

LXV – 65@65

Stanley Ulijaszek - 65 outdoor swims at the age of 65

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Swim #17, Leipzig Schreberbad



This lido is on my list, as was Leipzig in general, happy to be here on holiday with in laws Janet and Tony, and Pauline. This is one of Germany's oldest lidos - Schreberbad opened in 1866, and was a basin fed by the River Elster, which we crossed on the way. This is a little beauty of a location, the idea of a bathing facility which capitalizes the natural resources of the spreading industrializing Leipzig in the nineteenth century. This was the last day in September before it closed for the Summer season, by luck and not judgement, we were here, and it was open. Janet and Tony are well-travelled, love to be active, both used to warmer waters in Australia. Tony pulled me into the open water after a lapse of many years when we were in Victoria in 2009, when I entered the Port Lonsdale Rip-View Classic. This was an ocean swim, set in a coastal town across the narrow gap at the mouth of Port Phillip Bay where Australia lost a Prime Minister, Harold Holt.

It is worth saying that while Holt was a keen skin diver and spear fisher, he was not a strong surface swimmer. Holt could dive for considerable periods, holding his breath (he considered oxygen tanks to be 'inauthentic'). During drier Parliamentary debates, he amused himself by seeing how long he could hold his breath. The drama of his death is well-written about – with his health of concern, his doctor advised him to swim less – this was the headline in the national newspaper *The Australian*. His reaction was the same I think as that of any well-swum person – he ignored it. One hot Sunday, the plan of leisure was to swim to work up an appetite, then have a barbecue lunch. The rest, is history, as was Harold Holt. Holt swam with one other, as the water was swelling, with a strong rip. Holt was taken out to water, without seeming to be in trouble. He never came back. "Should have listened" – to his doctor, to his friends. But he loved the water. Years later they opened the Harold Holt Memorial Swimming Centre in the Melbourne suburb of Glen Iris. The very Australian irony of commemorating a drowned Prime Minister with a swimming pool continues to amuse – the Day of the Rip View Classic is the day when it is now traditional to tell the story. As I found out on that day. The Rip View Classic – do it if you can, the proceeds of registration go to the local life-guards, who do a great and important job. They, at Port Lonsdale and across Australia, are the backbone of Australia as a swimming nation. I did a decent time, and I was pulled into swimming again. I still have the tee-shirt.

Today we're in Leipzig, a city I have longed to visit for many years - home of Bach, and the Gewandhaus Orchestra, we heard both. The Schreberbad was initiated by Dr Daniel Gottlob Moritz Schreber, and opened five years after his death. He was a physician and lecturer at the University of Leipzig. In 1844, he became director of the Leipzig Sanatorium. He wrote predominantly about children's health and the social consequences of urbanization at the dawn of Leipzig's industrialisation. The idea of *Volksgesundheit* (people's health) was developed in his time, and the lido we are swimming in today was built with this in mind - health from physical activity in the outdoors. The pool is no longer fed by the Elster (or magpie), and has been renovated. The water is crystal clear with barely a touch or taste of chemicals - as it says in the mural at the entrance and in the changing rooms, here makes swimming fun! I could not argue with that, and nor could any of the others. The water was sharp on getting in – a warm Summer, pampered by warm water, made me feel the chill, although in reality not chill at all. People seemed to change at the side of the pool, and there was time to talk with the small number of local people in the water that Saturday morning. There was cake in one of the historical cafes, of course. Leipzig is great for cake; and cakes, plural - little Bach cakes, which are a recent tradition, in the spirit of the Mozart Balls my kids love and which you can find in Vienna and in all good airport shops in Germany and Austria. And music – I managed to see the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Andris Nelsons – conducting Bruckner 8. And the Thomaskirche and Bach cantatas. Leipzig is a city to come back to.