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**The Shaping of Aquatics Education in New Zealand Schools:  
An Historical Study of Curriculum Policy and Practice**

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## Abstract

The teaching of aquatic activities has traditionally held a prominent position in the curriculum of New Zealand schools. In particular, the promotion of swimming and water safety skills and knowledge have long been valued as a community good. Given the geographical disposition of an island nation with its extensive coastline, fast-flowing rivers and large tracts of inland water, as well as the propensity of its citizens to associate with water-related activities both at work and play, such promotion seems entirely justified. In the context of today's society, the aquatic environment has been identified as the second most important location for public leisure and recreation with over half of New Zealand's population identifying water-related activity as being significant in their lifestyle (LINZ Survey, 1991).

However, even though the prophylactic and pragmatic values of aquatic competency were recognized at an early date, little is known about what historical influences have helped shape current practice in the promotion of such values, nor indeed to what extent aquatics education has been reflective of, or reactive to, changes in societal values, attitudes and practices throughout its development.

This thesis examines the historical development of aquatics education using historical research. In particular, the historical research concentrates upon the relationship between aquatics education and the social context in which its development has taken place. Such a concentration is considered particularly relevant in a study of aquatics education because of the high public profile that swimming and water safety have had throughout New Zealand's brief history - a profile that is best reflected in the frequently expressed public and private concerns regarding the high levels of death by drowning as well as the high incidence of water-related rescues.

Finally, rather than view the development of aquatics education as part of a progressive, liberal educational enterprise so often reflected in official documents, this study presents evidence supporting the view that aquatics education, as part of curriculum practice, is a site of contestation that is socially constructed and which presents itself as a discursive legacy reflecting the dynamic interaction of numerous socio-cultural forces operating at an instance in time.

## **Preface and acknowledgements**

The idea of this thesis was first conceived during the completion of a review of related literature for a longitudinal study on aquatics education in New Zealand secondary schools first initiated in 1987 and completed in 1996 after a decade of curriculum practice that included substantial changes in the way schools operate. More recently, enrolment in a course entitled Education and Historical Analysis, conducted by Roger Openshaw, provided both the catalyst and inspiration for historical research into the area.

In affording the writer the opportunity to indulge in an in-depth study of an activity that has long held a professional and personal interest, this study has been a labour of love as much as a labour of material end. As in all such work, many people have facilitated its completion at both a personal and professional level. On the personal level, I am appreciative of the tolerance and patience shown by my wife, Sian, and children, Damian and Bethan, who have had to endure endless hours of the ramblings of an enthusiastic, but neophyte, historical researcher.

On a professional level, I am indebted to my supervisors, Roger Openshaw, for re-kindling an enthusiasm in me for things historical and Pat Nolan, for his curriculum expertise. I am indebted to both for their advice, patience and constant support. I am also grateful for the advice and support of my 'critical friends' including Bruce Ross, Murray Britt, Alan Ovens, Wayne Smith, Maureen Legge and Chris Tennet at the Auckland College of Education.

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## Chapter One

### 1.1 Introduction

The teaching of aquatic activities has traditionally held a prominent position in the curriculum of New Zealand schools. In particular, swimming and water safety skills and knowledge have long been promoted as a community good. With more than 6,000 kilometres of coastline extending over ten degrees of latitude, fast-flowing rivers and large tracts of inland water, as well as the propensity of its citizens to associate with water-related activities both at work and play, such promotion seems entirely justified. In the context of today's society, the aquatic environment has been identified in the Life In New Zealand Survey of 1991 as the second most important location for public leisure and recreation with over half of New Zealand's population identifying water-related activity as being significant in their lifestyle.<sup>1</sup> In a survey of Maori participation in physical activity, swimming was identified as the most popular activity with a reported participation rate of thirty nine percent, a rate three times that of participation in rugby.<sup>2</sup>

More recently, in 1997, it has been estimated that 773,000 New Zealanders participated in some form of aquatic recreation with swimming being identified as the most popular physical activity amongst 18-24 year-old males and the second most popular activity for females of the same age group.<sup>3</sup> More specifically, a study of fifteen-year-old adolescents in New Zealand reported that over half (54 percent) of the respondents cited swimming as their most frequently reported form of physical activity (Reeder, Stanton, Langley and Chalmers, 1991) whilst a 1997 survey of 750 young people in the 13-17 year-age group showed that swimming for females and surfing for males were the most popular out-of-school activities engaged in.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Life in New Zealand Survey (LINZ)*, 1991, Hillary Commission, Wellington

<sup>2</sup> *Ko te whai wahi o te iwi Maori ki nga hakinakina: Maori Participation in Physical Activity*, Summary of findings of research initiated by the Hillary Commission, Wellington, August, 1992

<sup>3</sup> *Sports Facts Report (No. 1)*, 1997, Hillary Commission, Wellington

<sup>4</sup> *Young People and Sport*, 1998, Hillary Commission, Wellington

In spite of the prominence of aquatic activities in New Zealand society, little is known about the nature of aquatics education, especially in the school domain, which, for many, is the only formal opportunity for aquatics education. Furthermore, little is known about the historical forces that have helped to shape current practice and which may be of value in helping to shape future curriculum direction. In this respect, Goodson describes curriculum as a “multifaceted concept, constructed, negotiated and renegotiated at a variety of levels and in a variety of ways” (Goodson, 1994, p.111). This state of constant flux is subject to a variety of shaping forces although Longstreet and Shane suggest that “curriculum is an historical accident – it has not been deliberately developed to accomplish a clear set of purposes. Rather, it has evolved as a response to the increasing complexity of educational decision making” (Longstreet and Shane, 1993, p.7).

During its evolution, the promotion of aquatics education, whether accidentally implemented, or the subject of negotiation, or both, has been driven by competing and complementary desires - the desire to reduce negative statistics such as deaths by drowning, the desire to improve the proportion of children who can swim, the desire to produce sports champions, the desire to produce a fit society and the desire to provide education for leisure and recreation. However, in spite of some commonality of intent, aquatics education has evolved with considerable fluency of definition and content as competing tensions have surfaced and gained ascendancy.

Historically, demands for greater emphasis on aquatics education have been consonant with rising fatalities from drowning accidents, a phenomenon which characterised early European colonisation of the country to such an extent that, in the nineteenth century, drowning was referred to as the ‘New Zealand Death’ (Pascoe, 1971). Indeed, so prominent and persistent was the problem that it is claimed that death by drowning took more lives than road accidents until as late as 1928 (McLean, 1991). Between 1927 and 1949, over 3,000 New Zealanders had drowned (NZ Water Safety Council,

1985 Annual Report). Such statistics prompted direct government intervention in 1949 with the establishment of a Prevent Drowning Committee that was to eventually become the New Zealand Water Safety Council. Drowning rates peaked in 1985 with 206 deaths and, despite a decline in recent years, they have been consistently the highest per head of population recorded in developed nations (McBean, in process). Significantly, recent rescue statistics have indicated that the teenage and young adult population feature disproportionately in incidences necessitating emergency rescue procedures (Moran, 1996).

Within the context of the school curriculum, aquatics education was first promoted in early curriculum documents thus,

The ability to swim is a permanent possession of much practical value. It makes possible the enjoyment of a particularly invigorating and healthful form of exercise, attractive in its sporting possibilities for younger people, and capable of being indulged in with benefit until well on in life. Its importance for our seafaring population is tragically emphasized by the many lives that are lost for want of early instruction in swimming.<sup>5</sup>

However, even though the prophylactic and pragmatic values of aquatic knowledge were recognized at an early date, little is known about what historical influences have helped shape current practice in the promotion of such values, nor to what extent aquatics education has been reflective of, or reflexive to, changes in societal values, attitudes and practices throughout its development.

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<sup>5</sup> Department of Education, *Syllabus of Physical Instruction*, 1919, p.225

## **1.2 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study was to examine the historical development of aquatics education in the curriculum of New Zealand's primary and secondary schools. In particular, the historical research concentrates upon the relationship between aquatics education and the social context in which its development has taken place. Such a concentration is considered especially relevant in a study of the place of aquatics education in the curriculum because of the high profile that swimming and water safety have had in the wider community throughout New Zealand's brief history. In addition, the study will examine how the definitions and aims of aquatics education have evolved in response to shifting socio-cultural tensions within the context of an often politically-charged process that is curriculum change.

## **1.3 Research questions**

Within the over-arching theme of how aquatics education developed as an important part of the school curriculum, a number of questions are asked, such as:

What was the importance of water-related activity to early New Zealanders?

How did lifestyle influence opportunity for participation in aquatic activity?

What societal customs and beliefs influenced opportunity for acquiring aquatic skills and knowledge?

How did advocates legitimise the inclusion of aquatics education in the school curriculum?

How did individuals and their actions influence the development of aquatics education?

How have economic influences impacted on opportunities for development of aquatics education?

How have the definitions and aims of aquatics education changed during its evolution?

#### **1.4 Theoretical perspective**

As is the case with all history, the history of education is concerned with providing meaning to events of the past from the vantage point of a volatile present. Situated amidst the volatility of the present, one thing appears to be clear - the paradigms that have held court over historical study in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries no longer hold unquestioned authority. The emergence of new theories and new ideologies, encapsulated in such guises as postmodernism, cultural anthropology and the new historicism, has precipitated an avalanche of intense, and sometimes vitriolic, debate on the nature and meaning of history.

Such debate is hardly new. Indeed, one of the earliest critics of traditional history and its associated empiricist, liberal and positivist tenets was the German philosopher Nietzsche more than a century ago. Others such as Dilthey, Croce and Collingwood were to follow with challenges to the epistemological and ideological foundations of Ranke's 'history as it really was' thesis. Underlying this traditionalist view was a belief that there was a past reality or truth out there waiting to be discovered. All the historian needed to do in order to achieve the historiographical ideal of leaving to posterity a 'true account of what happened' was to sift through the data without prejudice, clear fact from fiction, whilst all the time scrupulously maintaining impartiality, accuracy and objectivity.

