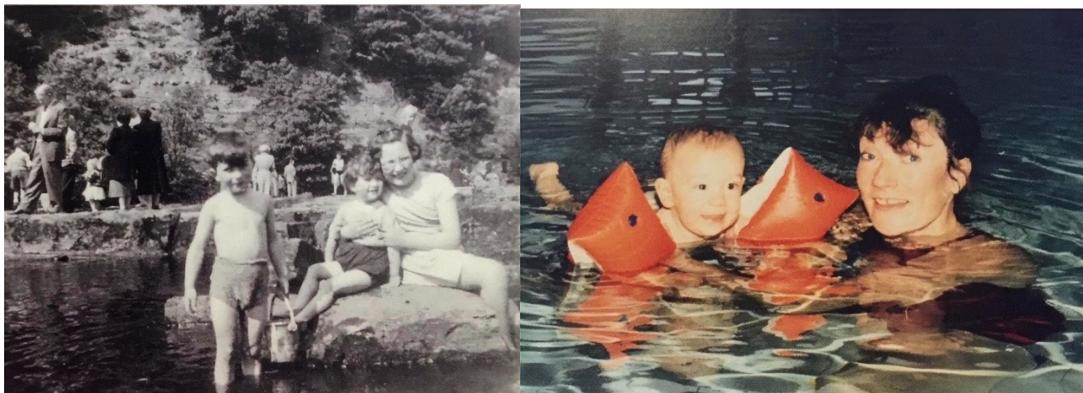


Wimmin Swimmin' Report by Annie Clouston



When I was three I fell in the river at Winston, got a soaking, and was rescued by my dad. He was a swimmer himself having been chucked in the harbour at Old Hartlepool as a young boy and didn't drown. Somehow, we Cloustons were not adversely affected by these traumas. The photos show me, my brother and older sister at Whorlton circa 1954 (note the knitted budgie smugglers) where I learnt to swim. My daughter Olivia was more warmly introduced to swimming at nine months at the wonderful Art Deco Mounts Baths in Northampton.

What we have heard from a number of our women swimmers is that they have had negative experiences in relation to being immersed in water, mostly as children. Being dragged along in a hoop wielded by a stern-faced matron, having a tsunami engulf them caused by a divebombing youth, being barked at to get dressed in record time (and going back to school wet!) behind a rubber tarpaulin by a resentful teacher, are just a few of the reasons why swimming pools have not felt like sites of enjoyment or places of safety.

But it's never too late to change your swimming story, and for lots of positive reasons, you can. Swimming can be such an antidote to stress – just floating weightlessly, having a zen moment or two – in the right environment. On Saturdays between 4 and 5 once a month, a peaceful, safe and supportive space is on offer at Teesdale Leisure Centre. Wimmin Swimmin' have exclusive use of the pool and a trained lifeguard. Whether you are a beginner, a timid swimmer or want to be re-introduced to exercise from which you have lapsed, Sue, Ruth and I will welcome you and help you if you need it and leave you alone if you don't..

If you want to give it a try contact Sue: sueoverton@hotmail.com 07512 368884. Sessions cost £5 and are usually the fourth Saturday of the month. Our next three sessions are: 24th January, 28th February and 28th March.

With special thanks to Pete Redgrave for improving the quality of the photos