



Basildon's First Swimming Pool – Gloucester Park.



Registered Charity n. 1176037

Registered address: The Green Centre, Wat Tyler Country Park, Pitsea Hall Lane, Basildon Essex SS16 4UH

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I wonder how many of you remember having to make your way to the seaside or wait until to you went on your summer holidays for a swim. Or was it a trip to the creek either at Pitsea or Vange during the summer months when the tide was in. Today the area is mainly a muddy marshland.

By 1933 with an increasing local population, the farmers of Riverside Farm off Wharf Lane, Vange constructed an outside swimming pool with a diving board. It was filled by sea water pumped from the tidal Vange Creek. It was very popular but closed in 1952 due to health scares arising from the poor quality of water. It was subsequently filled in during the early 1960's.



Vange open air swimming pool

You could take the bus to Billericay Park and bath in the outdoor pool there which was open in 1937.



With the coming of the New Town, calls were heard for a permanent indoor public swimming pool but it appears to have fallen on 'deaf ears' as there were other essential amenities required.

However, by 1960 outdoor pools could be found at Craylands and Laindon High Road senior schools. In 1962 Barstable Grammar School had an indoor pool followed by Manor Junior School in 1963. Other schools still had to travel to Hutton for either swimming lessons or take swimming exams.

At this time the Basildon Swimming Club was formed, in the first five years of their existence they were compelled to train at Barstable Grammar School. Eventually in 1966 the council announced its intention to build two pools within a single complex at a site just minutes from the town Centre in Gloucester Park.

It was designed by Basildon Council in-house architect Kenneth Cotton at a cost of around £500,000. With the main contractor being Norman Sinclair Ltd.



Gloucester Park Swimming Pool with the lake that was created in 1973

The pool, was simply known as Gloucester Park Swimming Pool, and was opened on Tuesday 9th April 1968 with the Leader of the Basildon Council, Cllr. Anthony Stockley and when he blew a whistle 88 children from Basildon Schools Jumped in. It was officially opened on Wednesday 19th June 1968 by Cllr. Terry Chapman who performed the opening ceremony.

There were two pools – Champion size (thirty-three and a third by twelve and half metres) with minimum depth of three feet gradually sloping to six feet, six inches,

then to a maximum depth of twelve feet, six inches. This pool had a two-storey diving tower and a poolside spring board. The second was a small “teaching pool” with minimum depth of two feet, six inches to a maximum depth of three feet.

Between December 1989 and October 1990, extensive refurbishments took place with the diving board removed and a café resited on the ground floor and given the name ‘splash’. A fitness gym ‘The Pulse Fitness Centre’ opened in 1994/95 on the first floor where the first café once traded. In 1995 the poolside springboard was resited and few years later removed leaving the pool without any diving facilities.

For a time, there were a number of other activities, such as a creche, sauna, solarium with sun booths/beds.

During its time it became the home of two swimming clubs; Basildon and Phoenix, both who regularly participated in competitions and galas. (Local, County, National)

The pool eventually closed on Sunday 24th April 2011, with the Sporting Village opening a week later on 30th April 2011. Another one of Basildon’s unique buildings was confined the history books when it was demolished in September 2011.

The site was eventually developed by Barratt Wilson Bowden and approximately five hundred homes were built.



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