More recently, Rorty (cited in Jenkins, 1991) has examined history and historiography in the post-modern condition and promoted the concept of 'ironic re-description' which holds that anything can be made to look good or bad, desirable or undesirable, simply by being re-described. Such re-descriptive turn implies that the past can be infinitely re-interpreted, especially in the absence of traditionally privileged centres and collapsed metanarratives which characterise Lyotard's post-modern condition (Lyotard, 1984). In this respect, Jenkins argues that history rather than being constituted by some proper, fundamentally correct text is a "shifting problematic discourse, ostensibly about an

aspect of the world, the past, that is produced by a group of present-minded workers . . . who go about their work in mutually recognisable ways that are epistemologically, methodologically, ideologically and practically positioned” (Jenkins, 1991, p.26). In recognising the problematic nature of history and the theory-laden status of the historian, Jenkins thus concludes that

querying the notion of the historian’s truth, pointing to the variable facticity of facts, insisting that historians write the past from an ideological position, stressing that history is a written discourse as liable to de-construction as any other, arguing that the past is as notional a concept as the ‘real world’ . . . all these things destabilise the past and fracture it so that in the cracks opened up new histories can be made (Jenkins, 1991, p.66).

Windschuttle has suggested that the traditional practice of history is now suffering “a potentially mortal attack from the rise to academic prominence of a relatively new array of literary and social theories” (Windschuttle, 1994, p.2). In defence of traditional history, Elton has refuted many of the claims of historicists such as Jenkins by suggesting that to the “new disciples of total relativism, history matters only insofar as it contributes to their own lives, thought and experiences . . . the ultimate heresy” (Elton, 1991, p.43).

It is the author’s belief that history is framed within theoretical lenses which provide for different interpretations or historicising and that history may be little more than sedimented layers of previous interpretations. However, the current debate between the old certainties of traditional history and the rhetorical discursive practice that is postmodernist historiography does not necessarily present an ‘either/or’ but rather a ‘this and that’ condition. It is possible to pick through the residue of certaintist history and reject that which is not philosophically palatable such as the notion of absolute truths and unbiased reporting but at the same time embrace the notion of a single reality and the reality of the past itself. From the vantage point of the present for example, it is

possible to view the reality of shifting definitions and purposes of aquatics education throughout its evolution. By the same token, it is possible to rummage through the glad-bag that is postmodernist history and accept the existence of Jenkins's 'interpretive flux' or of Rorty's 'ironic re-description' and the significance of positions, but at the same time reject the pyrrhonism and nihilism that is implicit in an 'anything goes' rampant relativism. In recognising the theoretically-laden positions of previous participant historians such as Butchers and the relevance of their contribution to the history of aquatics education, the reader is better positioned to understand the discursive nature of their legacy and the inevitable presence of interpretive flux. Similarly, when presenting evidence from contemporary newspaper records and other institutional documents, the reader must be constantly aware of the positioned nature of the reporting particularly where the data is presented in a promotional role for financial or public support of water safety education.

In this respect, it is important that this author identify his own position through a biographical note in the introduction to this work and thereafter, in examining the data on aquatics education, maintain an awareness of the positioned status of the writer of sources used, especially where that person is acting in the role of participant historian. In this respect, a tendency to accept the deliberations of officialdom without challenge and without regard to the consequences of such deliberations in the field, have typified much of the early writing of New Zealand's educational history. When examining official reports such as those included in the *Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives*, it is important to retain a sense of scholarly scepticism with regard to some of the congratulatory reporting of ministers of the crown and lesser officials such as school inspectors. For example, evidence will be presented which suggests that initial subsidies for the teaching of swimming via the Manual and Technical Instruction Act of 1900 were not taken up with the enthusiasm suggested by Education Department officials. Similarly, it is important to remember when considering evidence from political sources such as the *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates* and local/regional council records, that there are often ideologically-driven personal agendas permeating the

official record. For example, extracts from Parliamentary speeches in the 1950's by members of government report favourably on the success of such government measures as learners' pool subsidies and water safety campaigns but evidence will be presented which suggests that swimming ability levels, if they did improve significantly, were as much a reflection of local community initiatives as they were of state intervention.

Gordon, in attempting to establish historical pre-conditions to the problems confronting New Zealand education in the 1980's suggested that there were three types of histories that have dominated the field of education (Gordon, 1985). Since much of the data for this study is derived from information promulgated within these styles of historical writing, it is worth examining their ideological background in order to understand the position of the writer. The first type is what McKenzie refers to as 'celebratory history', history written as self-congratulatory records of institutional successes (McKenzie, 1984). In sourcing evidence of aquatic activities in schools, or through local authorities such as regional or local councils, it is important to realise that the celebratory vein that pervades the writing of centennial histories often employs a selective memory which discards anything capable of tarnishing the enterprise being celebrated. Examples of such texts used in this study which may fall into this category include *Glorious Enterprise: The History of the Auckland Education Board* (Cummings, 1957), *Ad Augusta-A Centennial History of Auckland Grammar School* (Trembath, 1969), or *A Dip in the Clear Blue Water* (Pointon, 1984), the latter being a celebratory history of Auckland City Council's provision of swimming pools.

The second kind of history is loosely categorised as the 'liberal-developmental' or 'liberal progressive' where educational development was viewed uncritically as a social good and the education system was seen to be progressing towards some Utopian state of perfection. McKenzie noted that to view history as "a singular illustration of a pre-ordained thesis is in the end to offer a palpably inadequate explanation of the meaning of events" (McKenzie, 1984, p.5-6). This notion of history as 'finished business' was not challenged by early writers. Indeed, it has been argued that early historians not only

failed to challenge the idea of a singular, progressive educational enterprise but were actively involved in reinforcing what Beeby (1986) was to describe as the educational myths (equality, education of the whole child *etc.*) that permeated their reporting of history of the successes whilst the failures just faded off the education screen (Jones, McCulloch, Marshall, Smith and Smith, 1990). As an illustration of this, evidence will be presented that demonstrates the inadequacy of aquatics education for Maori pupils in native schools and some girls schools in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, inadequacies that were to endure in some rural areas until well into the latter part of this century.

Characteristic of the liberal-progressive genre are A.G. Butchers' works of the 1929-30 period which, in spite of its theoretical imperfections, provided the first comprehensive analysis of the education system. Written whilst in the role of 'participant' historian, with all its inherent problems of employer capture, Butchers was appointed to the task of writing a 'definitive' history on behalf of the Department of Education much in the mould of a 'defender of the faith', a point clearly articulated by Sir Edward Gibbes in the Foreword to *Education in New Zealand: An Historical Survey* (Butchers, 1930). It is important to remember that Butchers was writing at a time of continual growth in state education and thus a benevolent and benign view served not only the self but the system. Historians of the traditionalist persuasion may argue that Butchers' books told history like it was, at its impartial and objective best.

However, rather than being in any way examples of 'theory-less' texts, Butchers' works were implicitly theory-laden in the optimistic and progressive tones so clearly elucidated in his 'river of education' thesis. For example, in 1930, Butchers, in extolling the virtues of swimming certificates and capitation grants for teaching swimming, reported that the number of pupils able to swim had "increased enormously" and that it was estimated that "over 30 percent of pupils in the State primary schools are now able to swim" (Butchers, 1930, p.494-495). No mention was made of the remaining 70 percent other than the promissory note of future government action towards the "single-

minded pursuit of the common objective, namely, the development of an A-1 nation physically in New Zealand" (*Ibid.* p.497). McKenzie summarised Butchers' perceptions succinctly by suggesting that, like the world about him, at the time he had created a 'rise and triumph' view of educational history in that he saw the peaks rather than the troughs of educational development (McKenzie, 1979).

The progressive-liberal style of historical writing was eventually replaced by a third style of history telling that is best described as the complacent style in that there seemed to be an underlying belief that all problems in education could be solved within the existing system. Examples used in this work are such texts as *Compulsory Education in New Zealand* (Beeby, 1952), *Education in New Zealand* (Dakin, 1973) and the *History of State Education in New Zealand: 1840-1975* (Cummings and Cummings, 1978), all of which toed the party line of benevolence and gave support to an enlightened bureaucracy.

The complacency of such texts was to be rudely disturbed by the emergence of a revisionist style of educational history in the 1980's. Shuker, for instance, reflected the growing antagonism toward the traditional certaintist view when, reviewing the Cummings and Cummings text, he stated "What emerges implicitly however, is a picture of the slow but steady evolution of a centralist state education system, engendered essentially by liberal-minded policy makers, in response to changing demands on the school system" (Shuker, 1980, p.37). McCulloch took the debate a stage further and argued that Shuker's enthusiasm for the revisionist cause had tipped the balance between history as an amalgam of empirical study and sociological theory too heavily towards social advocacy and thus offered only limited purchase on the history of New Zealand educational policy and practice (McCulloch, 1988). More recently, in describing the process of writing history, Openshaw, Lee and Lee advance a position, which has strong appeal to the present author, that it is possible to "both utilise sociological and other contemporary theories to interrogate matters of concern to the

educational community whilst retaining a scholarly scepticism regarding its utility in the historical context”(Openshaw, Lee and Lee, 1993, p.15).

In conclusion, it is the author’s belief that the history/historiography debate regarding the fragility of the historical enterprise has, in its more constructive mode, encouraged historians to reflect carefully on their sources, a practice that will hopefully be apparent in the present text. In so doing, it may be possible to present a text where the historian may “if we are very scrupulous and careful and self-critical, find out how it happened and reach some tenable conclusions about what it all meant” (Evans, 1997, p.253). For example, evidence will be presented that aquatics education, in spite of its high public profile, was not universally available even as late as the 1960’s and that official records, whilst occasionally acknowledging that there were delivery problems, continued to report in optimistic and self-congratulatory mode. At the same time, it is important to remember that no historical account can recover the totality of past events, and that history has a tendency to conflate, compress, exaggerate (Lowenthal, 1985). Such shaping forces will be clearly evident in the data utilised by advocates of aquatics education over the years and nowhere more obviously than when the focus is on the emotive topic of accidental death by drowning.

In examining the history of aquatics education in New Zealand schools then, the author will present a subjective interpretation of the past using present-day modes of thought. In other words, with the benefit of hindsight and without the strictures that may have restrained the participant historian of previous times, the author will present a history of aquatics education in New Zealand in which the history presented will be both less than the past but also more than the past (*ibid.*).

### **1.5 Biography**

In keeping with the maxim that in order to know the history, first study the historian, the author’s personal interest in aquatics education has been fuelled by a life-long

involvement in aquatic activities encompassing sporting, professional and recreational roles. An early enthusiasm for swimming was facilitated in childhood by the coincidence of a number of environmental rarities in the post-War 'baby boom' years in Britain - relatively close access to beaches and the good fortune to attend a secondary school which had the luxury of both indoor pool facilities and an expert teacher to nurture the author's swimming skill development. Tertiary study in Physical Education and an extensive period of international swimming competition reinforced an enthusiasm for things aquatic, the authors' emigration to New Zealand dovetailing with participation in the Commonwealth Games in Christchurch, 1974.

