of £1,300. The enamelled bricks for the interior were given by W. Ramsden Esq.

Public Opening

Tyldesley baths opened to the public on Saturday 1st July, the following Saturday the Leigh Chronicle reported:

"The receipts at the swimming baths, which is now open, have been exceedingly encouraging. The baths were opened on Saturday last, upon which date over one hundred persons visited it, and participated in the aquatic enjoyment it afforded them. The sum of 16s. 10½d. was taken at the doors. On Monday, the attendance was almost surprising no less than three hundred visiting the place during the day. The receipts up to Monday evening were £4 15s. 4½d, and it should be stated that a slight relaxation in the charge was made to some of the intending bathers. A begrimed little urchin who had only a half-penny in his possession begged hard to be admitted, and on being told he might go in his satisfaction was of such character as to leave no doubt of his love of the exercise. The town appears to produce some good swimmers, some of whom dived the length of the bath, and in one instance, it is stated, two lengths were accomplished. Somersaults were also frequent and common and on all hands a desire to master the useful and healthy art of swimming was manifested. The selection of a person as a bathkeeper will very probably be made from Messrs. Whitehead, Bolton; Drake, Boothstown; and John Edge, Tyldesley."

In the first three weeks they had been visited by 5,020 bathers. The charge was 2d each, and the receipts about £42.

Official Opening Ceremony

On Saturday afternoon, 22nd July 1876, the baths were officially opened by Caleb Wright, Esq., JP.

Early in the afternoon Tyldesley began to have a lively appearance, and shortly after three o'clock the atmosphere was filled with the music of the bands which headed the various Sunday School scholars to the square.

Here every inch of the ground was occupied, but good order prevailed, and the marshalling of the procession by A. Cranshaw and his staff was a comparatively easy task to perform.

The order of the procession was as follows:

Good Templars Brass Band, members of the Local Board and friends, Tyldesley Chapel Scholars, Ellenbrook Band, Wesleyan Scholars, Congregational Scholars, Catholic Band, Catholic Scholars, Good Templars Rifle Band, Chowbent United Order of Oddfellows and Ancient Foresters, Leigh Fire Brigade and Tyldesley Fire Brigade.

The route took them along Elliott Street to Sale Lane, returning down Elliott Street past the Gas Works, down Blenheim Street, James Street, Charles Street, Factory Street and Castle Street to the Chanters Bridge, returning by Castle Street up to Shuttle Street into Union Street and to the baths.

It is stated that nearly 3,000 people took part in the procession which was almost two miles long, and was witnessed by thousands of spectators.

After the procession entered the baths enclosure, Mr Caleb Wright delivered an address and declared the baths open.

The outdoor proceedings concluded with the singing of the National Anthem.

History of Tyldesley Swimming and Water Polo Club



The scholars then reformed and walked to a field adjacent to the residence of Caleb Wright, at Lower Oak, Shakerley, where a variety of amusements and field sports were enjoyed.

A swimming gala was held at the baths, at which the attendance was large. Caleb Wright presided.

The handicap race, first prize gold medal, open to all England, was won by H.G. Dunlop of Manchester, the Lancashire Champion. Peter Atherton captain of the Bolton Swimming Club, with twelve seconds start won the second prize, a gold centre medal, and Walter Hartley of Rochdale, with seventeen seconds start, won the silver medal for third. There were ten entries.

Ernest Dolbridge of the Bolton Swimming Club won the 100 yards handicap race open to residents within seven miles of the baths, the prize being a gold centre medal. R.G. Elliott, of Howe Bridge, was second and took a silver medal.

The scratch race, first prize silver medal, open to residents of Tyldesley, was won by James Walshaw. Second prize, Victoria Cross, was won by Joseph Dixon.

Messrs. Reynolds and Boardman, of Bolton Swimming Club, gave a display of *ornamental swimming and double floating, and the gala concluded with a game of water polo.

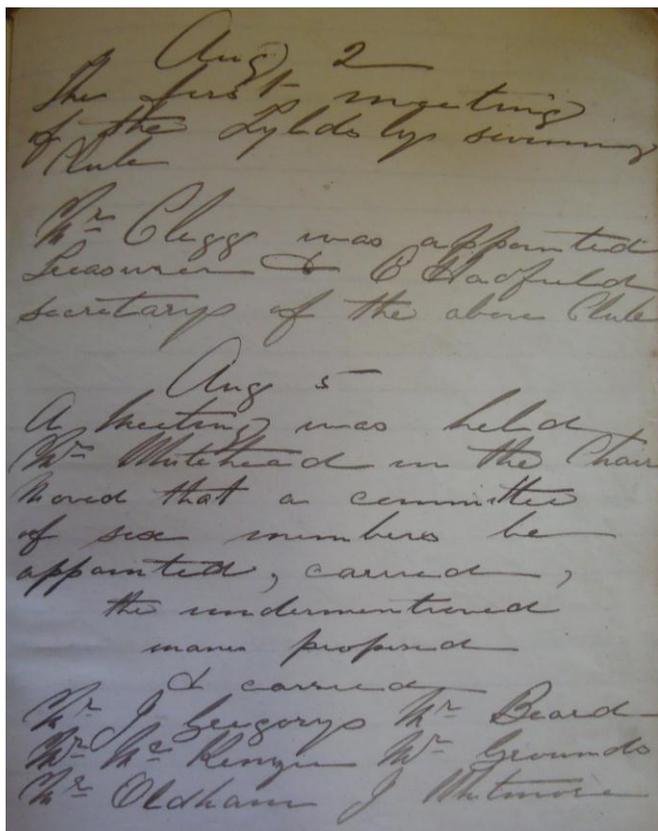
(Ornamental swimming was an early form of synchronised swimming without music.)

