

# QR Trails Stonehaven

## Art Deco Outdoor Swimming Pool

In 1933 following over whelming support from a poll of Stonehaven householders an outdoor swimming pool costing £9529 was built in the following year despite a number of technical challenges such as laying the in/outlet pipelines to the sea and the embarrassment of the pumps failing to pump the necessary 1/3Millon gallons in front of assembled dignitaries!

The over design of the pool was in the Art Deco style and constructed utilising thousands of tons of concrete and to competition standards. Today is recognised as an Olympic sized pool ....50Mts in length, 18Mts wide and 2Mts at its deepest point.

On 4<sup>th</sup> June 1934 enthusiastic crowds gathered to watch the opening ceremony performed by Mr Barclay-Harvey and to enjoy diving and swimming displays and a mannequin parade as well as the official speeches.

In 1935 the pool was emptied and refilled with sea water every few days – at that time, filling took only 2¾ hours. The sea water was heated to 55 degrees whereas today it is 85 degrees!

During the Second World War the pool provided shower facilities for locally based soldiers.

In the 1960/70s the increase in foreign travel resulted in falling numbers at home resorts and Stonehaven suffered, like most other places, a decline in popularity but the pool continued to attract over 65,000 visitors in 1975.

During the 1970s midnight bathing flourished with live entertainment, competitions and ducking for cans of soup! Unfortunately this adventure, unique to Stonehaven, had to be abandoned due to alcohol related misbehaviour but, happily, has been re-introduced very successfully and is an experience not to be missed.

The original 9Mt high diving boards were also removed in the 1970s because of health and safety concerns. With the removal of the top board and the old diving boards “crowd pulling-activities” .....such as:

- \* Richard Hogg – a premier trick diver
- \* 'Peg Leg Bernard' who jumped from the top board into a ring of fire on the pool's surface!
- \* Jimmy Rae and Hank Akers performing spectacular double dives
- \* Pete Desjardins famous diving exhibitions
- \* Diving displays by Aberdeen Thistle Swimming Club
- \* Thrilling performances by the Javelins

.....could no longer operate. Health and Safety Regulations also put paid to many other fun activities and visitor numbers began to decline.

For a couple of seasons the pool was filled with fresh water, however, sea water returned in 1982 because people attributed therapeutic benefits to the use of salt sea water and it continues to be used today.

By the mid-1990s the declining numbers of visitors to the pool had dropped alarmingly and was close to closure. This prompted the founding of a Community Group, The Friends of Stonehaven Open Air Pool, who currently operate the Pool in partnership with Aberdeenshire Council.

A paddling pool was added in 2009 for the under 8s and facilities introduced for the disabled with a hoist to enable them to enter the water and a separate room for changing. There is a poolside cafe which sells snacks and meals that can be accessed from both outside and inside of the pool.

The Stonehaven Open Air Pool is a major 4star visitor attraction as it is the only outdoor, open aired, salt water heated Olympic sized swimming pool left in the UK from the “boom” days of the 1930s.