

LXV – 65@65

Stanley Ulijaszek - 65 outdoor swims at the age of 65

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Swim #2, The Cherwell River



The Cherwell River in Summer is, at a stretch of the imagination close to jungle. It reminds me of the humidity and warmth of the rivers in the Purari Delta, Papua New Guinea, a vast swampland which becomes ever more beautiful the longer I stayed there. This was there between 1979 and 1981, when I worked as a public health nutritionist. These were formative years, when thinking about nutritional health took me to anthropology and ecology, matters that became mine to investigate from my first academic position at the University of Cambridge several years later.

Today it's a short swim upstream and back down again to have lunch in the Venetian craft that Pauline took out from the College Boathouse to row, under her command, to this seemingly remote place. But it's not remote at all, being behind the University Parks, which has its own swimming history. Parson's Pleasure (for men) and Dame's Delight (for women and children) were separate and partially secluded swimming places with facilities - changing rooms, stairs into the water, bathing platforms, along this stretch of the river. Dame's Delight was closed in 1970 and Parson's Pleasure in the early 1990s. Parson's Pleasure was one of the few public places in the UK that allowed nude bathing in recent times. Both sites are long gone, although the memory lingers. Parson's Pleasure is now part of the University Park - close to the rollers that allow punts to be taken above and below the weir. People still swim here, as I have today.