Prizes were presented by W. Ramsden Esq. and Mr. R.M. Whitehead, late of the Bolton Swimming Club, who had been appointed keeper of the baths, ably performed the duties of handicapper, judge and starter.

Following the gala a tea party, concert and ball was held in a large room at Messrs C. Wright and Company's mill. About 800 people sat down to tea, after which there were several speeches, and a concert by Mr. Tunnercliffe's Glee Party. Following the concert the room was cleared for dancing.

On the following Monday, Caleb Wright gave a treat for eighty old people at the mill.

THE SWIMMING CLUB



Original Minutes of the August 2nd & August 5th Meetings

Less than two weeks after the official opening of the baths, The Tyldesley Swimming Club was formed at a meeting on the 2nd August, 1876. Two appointments were made James W. Clegg, treasurer and P. Hadfield, secretary.

James W. Clegg owned a mill in Shakerley and was the son-in-law of Caleb Wright.

The second meeting took place on the 5th August, R. M. Whitehead took the chair, and a committee of six was appointed: Mr. Beard, Mr. Grounds, Mr. Whitmore, Mr. Oldham, Mr. McKenzie, Mr. Gregory.

It was moved and carried that a notice board 2 ft by 18 in black with semi-circular top, gilt edged and lettered Tyldesley Swimming Club be purchased.

It was also moved and carried that samples of swimming drawers be tendered and a stamp be purchased for lettering the drawers T S C. 36 pairs of drawers at a cost of 9/6 were later purchased and sold to the members at 1/6.

A third meeting took place on 9th August, Thomas Tyldesley and James Howarth were appointed auditors, and Mr. Cooling was made Vice-President.

R. M. Whitehead was appointed instructor of swimming for the club, this was a paid position for which he received 5s per week

It was decided that practices would be Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 7 pm to 8 pm.

The annual subscription for membership of the Swimming Club was set at five shillings, and the founder members were:

P. Hadfield, Elliott Street, Tyldesley

Peter Marsh, 18 Castle Street, Tyldesley

History of Tyldesley Swimming and Water Polo Club



Adam Pendlebury, 62 High Street, Atherton
R. M. Whitehead, "The Baths"
David. Whitmore, 3 Ashwell Street, Tyldesley
Josh Whitmore, 3 Ashwell Street, Tyldesley
Mr. Beard, Park View, Atherton
Mr. Gregory, Elliott Street, Tyldesley
James. W. Clegg, Elliott Street, Tyldesley
T. Davies, 61 Bolton Old Road, Atherton
Mr. McKenzie, 26 Sale Lane, Tyldesley
Robert Bentham, 36 Alfred Street, Tyldesley
Joseph Dixon, James Street, Tyldesley
Mr. Lever, Hindsford Lane, Tyldesley
Mr. Walshaw, Elliott Street, Tyldesley
Samuel Oldham, Well Street, Tyldesley
Mr. Smith, Shuttle Street, Tyldesley
Mr. Grounds, Church Street, Tyldesley
Mr. Tyldesley, Lime Street, Tyldesley
Mr Sheppard, Co-operative, Tyldesley
Mr Cranshaw, Local Board
James Howarth, Boar's Head
P. J. Tunnicliffe, Astley
Dr. William Duncan, Tyldesley

Dr. William Duncan was elected first President of the club on 18th August, 1876.

On the 30th August 1876 a set of rules prepared by Messrs. McKenzie, R. M. Whitehead and P. Hadfield were adopted by the committee and sent for printing.

The first Annual General Meeting was held at the Baths on 18th April, 1877, and the following advert was placed in the Tyldesley Journal:

TYLDESLEY SWIMMING CLUB

The committee of the above club beg to inform gentlemen of Tyldesley and neighbourhood that the swimming season has now commenced, and that persons can join by giving in their names to the undersigned.

The club has the advantages of an efficient teacher, and a pair of patent life saving cuffs by the aid of which learners are greatly assisted.

Terms 5s.0d. per annum

R.M. Whitehead.