Professional interest in the teaching of aquatic activities developed in conjunction with the author's role as a lecturer involved in Physical Education teacher education. In addition, an interest in the field of water safety education developed as a consequence of the community work undertaken as a surf lifeguard at Muriwai beach on Auckland's west coast. Continued association with life saving and sporting organisations has led to involvement in management and advocacy roles, both in the realm of school and public water safety education at local, regional and national levels. Over the past decade, much of this work has culminated in the development and publication of a sequential programme of surf safety education for primary and secondary school-age school children.<sup>6</sup>

Periods of part-time employment as a professional swimming coach and the raising of a young family, provided opportunity for the author's involvement in pre-school and primary school teaching of swimming and water safety. More recently, as Chairperson of a newly-formed regional water safety organisation, the author has had opportunity for research into a variety of aquatically-oriented studies including the efficacy of pre-school child water safety campaigns, regulatory control of safety on the water via local

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<sup>6</sup> For further information on the three programmes available to schools, refer to the *Surf Sense*, *Surf Safety*, and *Surf Survival* series, details of which can be found in the Bibliography

body by-laws and the development of a water safety programme for year 7-8 pupils aimed at fostering water safety skills in a deep water environment.<sup>7</sup>

The catalyst for this study into the history of aquatics education in New Zealand was an earlier investigation by the author of secondary school aquatics programmes which was initiated in 1987 at the request of the New Zealand Water Safety Council.

Subsequent study of the same schools a decade later in 1996, provided the author with an opportunity to analyse the changes which had taken place as a consequence of a decade of educational practice in terms of the availability of aquatics, the extent of the programmes offered and teachers' perceptions of pupil swimming ability<sup>8</sup>. It became evident as a consequence of the author's investigation of the literature related to this research, that no systematic study of the historical forces at work in the shaping of aquatics education as a significant part of contemporary curriculum practice had been undertaken. What these studies provided then was a provisional selection of information and a provisional interpretation of that information which started the "continual process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past" (Carr, 1961, p.24), the culmination of which, in this instance, is the present study of the history of aquatics education in New Zealand schools.

### 1.7 Method

It has been claimed that historical research is the systematic and objective location, evaluation and synthesis of evidence in order to establish facts and draw conclusions about past events (Borg, 1963). Whilst the epistemological foundation of this statement

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<sup>7</sup> Watersafe Auckland Incorporated (WAI) was established in 1994 as an incorporated society to promote water safety in the Auckland region following the dis-establishment of the regional offices of the New Zealand Water Safety Council. Tasks undertaken by this organisation have included: the education of the public in promoting an Auckland Regional Council by-law on the wearing of lifejackets on the water; a pre-school child water safety campaign in conjunction with the Child Safety Foundation (NZ); and a school programme entitled *In at the deep end* for intermediate school-age pupils

<sup>8</sup> For further information on the nature of aquatics education in New Zealand secondary schools, refer to Moran, K. (1998). Aquatics Education in New Zealand: A longitudinal study of curriculum practice (1987-1996). *Journal of Physical Education New Zealand*, 31 (4), pp.2-6.

may be challenged, the methodological implications of systematic and ordered investigative study are inherent in any sound historical research. In seeking data from the past, researchers often have to contend with inadequate information. Lowenthal makes the salient point that history is less than the past since it is impossible “to recover or recount more than a tiny fraction of what has taken place” (Lowenthal, 1985, p.214). Such inadequacies mean that the historian often has to operate within what Collingwood aptly refers to as “a web of imaginative construction stretched between certain fixed points provided by the statements of his authorities” (Collingwood, 1946, p.242).

One problem for the researcher of educational history is the necessary dependence on official sources for Collingwood’s ‘certain fixed points’. La Capra, in labelling many traditional historians as ‘documentarists’, is critical of the documentary mode of historical research because of its underlying faith in uncovering hard facts (reported in Jenkins, 1997, p.12). Reliance on official documents alone may not provide an accurate portrayal of the conditions that prevailed at the teacher-pupil interface. In this respect, Davin maintained that reality may not be best served by the dominant voice of the adult who is “usually a male, middle class informant or administrator or investigator” (Davin, 1986, p.13). In a similar vein, Openshaw *et al.* reason that one of the areas of neglect in the writing of New Zealand’s educational history is the “near total neglect of the classroom where both liberal and revisionist accounts have utilised official accounts and official syllabuses, with the result that the voices of both teachers and children are rarely heard” (Openshaw *et al.*, 1993, p.15).

In an effort to counter potential claims of documentarism in this work, the author has endeavoured to balance the dependence on official records by including data which may inform the reader on real rather than perceived curriculum practice. To this end, information has been gathered from auto-biographic sources such as Barr’s *Within Sound of the Bell* containing recollections of her school aquatics education or from sporting and recreational memoirs such as Norma Williams’ *Between the Lanes*. In addition, the oral

recall of 'significant others' via the taped interviewing of swimming luminaries, Cliff and Norma Williams, both of whom have had a lifelong involvement in the promotion of swimming in New Zealand, provide a rich tapestry of personal involvement from both a learner and a teacher perspective. Such information, whilst essentially anecdotal in nature, provides important participant input even though such memories may be viewed through somewhat rose-tinted lenses.

Another important unofficial printed source of material are contemporary media reports from sources such as newspapers, journals, and magazines, which, in addition to providing contemporary chronological accounts of events, also provide comment upon them. To this end, Wood (1973) suggests that editorial comment not only provides the apt quotation to liven heavy pages, but provides some corrective to the often inevitable reliance on government sources, although it may be too easily forgotten that journalists may neither represent general opinion nor play a significant role in its formation.

With regard to the bibliographic handling of material, the author has subdivided sources into primary sources, defined as data recorded at the time under study and secondary sources which are subsequent accounts of events recorded after they have taken place. In the case of the former, their place in the text is located via footnotes. In addition, footnotes provide not only the source referred to in the text but also may provide additional detail, cross-references, conflicting statements and alternative views as well as further references for the reader. In the case of secondary sources, details of the author, the nature and date of publication, the place of publication and the publishing authority are included in a bibliography at the end of the text using standard American Psychology Association (APA) format.

One of the problems confronting the educational researcher with regard to either primary or secondary sources is authenticity and the availability of documents. Documents such as manuscripts, correspondence, official records, charters, laws, minutes of meetings are capable of transmitting accurate and meaningful data, and have, wherever possible, been

sighted in their original state to avoid reporting errors which may have occurred in transmission via secondary sources. To this end, the author has utilised records kept in the National Archives and other sites such as the Auckland Museum Library, the North Shore City Council Library and the Auckland City Council Library for original copy. Of particular value in this respect have been the correspondence and memoranda on file in the Residual Management Units (RMU's) of the now-defunct Department of Education Auckland Office and the Auckland Education Board held at the offices of the National Archives, Mount Wellington, Auckland.

In addition to using the traditional examination of hard copy databases, the author has attempted to utilise computer-based searches of bibliographic and archival sources, particularly of those databases with sporting and educational connotations such as *Sports-discus*, *Ausport*, *INNZ*, *Australian Education Index*, *ERIC*, *British Education Index* and *Austrom*.

Finally, in organising the material, the author has adopted a mixed strategy of presenting both a chronological account to give some impression of the temporal sequencing of aquatics education development as well as to provide an account that focuses on selected socio-cultural themes which highlight the way in which curriculum developments in aquatics education have been socially constructed.

### **1.7 Definition of terms**

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions apply:

Aquatics education - refers to that part of the formal education of a child that has as its core business, the development of aquatic skills and competencies, together with the development of values, attitudes and beliefs that promote safety and enjoyment of aquatic activities as part of a healthy lifestyle.

Aquatic activities - refers to those recreational activities which take place in, on, or under water. They may even include activities that take place near water and which have no intentional water contact or immersion such as fishing or shellfish gathering. The current operational definition of aquatic activities in the Physical Education syllabus includes the progressive development of swimming strokes, water safety skills, survival techniques, sensible behavioural attitudes and a variety of water based activities which leads towards the acceptance of aquatics as enjoyable recreational and healthy exercise (NZ Department of Education, 1987). The American-based Council for National Cooperation in Aquatics (CNCA) further defines aquatic activities as having the following characteristics: personal safety; prevention of aquatic emergencies; ability to assist in an aquatic emergency; personal enjoyment; development of lifetime skills; health and personal fitness; possibility of competition; therapeutic potential for the disabled; and an appreciation of aquatic activity (CNCA, 1978). Aquatic activities as presently defined, thus allows for a much expanded field of aquatic endeavour than was possible in the traditional curriculum pursuits of swimming and lifesaving.

Aquatic competence - refers to proficiency in aquatic activities and includes a wide variety of skills, knowledge, and values that come from a variety of fields and sub-disciplines (Langendorfer & Bruya, 1995).

Primary schools – refers to that sector of the education system that deals with the education of pupils from year 1 (new entrance or infants) to year 8 (form 2), including intermediate schools and the first two years (form 1 and 2) of area, integrated and private schools where applicable.

Secondary schools - refers to that sector of the education system that deals with the post-primary education of pupils from year 9 (form 3) up to and including year 13 (form 7) in high schools and colleges.

Curriculum - refers to the planned and intended sequence of learning activities which takes place within the formal teaching programme of the schools. It may also include co- or extra-curricular activities such as swimming clubs, lifesaving clubs or wider living/liberal studies programmes offered either inside or outside the normal school programme on a casual or irregular basis.

## **1.8 Delimitations and limitations of the study**

### **Delimitations**

Two major delimitations confine the study. Firstly, the historical study will confine itself to historical research of aquatics education in New Zealand schools from first colonisation to the present and, secondly, the study will confine itself to the study of written material in the form of documents and records as evidence of past events and use one recorded transcript of oral history in an attempt to provide some participant perspective on one specific era of development.

### **Limitations**

The historical research will draw upon both primary and secondary sources. Use of the latter source may produce a resultant distortion of evidence which is an inherent risk in the transmission of information. As previously discussed, when relying too heavily on official sources, albeit of a primary source, there is a risk of excessive state-orientation and the tendency to write up the story of the establishment. In addition, official publications are an expression of bureaucratic order and, like any bureaucratic structure, flaws reflecting absent-mindedness or inefficiencies in accurately recording the past can provide contradictions, omissions and exaggerations.

