

On very hot afternoons getting a lane clear for the purpose of training was normally achieved by a relay of three or four of us swimming a few lengths butterfly. The recreational swimmers normally got the message without too many black eyes being suffered. When it became impossible to train in the pool during school holidays, our coach Bruce McDonald would take us for the day to Lake Parramatta where we would combine a picnic with a four or five mile training swim.

Julian Carroll, Australian backstroke champion and Olympian

In safe hands

The first pool manager was Rob Chalmers, a State swimming champion, celebrated surf life saver and one of the first Australians to be awarded the Royal Humane Society's gold medal. Ted Simms, who began as a pool attendant in 1936, was appointed pool manager in 1946. Simms introduced a new method of chlorination to prevent algae, which previously had to be vacuumed or brushed off manually. Simms would not stand for any 'silly business', and recalls how he would use a broom handle to knock agile young men out of the perimeter trees – from where they could see into the ladies' change rooms.

After Parramatta pool opened in 1959 Simms became superintendent of both pools. Senior pool attendant Barry Vines took over as superintendent in 1977, and retired in 1997 after 41 years' service. Under Vines' management, pool heating became more efficient, as natural gas and then electrical heat pumps were introduced.

Until Parramatta and Auburn pools opened, people travelled to Granville from as far afield as Homebush, Liverpool and Richmond. Barry Vines remembers an extended heat wave in the 1970s, during which Granville had 51 000 visitors in one week (usual numbers were about 18 000). Ted Simms remembers that on hot days it was so crowded 'you couldn't put a pin between the people in the pool.'

There were no dedicated training lanes at Granville until about 1960, when the opening of both Parramatta and Auburn pools took some of the pressure off Granville.

Above: Manager Barry Vines in his office at Granville pool

Below: Doug Cox, Bill Mathews, Ted Simms and Barry Vines at Granville, June 1975
Photos courtesy of Barry Vines

City of Parramatta Swimming Pools Notice Rules & Regulations

By order of ES Jameson, Town Clerk, 1948

If it was a hot day and the swimming pool was crowded, we couldn't use the diving boards, so we'd sit around in the stands and try to talk to girls. We did most of our training in the early morning or late afternoon, when the crowds had cleared. We had no trainers in those days, we just had to train ourselves.

Frank Murphy, Australian diving champion and Olympian



Jack Barnett and Ken Bruce in a comic dive at Granville Pool, ca. 1965
Courtesy of Jack Barnett

A mecca for diving

In the first decades after its opening in 1936, Granville had one of the only 10 metre diving towers in Sydney. Granville became the premiere training venue for several State and National champion divers, including Arthur O'Connor, Lana Robertson, Jack Barnett, Noeline Maclean and Frank Murphy. Local brothers Joe and Jack McCann were well-known Australian champions – Joe competed at the 1956 Melbourne Olympics and Jack at the 1938 British Empire Games. Many successful divers had little professional training, but congregated at Granville to watch and learn from other good divers.

Several local divers became members of the NSW Diving Troupe, including Doug Dale, Roy Lyndon, Jack Newling and State champions Jim Montgomery, Midge Betts and Peter Fahey. Swimming carnivals at Granville always included exhibition diving, and spectators could also expect to see the courageous and hilarious comic diving routines of locals Midge Betts and Paul Hogan.



Right: Frank Murphy diving at Granville, about 1949
Courtesy of Frank Murphy



Far right: Midge Betts diving at Auburn
Courtesy of Granville Historical Society

