



It is the earnest wish of the council that the people will appreciate the beauty of the structure, the purity of the water, and facilities provided in this place where the adult population will find recreation and the children of today and tomorrow will be able to learn the art of swimming and life-saving under the best possible conditions.
 Mayor of Granville JS Fielding, October 1936

Above: The façade of the Granville Swimming pool designed by architects Rudder and Grout Building, 12 June 1935
 Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW

Right: Granville industrial area ca. 1925, showing the site of Granville pool at Bergan's Paddock
 Courtesy of Granville Historical Society



A 'wonderful possession' ¹

Granville was Sydney's fourth Olympic-sized municipal pool built during the 1930s Depression - following Enfield, Bankstown and North Sydney. The immense popularity of swimming following Australia's successes in the Olympic Games of the 1920s and 1930s coincided with government objectives to provide work for the large numbers of unemployed men.

Granville Municipal Council and residents also wanted a safer and healthier environment for swimming, rather than the creeks and brick pits frequented by local children. The site chosen for the new pool was the duck pond in Bergan's Paddock, the location of Granville's first woollen mills. The pool was built by previously unemployed local men, with money provided in the form of a low-interest loan by the Unemployment Relief Council.

In October 1936 the pool complex was opened with great fanfare by Mayor JS Fielding and Minister for Works ES Spooner. While the Granville Boys' Silver Band played, spectators enjoyed swimming exhibitions by Olympic swimmers Bonnie Mealing, Clare Dennis and Pat Norton, breast stroke champion Margaret Dovey (later Whitlam), and a diving display by the NSW diving troupe. Granville resident Dave Ramsey, then aged seven, climbed over the fence with a friend to avoid paying the entrance fee - only to discover that the festivities were free.

¹ Mayor JS Fielding, October 1936

In the 1930s if you were one of the top swimmers you'd be called upon to give an exhibition of your stroke. The opening was a lot of fun and exciting, because Granville was one of the first new pools in the western suburbs. In those days breast stroke was very graceful, so I got in and glided along like a swan.
 Margaret Whitlam, Australian breast stroke champion

Many of Granville pool's original features have disappeared or been altered over the years. The original 1936 Olympic pool was shortened from 55 yards to 50 metres, and the small terrazzo water slide and 10 metre diving tower were both removed by the 1970s. In the early years swimmers had to pass through overhead showers and a footbath before entering the water, and the change rooms featured rooftop sunbaking areas. For a small fee, swimmers could hire costumes, towels and lockers.



Above: The diving troupe of the NSW Amateur Swimming Association executing a combined swallow dive at the pool's opening. The divers included Arthur O'Connor and local boy Joe McCann
 Sydney Morning Herald, 12 October 1936

Right: Granville pool float for Parramatta's sesquicentenary celebrations, 1938
 Courtesy of Granville Historical Society