Historical analysis of curriculum documents may well indicate the nature of intended curriculum practice rather than what actually happened.

Authenticity of the primary source of information (external criticism) has been taken at face value. Where credibility of the reporter (internal criticism) is an issue, the researcher has attempted to examine possible sources of bias and qualify any comment made. Finally, as with any qualitative study, the historical research into aquatics education could be subject to other interpretations.

### **1.9 Significance of the study**

A study of the shaping of aquatics education in the school curriculum is important for several reasons. Firstly, it is important that practitioners in the field understand and can justify why they do what they do in the name of education. This study will inform their practice by providing a 'what was' historical perspective that will help explain the emergence of aquatics education to its current prominence in the curriculum. It will also assist in their understanding of curriculum by demonstrating the social construction of that part of their curriculum practice. In addition, the study will provide information which will hopefully precipitate evaluation of current practice and provide the basis for future action.

Secondly, it is important that policy makers at local level (HOD's, principals, boards of trustees etc.), regional level (advisory services, local government bodies, regional aquatics organisations, sports groups etc.) and national level (national government bodies, national aquatics-related associations, safety and rescue organisations etc.) are fully informed on 'what was' before determining 'what is' and 'what ought to be'. In terms of accountability and the public purse, decision makers in this high profile field have a duty of care which transcends the normal public concern for good education and wise spending - there is the additional powerful concern of lives lost. Again it is hoped that this study will provide the basis for informed decision-making at this level of educational provision.

Thirdly, it is hoped that the study will impact upon the work of the writer whose role in the professional training of future teachers is predicated upon being well informed and critically aware of past and present aquatics education. Only by receiving the best of professional guidance and informed advice in their initial teacher education can those who will be at the forefront of educational progress be expected to fulfil effective teaching roles.

Fourthly, it will provide the reader with an examination of how the curriculum, in general, and one aspect of the curriculum, aquatics education, in particular, have developed in an historical context, illustrating how the curriculum is a site of contestation subject to a multiplicity of political and professional pressures which determine the legitimacy of curricular practice. In addition, it will also provide opportunity to observe the malleable nature of a curricular activity such as aquatics education by observing how its definitions and aims change throughout history in response to changing social, economic and political circumstances.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this study, by positively influencing those involved in the promotion and practice of aquatics education, will result in more effective aquatics education for that sector of society which potentially has much to gain and much to lose through either educational enrichment or ignorance of things aquatic. A combination of increasing popularity of aquatic activities in an aquatically-oriented society and the continued over-representation of young adults in drowning and rescue statistics will ensure that the focus of this study remains topical and the subject of much debate. More than that however, it is hoped that the information contained within this study will provide meaningful answers to important questions - the goal of every researcher.

## Chapter Two

### 2.1 Of kau whakataetae and kopapa: Pre-European Maori aquatic activity

In a land characterised by intractable bush and hilly terrain, early Polynesian and, more latterly, European settlement, tended to be located around coastal areas, along rivers, and on lake shores. Earliest Polynesian settlement relied heavily on the abundant marine resources as a primary source of sustenance along with cultivation of kumara and other imported crop species planted in open fertile coastal areas. The cultural significance of 'Kaimoana', still evident in contemporary Maori society, reflects the close association between the earliest settlers and the sea. The vast majority of early pa sites, of which over 6,000 have been recorded from pre-European times, were located on the coast, a testimony of the significance of water in everyday life (McKinnon, 1997). Water also provided the transportation medium for cross-country navigation as pressure for land and hunting grew with increasing human habitation and the resultant territorialism and tribal conflict. The significance of water features in Maori society at the time is reflected in the extensive naming of rivers and inland lakes (McKinnon, 1997) as well as in the identification of Iwi such as the ngati-wai - the water people - in Northland. Diamond (1966, p.188) noted that Maori inhabitants at the time of initial contact with Europeans referred to Auckland's west coast as 'tai tamatane' - the manlike sea - where it was considered 'mans' work to battle the boisterous surf conditions and the east coast beaches as 'tai tamahine' - the sea for girls - place names that reflect indigenous gender stereotypes of the time as much as it might reflect the physical nature of the environment. Given this geographical predisposition to settlement near water, it was not surprising that New Zealand's indigenous people developed a propensity for aquatic activity at work and at play.

Gathering data that accurately portrays the significance of aquatic activity in pre-European times is beset with many of the difficulties that confront any historical analysis of the time, not the least of which is the reliance on data recorded via oral

tradition and often narrated as an extension of mythology (Binney, 1989). Best suggests that Maori highlighted the significance of the ability to swim by reifying it in certain folk tales and myths as exemplified by the stories such as that of Hine-popo who swam from Kapiti across Raukawa (Cook Strait) and Hinemoa who swam from Owkata to Mokoia Island on Lake Rotorua (Best, 1976). Other outstanding feats of long-distance swimming which also signal out women's swimming expertise include the crossing of Wakatipu by Haki-te kura and, in more recent times, Rau-whato who crossed Lake Taupo and Te-Rau-O-te-rangi who swam from the six miles from Kapiti to the mainland carrying her baby on her back (Reed, 1963). Similarly, Erangi, a fourteenth century tupuna who lived on Auckland's west coast at Te Henga (Bethell's Beach) is said to have swum with her baby a distance of two kilometres through the surf to be with her lover and father of her child (West Auckland Historical Society, 1990).

The reification of swimming skills was probably grounded in the competencies required of women in the performance of their daily domestic roles of fishing and shellfish gathering. Dieffenbach, for example, noted that he often had occasion when observing Taranaki tribes to "admire the expertise of the women in diving for crawfish in the surf near the Sugarloaf Islands" (Dieffenbach, 1843). In addition to swimming being interwoven into mythology, Polack noted that Maori had developed strong spiritual connotations to aquatic activities from bathing to fishing, with aquatic divinities collectively being identified as *tanihwa* or *taniwhoa* which were to be found in every port, river, creek, lake and sea (Polack, 1838b).

Another difficulty confronting the historian in developing an understanding of the role of aquatics is the regional specificity of the information recorded by early historians. Best's work for example draws heavily upon the experience of the Tuhoe people in the late nineteenth century (Openshaw, Lee and Lee, 1993). Similarly, Beattie's work reflects memories of South Island Iwi and signals differences in language and custom at a more local level. Caution is also advised with regards to the tendency to romanticise indigenous cultures, including Maori, commonly referred to as the 'noble savage'

syndrome, a condition which typified many literary works amongst nineteenth century European writers of literature and history alike.<sup>9</sup> The many instances of Maori aquatic survival skill take on heroic proportions in the telling especially when compared with the seeming inability of Pakeha to survive in an environment where contact with water, whether accidental or intentional, was frequently an everyday occurrence.

Further complicating enquiry is the tendency for early New Zealand historians to present an ethnocentric European interpretation of Maori culture. For example, Best points out that Polack, in his observations on Maori in the 1840's, was dismissive of the fact that Maori appeared to have no statutory holidays, a concept associated with industrialised society and mass labour which was of little relevance to a society which was essentially agrarian, governed by seasonal changes in food supply and had no notion of structured work/leisure hours (Best, 1976). Similarly, Best challenges the somewhat dismissive comments of the Rev. Yates, an early missionary in the north, on the paucity of local games and pastimes, as not taking into account the intrusive nature of colonists culture where so many new interests claimed attention that some former pursuits (especially those such as swimming which violated morality codes) were "bound to be practised to a lesser extent or to fall into desuetude" (*Ibid.*, p. 15). The tendency for misreporting may have been further exacerbated by the somewhat strained relationship between scholar and informant at a time when race relationships were under considerable duress (Openshaw, *et al.*, 1993).

Bearing these limitations in mind, Best reported probably the first example of aquatics education by suggesting that, "Maori children seem to take to water as though it was their natural element, and, under favourable circumstances, learn to swim about as soon as they can walk" (Best, 1976, p.42). In a similar vein, Dieffenbach reported that Maori children near the sea or the lakes acquired the art of swimming almost before they were

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<sup>9</sup> For an extended debate on the association between aquatic activity and the romantic period of English literature in the nineteenth century, see Charles Sprawson's *Haunts of the Black Masseur: The Swimmer as Hero*. London, 1992

able to stand upright (Dieffenbach, 1843). Best also noted that Maori children were sometimes taught using *poito* (floats) made of dried gourds placed in nets and tied to the child or simply carried under one arm. In the South Island, flotation aids were made out of kelp bags and called *poha* (Beattie, 1994) although Maori in the Nelson region were reported as using “two *taha* or *hue-Maori* (gourds) and couple them with *harakeke* (flax) or with *pakipaki* (flax mat) and this coupling was placed under the *poho* or *uma* (chest) of the would-be swimmer, the buoyant gourds preventing sinking” (*ibid.*, p.483). *Kau tahoe* (sidestroke) appeared to be the most popular form of propulsion but early European settlers also report seeing *Kau apuru* (breast stroke) and *Kau tawhai* (overarm crawl) performed (Best, 1976). A distinction was made between swimming in a vertical position which was termed *kaupo*, a form of exercise that is best described in contemporary terms as that of treading water and *kautapapa* which was swimming in the horizontal position (Beattie, 1994). A form of robust play, that of *taurumaki* or ducking, was a favourite pastime of Maori children and consisted of attempting to keep the opposition under water for as long as possible (Best, 1976).



**Illustration 1.** Maori aquatic recreation – Surfing

The print shows wave riding using *kopapa* or surfboards which were relatively crude in design consisting of carved planks approximately 1.5 metres in length. Such recreational activity was common practice on the East Coast of the North Island. (Source: Adapted from Elsdon Best’s *Games and Pastimes of the Maori* from a print by Ellis)

In addition to swimming skills, Maori also practised a rudimentary form of platform diving which entailed the construction of a *Kokiri*, a diving board erected in a slanting position extending out over the water from which the performer jumped feet-first into the water in what was referred to as *ruku*, or feet-first diving (Best, 1952).

Another form of water activity which encouraged children to be fearless in or around water was the use of a large swing called *moari* or *morere*, meaning giant stride, which consisted of a large pole erected close to the water's edge with flax ropes attached to the top of the pole. The performer swung outward on the ropes and released the rope high over the water to enter feet-first (Best, 1976).

Canoe racing or *whaka hoehoe* was another popular form of water-based activity indulged in by Maori youth of both sexes. The value of canoes in portage and cross-country navigation was recognised by pre-European Maori and Maori water skills were readily appreciated and utilised by early European settlers and explorers. Such skills were learned through play at an early age and institutionalised via paddling races called *kaipara waka hoehoe* which were a common form of competition amongst whanau. They were also to become a common feature of early European regattas in Auckland and Wellington harbours (*Ibid.*, p.54). The significance of *waka taua* or war canoes, the domain of warriors in past and present Maori society, reinforces the cultural value attached to this form of aquatic activity.

Surf riding or *whakaheke ngaru* was conducted on *kopapa* (surfboards) as well as using *waka* (canoes) by North Island coastal tribes although the pastime was not developed to the same extent as in Hawaii and the surf boards do not have appeared to have been crafted to any extent (Buck, 1969). Beattie noted that the Murihiku of the lower South Island referred to early forms of wave riding as *kaukau* using *pohas* (kelp bags) for flotation as well as crudely shaped logs called *paparewa* (Beattie, 1994). Similarly, iwi of the Canterbury area were reported to have used big surfboards which could support

up to three people in the surf (*ibid.*, p.257). Best reported that surfboard riding was commonplace amongst East Coast tribes in summertime (Best, 1976).

Early observers of native society comment on the frequency of aquatic recreation although not all concur. Polack, who studied Maori tribes in the Bay of Islands in the 1830's reported that locals excelled in foot racing, climbing, swimming, and canoe racing (Polack, 1838b). Colenso noted that canoeing, swimming and diving were popular although in his estimation the Maori were "very much inferior to the other Polynesians"( reported in Best, 1976, p.17). In describing early contact between Maori and Pakeha between 1846-1848, Power affirmed the belief in Maori aquatic competencies by suggesting that Maori appear to be "as much at home in the water as on land" and that they "cannot understand any man not being able to swim" (Power, 1849, p.163). Dieffenbach, in his journeys through New Zealand between 1839 -1841, was also impressed with the aquatic competencies of Taranaki Maori describing them thus,

The New Zealanders, men, women, and children, swim well, and can continue the exertion for a long time; in common with the North American Indians, they swim like dogs, not dividing the water, as we do, with the palms of the hands, but paddling along with each arm alternatively (Dieffenbach, 1843, p.163).

Dieffenbach is clearly identifying a propensity amongst Maori to swim a form of dog-paddle or sidestroke as opposed to the already established English tradition of swimming breast stroke.

A Maori disposition to survival through their swimming competency is referred to in an early account of a drowning tragedy that occurred on the Manukau Harbour in 1841 when "of the five men in the boat only the Maori reached shore" (Diamond, 1966, p.59). An act of bravery performed by Wetere te Rerenga, a Maori chief and native magistrate, and members of his hapu at Mokau, Taranaki in 1884, when they rescued a

party of surveyors whose boat was swamped in heavy surf, was recognised by the Royal Humane Society of Australasia with the awarding of a Bronze Medal.<sup>10</sup> This popular notion of Maori survival ability in water is re-affirmed in more recent history by the vivid description of the demise of the schooner, *May*, off Auckland's west coast at Muriwai with the loss of six crew in 1902. The sole survivor of the shipwreck was a Maori crewmember, Watti Dunn, a 19 year-old Maori from Northern Wairoa, the district's swimming champion who had his winner's medal tied to his wrist during his three kilometres swim at night through stormy seas (West Auckland Historical Society, 1990).

Of particular utilitarian value then, especially to early missionaries and surveyors requiring guides to negotiate dangerous waters, were the generic swimming skills possessed by Maori as well specific skills such as river crossing which included the novel use of *tuwhana* (grip poles) and the crossing of swift or flooded streams in "a slanting course with the current by treading water with the erect body half out of the water" (Buck, 1969, p.244). Maori guides were not as ubiquitous in the South Island although some of the greatest exploration journeys of Thomas Brunner and Charles Heaphy were made possible using the river skills of the Maori guide, Ekehu (Pascoe, 1971).

One of the pre-disposing factors towards this frequent aquatic activity was the lack of inhibiting attitudes towards semi-nudity or the necessity to wear constricting European-style clothing. Maori male nudity was commonplace whilst women were not so casual about nakedness. Early reports are somewhat contradictory on this point. An observer of Maori lifestyle in 1824, Major R.A.Cruise, noted that nudity amongst Maori women was regarded as "a dereliction of feminine modesty" whereas an earlier observation in

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<sup>10</sup> Up until 1898 when the Royal Humane Society of New Zealand was formed, New Zealanders were honoured for acts of bravery by the Royal Humane Society of Australasia founded in 1874, itself an offspring of the London-based Royal Humane Society. For further information on drowning incidents which were the subjects of bravery awards, refer to Colin Bannister's, *7000 Brave Australians: A History of the Royal Humane Society of Australasia 1874-1994*, Melbourne, 1996

1769 by a French naval lieutenant, Pottier de l'Horne, claimed native women to be "entirely void of modesty" and "naked for the bare asking" (reported in Eldred-Grigg, 1984, p.8).

What has been consistently reported is that Maori saw no reason for clothing when immersed in water, whether in private or public. Maoris of all ages often bathed together, both sexes naked, in rivers, hot pools and at the beach (*Ibid.*). It was considered indecorous to expose the glans of the penis for males<sup>11</sup> and the pubic area or *puke* of the mature female but such concerns were attended to by a minimum of clothing<sup>12</sup> via a small flax string for the male and a loin cloth for the female. Children took part in diving and swimming activities naked, whilst women also participated "with only a rough garment round their loins as they run up the pole (of the kokiri) as readily as monkeys" (Best, 1976, p.47). A description given by Power in the 1840's relates seeing naked Maori girls "swimming about . . . like so many mermaids, racing along the shore, diving from high banks, plunging, kicking, splashing, and ducking one another" (Power, 1849, p.162). Such descriptions not only reflect the romantic style of contemporary writing and the noble savage syndrome, but also give an indication of the Maori affinity to water, as well as the surprise (or delight) of the colonist when confronted with such open nudity.

James Cowan noted that the Maori of Ohinemutu, Rotorua, treated the naturally-occurring hot pools as places of great social significance where "practically the whole population would gather in the evenings for social gossip and song" (Cowan, 1910, p.54). Cowan also reported a certain loosening of the moral codes during the mixed bathing and suggested that infidelity was commonplace in this seductive environment (*ibid.*). The blatancy of nude bathing and its potential for promiscuity was a concern for

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<sup>11</sup> For further discussion about the modesty concerns of the Maori male, refer to Gluckman, L.K., *Tangiwai. A Medical History of New Zealand Prior to 1860*, Auckland, 1976, p.145

<sup>12</sup> For further discussion on modesty concerns of the female Maori, refer to William Colenso, "On the Maori races of New Zealand", *Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute*, 1, 1868, p.33 and R.A.Cruise, *Journal of a Ten Months' Residence in New Zealand*, London, 1824, p.267

some, though not all, European observers. In 1888 for example, Willis reported due shock and disapproval when, after inadvertently observing a group of female Maori swimming in hot pools that “the young ladies, finding themselves discovered in this unexpected fashion, burst into a hearty laugh, and shouted an invitation to join them. The whole thing was so indecorous that it is quite needless to say that we did not avail ourselves of the kindly offer, but fled the spot” (Willis, 1888, p.26).

However, missionaries could not see any such activities as either innocent or common sense. Margan and Finney (1970) have argued that the early missionaries to Polynesia in general and Hawaii in particular, viewed, through typically ethnocentric lenses, such aquatic recreational activities as surfing with suspicion and actively discouraged participation in it because of the associated adornments which included “gambling, the immorality of mixed bathing in scanty costume, as well as neglect of domestic and religious duties” (Pearson, 1979, p.32). The first European sighting of surf board riding was reported by Captain James King of the Royal Navy in 1779 when, upon observing the native riders at Kealakekua Bay, Hawaii, he proclaimed the feat as being “the most perilous and extraordinary. . . altogether astonishing, and is scarcely to be credited” (cited in Dennis, 1978, p.35). However, concern for religious propriety in appearance and behaviour, characteristic of the strict Calvinist tenets of the time, are reflected in the following quotation from a missionary who suggested that, as a consequence of indulging in the indigenous sport of surfing,

Some lives are lost, some were severely wounded, maimed or crippled, some were reduced to poverty both by losses in gambling and neglecting to cultivate the land ... But the greatest evil of all resulted from constant intermingling without any restraint of persons of both sexes and of all ages at all times of the day and at all hours of the night (cited in Finney and Houston, 1966, p.61).

In addition to the oppressive influences of missionary zeal, the debilitating social, economic and epidemiological effects of European settlement on the Hawaiian

population and their culture, meant that many forms of aquatic recreation such as surfing were lost to the indigenous culture in the early days of European colonisation so that, barely a century after first being observed in 1779, “the once proud sport of royalty had retrogressed several hundred if not a thousand years” (Margan and Finney, 1970, p.105).

Whilst the aquatic recreational activity of surfing had not become so institutionalised in Maori society as it had in Hawaiian society, the strict concern for religious propriety as well as rigid Victorian dress codes did permeate Maori custom and hasten the loss of the distinctive Maori aquatic activities previously noted in earlier observations of Maori society. Initial attempts to control what the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in 1830 referred to as the “perverse levity and awful depravity of these savages” were met with laughter or ambivalence by Maori but during the 1840’s a mass enthusiasm for Christianity had conveyed the new concept of sins of the flesh throughout Maoridom (Eldred-Grigg, 1984, p.13). Dieffenbach noted the oppressive hand of missionary fervour on Maori games and pastimes by suggesting that their numerous dances, songs and other games were regarded as vices (Dieffenbach, 1843). Best reported that an old native, when describing the rules laid down by early missionaries in the 1830’s, expressed much puzzlement at strictures which included no firewood gathering, no fishing, and no bathing on the Sabbath (Best, 1976).

## 2.2 'The New Zealand Death': Early European colonisation

With the arrival of British immigrants in the early nineteenth century, their ability to swim and survive in an environment where contact with water was frequent became an obvious concern. In fact, drowning was such a commonplace cause of death of pioneers that it was often referred to as the "New Zealand death" (Pascoe, 1971, p.556).<sup>13</sup> The first recorded drowning of a white person in Australasia from sea bathing was reported in the Sydney Gazette on Saturday, 18 July, 1818 (Meagher, 1960). In New Zealand, an early European victim of drowning was Captain William Cornwallis Symonds, Deputy Surveyor-General of New Zealand, who, in 1841, lost his life in a boating mishap on the Manukau Harbour in spite of his being a powerful swimmer (Dieffenbach, 1843).

Early drowning rates in New Zealand were extremely high by modern standards, a reflection of such variables as : the new arrivals' inability to swim; the type of clothing worn; the dependence on small craft as a means of conveyance; the dependence on waterways for navigation; and the lack of bridges and safe roads. Surveyors engaged in exploration of the South Island were particularly at risk in spite of the availability of skilled Maori guides. For example, in August, 1863, three people drowned in Lake Brunner, Westland, an occurrence that was not uncommon and prompted the observation by William Pember-Reeves that "more than one of the Government officers sent there to explore were either swept away by some torrent or came back half-crippled by hunger and rheumatism" (reported in Pascoe, 1971, p.559). Miners were particularly at risk in the rugged back blocks with multiple drowning incidence often reported. For example, in Arrow, Otago, four drowned in one incident in July, 1863; in Buller, Nelson four miners drowned in the Buller Gorge in January, 1865 and, in July of

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<sup>13</sup> New Zealand's claim to this title could be challenged by the frequency of drowning across the Tasman during the early colonisation of Australia. Statistics presented by the Royal Humane Society of Australasia between 1864-1874 suggest that 2479 drownings occurred in Victoria alone, a figure which represented an annual loss of 255 persons in a year, or about the usual number of immigrants contained in an immigrant ship. For further information, refer Colin Bannister's *7000 Brave Australians: A history of the Royal Humane Society of Australasia, 1874-1994*, Melbourne, 1996, pp.8-13

the same year, in Westland six drowned after a raft capsized whilst attempting to cross the Grey river.<sup>14</sup>

The geographical distribution of drowning by province shown in Table 1 not only reflects contemporary population distribution but also the dangers of cross-terrain travel that confronted those engaged in gold mining and exploration activities in the Otago and Westland regions at this time.

**Table 1.** Distribution of drowning incidences in New Zealand rivers: 1840-1870.

| Province    | No. of persons drowned |
|-------------|------------------------|
| Auckland    | 227                    |
| Taranaki    | 17                     |
| Hawke's Bay | 40                     |
| Wellington  | 165                    |
| Nelson      | 102                    |
| Marlborough | 48                     |
| Canterbury  | 135                    |
| Otago       | 170                    |
| Southland   | 37                     |
| Westland    | 174                    |
| Total       | 1,115                  |

Source: Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives, 1870, D-46, p.1

Official statistics testify to the extent of the drowning problem. A parliamentary paper of 1870 entitled 'Persons drowned in New Zealand' reported that between 1840 and 1870, 1,115 people had drowned in New Zealand rivers and streams alone giving a clear indication of the extent of the drowning problem and the public cause for concern.<sup>15</sup>

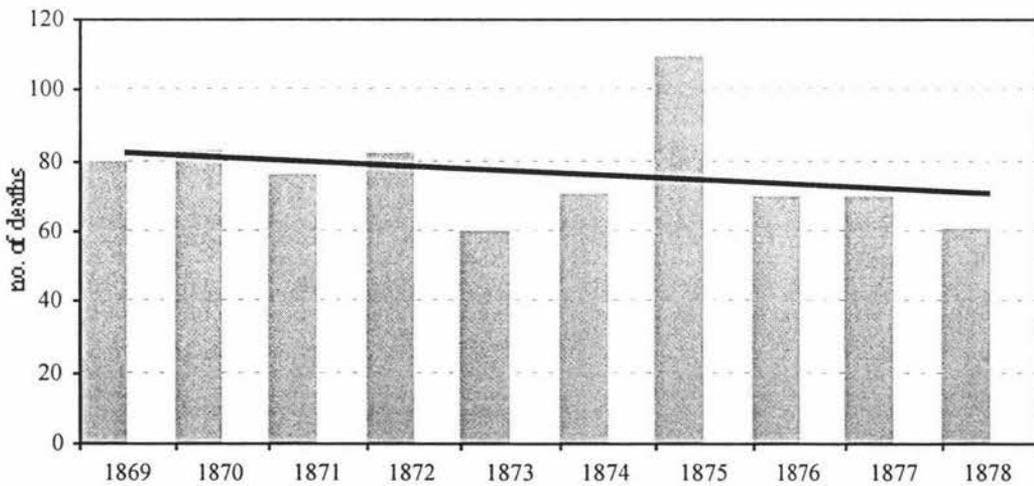
Riders taken from coroners inquests and included in the 1870 report suggest the difficulty associated with river crossing and the role of authorities in providing safe

<sup>14</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1870, D-46, pp.4-6

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3

passage by making recommendations that “government should take steps to protect life at this ford” and “government highly culpable for not having fords marked”.<sup>16</sup> The lack of protection from flash flooding, especially in the river plain areas of the South Island, is reflected in the loss of life reported. For example, within the space of two days in February, 1868, eight people had drowned as a consequence of the flooding of the Timuka and Opihi rivers, with another four fatalities in floods at Rangiora.<sup>17</sup> In an earlier incident in January, 1858, fourteen people were drowned in floods in Wellington, twelve of them members of the Sellars family which included five children.<sup>18</sup> Such incidences were widely reported in the news media of the day. In the *Illustrated New Zealand Herald* in 1875, the dangers associated with crossing swollen rivers were graphically depicted in a scene of a coach negotiating the Waimakariri in which the ferryman is seen to be wearing a lifebelt and the accompanying article suggesting that such precautions were essential because of the way in which the fords shifted with every flood (reported in Pascoe, 1971).

**Figure 1.** Deaths by river drowning: 1869-1878



Source: Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives, 1870-1879

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.4-5

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4

Figure 1 indicates the level of river drowning in the 1870's, a decade that claimed an average of 65 deaths per year and a total of 761 souls, the equivalent of the population of Tauranga or Gisborne at that time.<sup>19</sup> The incomplete nature of such statistics notwithstanding, such a substantial loss of life in a relatively small migrant population was of considerable concern to successive pioneer governments and, by means of further comparison, represented as significant a loss to the fledgling colony as the losses sustained in the Maori Wars of the early 1860's when, between 1863-1864, at the height of hostilities, a total of 822 Maori and Pakeha were reported as killed in action.<sup>20</sup> Comparison of singular events also reinforces the magnitude of the drowning problem at the time, for example, 137 persons were reported as killed in action at the highly significant battle of Orakau in 1864<sup>21</sup> whilst, a year earlier the *Orpheus* went down on the Manukau bar with the loss of 189 lives<sup>22</sup>. A few years later in 1866, 73 lives were lost at sea with the sinking of the *General Grant* off the Auckland Islands<sup>23</sup>. In 1864, at another important engagement at Gate Pa, 48 were killed in action, whilst in the same year, 79 people drowned in river incidences alone.<sup>24</sup>

Throughout the 1880's, an order of the House of Representatives required an annual return of "Persons drowned in New Zealand Rivers" to be tabled. As can be seen from Figure 2, drowning in rivers and streams gradually declined as a consequence of greater awareness and improved roading, although, by 1885, the sum of lives lost from 1840 was still considerable at 2236<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> Tauranga and Gisborne were estimated to have populations of between 500-1,000 in 1874. For further details of population distribution in the 1870's, refer McKinnon's *New Zealand Historical Atlas*, plate 53 – The Colony in 1874

<sup>20</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1865, - E-13, p.1

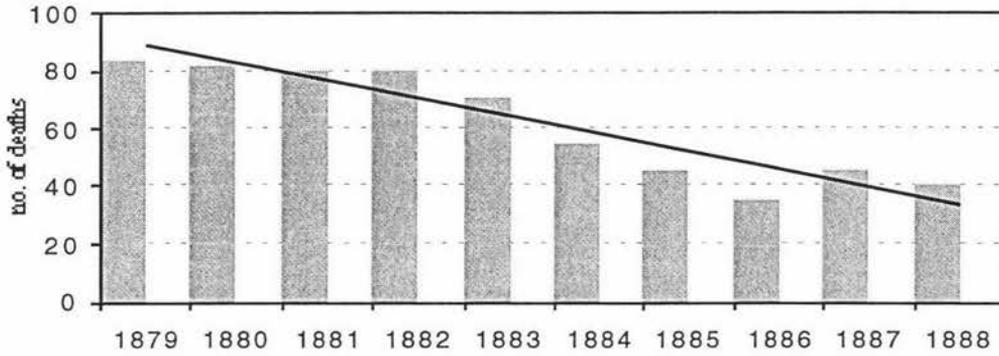
<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1

<sup>22</sup> For further detail of New Zealand's greatest maritime disaster, refer to Thayer Fairburn's *The Orpheus Disaster* in which he notes that the *Orpheus* had journeyed 20,000 miles from England only to meet disaster some two miles from journey's end in Auckland just fifteen minutes sailing time and suggests that "If only more of them had been stronger swimmers; if only all of them had had life-preservers. . ."

<sup>23</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1868, - E-6, p.16

<sup>24</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1870, - D-46, p.6

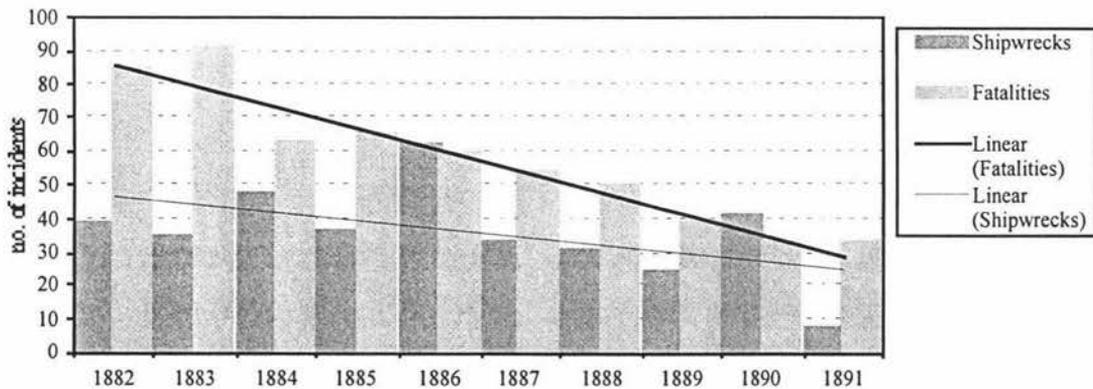
<sup>25</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1888, - H-27, p. 2

**Figure 2.** Deaths by river drownings:1879-1888

Source: Appendices to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1881-1888.

Exacerbating the above-mentioned problem was the oft-reported propensity of many of the early settlers to mix alcohol consumption with water navigation (Pascoe, 1971; McLean, 1990; Crawford, 1985).

Apart from the high risk of drowning whilst engaged in cross-country navigation, New Zealand's pioneer population was also at risk when using coastal transport. Coastal shipwrecks and their associated fatalities were all too common in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Marine department reports to Parliament reflect the increased tonnage of coastal traffic and the dependence upon sea transport for passenger movement around the growing colony. One consequence of this increased economic activity was the increase in shipwrecks and drowning as indicated in Figure 3 below.

**Figure 3.** Shipwrecks/fatalities in New Zealand: 1882-1891

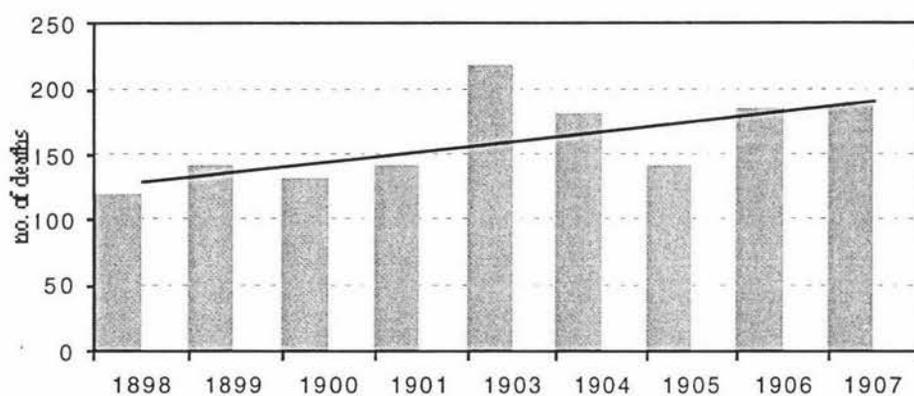
Source: Marine Department Reports, Appendices to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1882-1891

The high incidence of maritime fatalities was a consequence of a number of contributing factors including: poor swimming and water survival skills of passengers and crew; poor safety equipment and regulations; inexperienced crews; natural hazards; and poorly charted harbours and minimal navigation aids; and, especially earlier on, a dependence on sail rather than steam power.

However, as can be seen by the trend lines in Figure 3 above, by the end of the Victorian era, the number of shipwrecks and fatalities were declining as ports were made safer, ships were steam-powered, and harbour boards took up navigation and rescue responsibilities (McLean, 1990).

Whilst death by drowning was considered an occupational hazard for early settlers going about their daily business, a recreational incident involving a fishing expedition in a small boat in 1871, which claimed the lives of seven young men, prompted calls from the coroner and newspaper correspondents alike for regulation to prevent inexperienced persons using boats (Crawford, 1985). Whether such incidences could have been avoided by the victims having acquired appropriate aquatic skills and safety knowledge was not an issue of debate at this time.

As indicated in Figure 4, death by drowning continued to rise around the turn of the century, a consequence of a combination of causes including population increase, continuing low levels of swimming ability, inappropriate dress on or around water and a continuing high level of accidental immersions – all of this in spite of improvements in transport safety brought about by improved coastal shipping safety, better road infrastructure for cross-country travel and the development of rail transport.

**Figure 4.** Deaths by drowning:1898-1907

Source: New Zealand Official Yearbooks - 1898-1907

In summary, despite the availability of accurate figures before 1927 (NZWSC Annual Report, 1986), the extent of the 'New Zealand Death' was still very evident at the beginning of the twentieth century, with McLean, (1991) suggesting that death by drowning exceeded death by road accidents until as late as 1928. Concerns raised within political circles of the fledgling colony in the 1870's did not precipitate demand for aquatics education of the nation's youth through its neophyte state education system being established at about this time. The prevalence of drowning through accidental immersion did not stimulate demand for the development of preventative measures through education but rather by making the environment safer by improving the transport infrastructure.

### **Leisure and bathing: An emerging Victorian sub-culture**

Aquatic activity as a form of recreation, or for that matter recreation in any form, was limited in the work-oriented life of the early settlers. The early settlers were faced with a new country of rugged terrain, devoid of communication and transport links.

Occupations were essentially pastoral and were characterised by hard physical labour, long working days, few holidays and little leisure time (Crawford, 1989). In a pioneering environment, children were regarded as an economic asset and were often left with little spare time to play and little social infrastructure in which to participate in organised games (Sutton-Smith, 1982).

In spite of such limitations, indications of the recognition of the recreational potential of the aquatic environment was evident at an early stage of development of the Auckland region. The village of Devonport was described as the first of the marine or bathing villages of Auckland when offered for sale by auction in 1859.<sup>26</sup> The late 1860's witnessed a building boom in many parts of the fledgling colony largely due to the increased population through immigration. Society gradually changed from small isolated settlements into communities linked by road and railway. The nature of leisure time also changed from being a time for relaxation and recuperation to an opportunity for activity-oriented recreation, a reflection of the change in occupational workload as a result of industrialisation and mechanisation of the work place. Modernisation and a decline in working hours, together with the increased incidence of structured work and leisure hours as well as the growth of an urban-based workforce, were the catalysts for a change in lifestyle (Crawford, 1989). Increased leisure time became a reality in the latter part of the nineteenth century and organised recreation followed the established trend of 'Mother England' for participation in British games and sport such as cricket and rugby. Crawford reported a metamorphoses of attitudes in favour of physical activity thus,

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<sup>26</sup> *The New Zealander*, April 2, 1859, p.2

the 1870's saw sport, recreation and physical education protagonists being included with all manner of hopes, aspirations and beliefs that involvement in physical exercise would improve, not only the physique, but the psyche and personality (Crawford, 1983, p.9).

The hedonism of an educational ideology that promoted games as a value system was then firmly established around the time that our oldest schools were being founded. However, in their transfer across the world, such activities lost some of their elitist connotations and were embraced in a more egalitarian light. Such egalitarianism was, however, gender selective. Victorian England, from which most of colonial New Zealand's societal attitudes emanated, tended to maximise the differences between the sexes as it did the differences between the classes, between the rich and poor. Thus the experience of non-working class Victorian women was circumscribed not only by such disabilities as iniquitous property rights and disenfranchisement but also by such physical constraints as heavy corsetry, not being able to swim naked<sup>27</sup> (as was the common male practice in the first part of the nineteenth century), not being able to ride astride and not being able to participate in vigorous games or gymnastics (Fletcher, 1984).

Whilst boys and men were engaged in the 'manly' pursuit of exercise and games, girls and women of the prosperous classes at least, were busily engaged in the critically important role of being ladies with all its incumbent connotations of passivity, gentility and feminine weakness. Furthermore, since indulgence in sport and recreational activity was strictly class specific in Victorian England, working class women used municipal facilities for washing themselves, but the cost of swimming was beyond their pockets.

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<sup>27</sup> Trudgill points out that male nudity was seemingly acceptable practice to Victorian females and that in the major English resorts, crowds of perfectly respectable women thronged the gentleman's part of the beach, within a few yards of the bathing machines, quite unconcerned by the sights before them. He illustrates this by using commentary from a contemporary newspaper, the *Saturday Review*, which stated that, "There does not seem to be a notion that anything is improper - there are no averted looks, no sidelong glances, no blushes or shame. Naked men are treated as one of the products of the place, like lobsters, or soles or pebbles." For further information on Victorian attitudes to nudity and sexual attitudes, refer Eric Trudgill's *Madonnas and Magdalens: The Origins and Development of Victorian Sexual Attitudes*, London, 1976

Those of the privileged classes were thus protected from those of a lower social class or of doubtful virtue by a cost of admission that was “sufficiently high to keep it select” (reported in Hargreaves, 1994, p.96). In examining the early development of seabathing as a part of the lifestyle of Australians and New Zealanders, Booth (1998) reinforces the pervasive influence of class upon bathing participation by maintaining that the activity was initially legitimatised by the patronage of aristocracy in the eighteenth century.<sup>28</sup> It was based upon the recommendations of medical practitioners promoting the supposed therapeutic benefits of cold sea water bathing. Such practise was later adopted by the middle classes in the nineteenth century as a healthy pastime to be pursued initially as a recreational activity and then, more latterly, as a sporting activity (*Ibid.*).

In stark contrast to societal attitudes on women’s participation in physical activity was the developing attitude towards sport and recreation of the dominant male hegemony of nineteenth century New Zealand. The pioneer years of European settlement of New Zealand corresponded to a frontier stage of development when compared to the heavily settled and historically-aged mother country, Britain. As a consequence, Klein (1971) has suggested that a number of frontier value themes characterised fledgling attitudes towards sport and recreation and included emphasis on: masculinity with its implied toughness, aggressiveness and the ability to withstand stress; competitiveness as a socially useful tool; individual initiative and independence of action; individual autonomy and control over one’s environment; challenge, excitement and risk taking. In a frontier society, risks needed to be taken in exploration and in exploiting natural resources. Such values legitimated the male pursuit of vigorous, often violent, and physically demanding exercise. The values idealised in the bushman myth of tough masculinity, mateship and courage were often reflected in the blasé attitudes towards

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<sup>28</sup> Sprawson suggests that “Ever since George III had set the mood by swimming off Weymouth to the accompaniment of a chamber orchestra, a string of resorts had grown up along the coasts of England, ornamented with elegant squares and piers, as sea swimming became fashionable for purposes of health. These were unique to England. Salt water was a novel alternative to spa waters, as a cure for almost anything....Ramsgate, Margate, Brighton, Southend and Scarborough were already in vogue by the time Jane Austen came to write her last novel *Sanditon*.” For further information on the popularity of swimming as a therapeutic and prophylactic activity in Victorian England, refer Charles Sprawson’s *Haunts of the Black Masseur*, London, 1992, Chapter 1, pp 19-44

safety especially when in an aquatic environment and may have been contributory to the high male drowning rates in the early times.

Claims for the therapeutic and hygienic effects of swimming were being promoted in Britain and its colonies alike. The growth of large towns, increasing industrialisation and the reduction of opportunity to bathe in open water in nineteenth century Britain, were all factors promoting the establishment of swimming baths to promote cleanliness rather than public recreation. In 1828, the Corporation of Liverpool opened a salt-water bath at St. George's Pier Head, the first instance of a municipally owned and operated swimming bath in Britain (Sinclair, 1894). From the mid-nineteenth century, the English were regarded as the best swimmers in the world at a time when the leisured classes in particular were displaying a passion for athleticism unrivalled in contemporary Europe and America. Sprawson (1992) reports that London, with its six permanent pools, summer floating baths in the Thames and regular swimming galas was looked upon as the capital of world swimming. In an uncharacteristic display of sexual equality for the time, public swimming pool space was made available to London women as early as 1858 at the St. Marylebone Public Baths in recognition of the value of swimming as a 'life-preserving art' and as a form of exercise beneficial to women's health (Hargreaves, 1994). However, in reality, such concessions were really only to a very select group and remained the province and privilege of middle-class 'ladies only' participants for many years.

In some boys' public schools in Britain, one feature of the 'cult of athleticism' manifested itself in the employment of professional coaches for teaching purposes especially for games. At Eton, 'watermen' were employed to teach boys swimming at the river bathing places (McIntosh, 1968). After one drowning incident, swimming classes were instituted, long before any other educational institution in the British Empire, under the tuition of the "noted water-colourist William Evans, and the future Bishop George Augustus Selwyn, later a fighting cleric in New Zealand famous for swimming broad rivers in his efforts to subjugate the Maoris" (Sprawson, 1992, p.86).

In 1870, Nichols advocated that every school in Britain should have its swimming bath with male and female teachers (cited in Hardy, 1988) and, whilst such promotion of swimming was likely to be the exception rather than the rule, several school boards and individual teachers managed to provide their children with swimming instruction in spite of very limited facilities and opportunities (McIntosh, 1965). In New Zealand, James MacAndrew, as Minister of Works and Immigration, proclaimed in 1874 at the opening of the first 'Turkish baths' that if "money spent upon nobblers (*liquor!*) and tobacco were spent in bathing, the health and longevity of the community would be very greatly increased" (reported in Crawford, 1985, p.6).

The explosion of interest in recreational activity, gave impetus to swimming, but in the beginning at least, this meant swimming in public pools but not at the beach (Barnett and Wolfe, 1993). Victorian morality did not permit free public swimming in the open sea and repressive local legislation prohibiting swimming at city beaches was characteristic of many Australian and New Zealand beaches (Pearson, 1978). Booth (1998) argues that swimming in nineteenth century Australia and New Zealand, whether as a recreational pastime or as therapy or as sport, was very much a minority interest of the middle class and that many within mainstream society were indifferent to its allure.

In Auckland, the first to respond to the public's need to bathe were private entrepreneurs who, in the 1860's, barely twenty five years after the settlement of the Auckland isthmus, erected a simple wooden enclosure on the harbour's edge on the eastern side of the breakwater wharf between Commercial and Official Bays below the high water mark. The climate of Auckland, with its characteristic high temperatures and humidity, when combined with the Victorian propensity for full and heavy clothing meant that bathing took on an important hygienic rather than therapeutic tone. In a colonial settlement where most dwellings had access to no other supply of water than standpipes or wells, and baths were still a comparative rarity, it was imperative that some public means of encouraging personal ablutions be available (Bush, 1971).

A more substantial development about the same time was the establishment of the Britomart baths which was owned and operated by the Salt-Water Bathing Company and included refreshment rooms, springboards and a false bottom (Pointon, 1984).



**Illustration 2.** Salt water baths, Auckland c.1870

(Source: Auckland Public Library)

In 1881, partially as a consequence of the closure of the Britomart baths in 1876 as well as increasing public demand, the Auckland City Council finally became involved and a new salt-water pool was built in Custom Street West. The completion date of the baths was accelerated because of the intensity of the summer heat, a reflection of the importance of the bathing, rather than the swimming, prerogative. In the first nine months, 20,000 people passed through the turnstiles and, by 1883, this number had increased to 63,000 (Bush, 1971). However, in the opinion of one local newspaper, the conditions that greeted would-be patrons were far from satisfactory with the “slimy black mud or ooze that greets the eye of the intending bather on visiting the bathhouse in Customs Street much affecting its popularity”.<sup>29</sup> In 1885, the Council, obviously impressed with the heavy patronage of the Salt-Water Baths, and mindful of growing public criticism of the salt-water facility, constructed a covered fresh-water facility in Albert Street behind the city market.

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<sup>29</sup> *The Observer*, March, 1886

As other local authorities began to establish public facilities, regulations for sexual segregation were framed. Such regulations were introduced by the Nelson City Council in 1878 in by-laws which stated that the baths be open to “Ladies only on every day except Saturdays and Sundays, from 2 till 4 o’clock” (cited in Eldred-Grigg, 1984, p.8). In a similar vein, discrimination against females was clearly demonstrated in the unequal apportioning of pool time in the Auckland City Council baths with only two hours of each morning being designated as ‘ladies time’ and the rest for male swimming. In addition, the custodian of the pool was required to hoist a red pennant when entry was restricted to female bathing. Such discriminatory practices, whilst undoubtedly reflecting contemporary dominant male hegemony, also reflects the imbalance of the sexes demographically and of the dangers for unattended females in public places at the time.

In 1881, women bathers in Auckland were clearly dissatisfied with the situation and successfully petitioned the Auckland City Council who subsequently allocated an additional two afternoons a week for female swimming (Pointon, 1984). A tragedy early in 1887, when a woman was drowned, is indicative of the prevalent social mores that surrounded female modesty. The male pool manager, who was in the habit of vacating the premises in order not to offend the finer sensibilities of the women bathers during their allotted time, had left his wife who was a non-swimmer in charge at the time of the incident (Bush, 1971).

One of the country’s oldest baths - and one that is still in use - is the St Clair Salt-Water Baths (Barnett & Wolfe, 1993). In its official opening in 1884, the Mayor of Dunedin, Mr Calder, referred to the salt-water pool as providing opportunity to bathe in safety and, as reported in the press,

proceeded to divest himself of his overcoat, and showed himself to be arrayed in nature's garb, with the exception of a pair of bathing trunks, and without more ado took a 'header', followed by about a dozen similarly attired persons.<sup>30</sup>

Such a display of near-nakedness, especially by a civic dignitary in an official function does not appear to have raised any great public concern, an observation that reinforces the suggestion by Booth that the "public presentation of the body became a legal and moral issue in Australia and New Zealand only in the last decade of the nineteenth century" (Booth, 1998, p.45).<sup>31</sup>

By the turn of the century, the therapeutic and medicinal value of bathing in mineral springs and hot pools, which New Zealand had in abundance, had been recognised as a potentially valuable tourist activity and a watering hole for the troops of the Empire. Sir William Fox, an enthusiastic political proponent of this potential, reported in 1874 that Ohinemutu, Rotorua afforded the "finest conceivable opportunity of establishing a great sanitorium for Indian regiments"<sup>32</sup>. Early private initiatives in well-known regions such as Rotorua were followed in the late nineteenth century by Government investment in hot pools and baths. Returns from the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts from 1901-1903 indicate that Government funding had been concentrated on Rotorua, Hanmer Springs and Te Aroha and revenue acquired from admission charges to the baths suggest the popularity of the activity.<sup>33</sup> Demands from the local Member for Taumaranui, Mr. Jennings, for government assistance towards the establishment of similar facilities at Tokaanu, near Taupo, in 1903 aimed at providing baths for the local population and the large number of anglers and tourists were initially approved with a grant of six hundred pounds but not acted upon.<sup>34</sup>

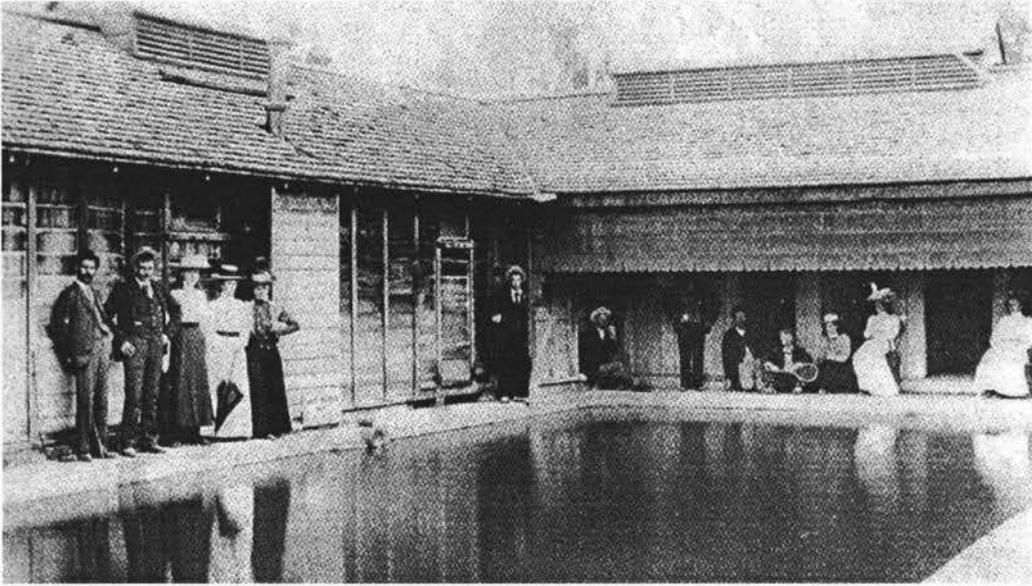
<sup>30</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, December 15, 1884

<sup>31</sup> Whilst the bulk of by-laws were introduced around the turn of the century, there is evidence of an earlier attempt to confine the practise of nude bathing with the passing of an ordinance (provincial law) by the local government of New Munster, based at Auckland. For further information refer Constabulary Force Ordinance, New Munster, Session 1, No.9, 1849 (Auckland City Council Archives)

<sup>32</sup> The Hon. W. Fox in a letter to the Premier on the *Hot Springs District of the North Island*, Appendices to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1874, H-26

<sup>33</sup> *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1903, Vol. cxxv, Sept.1, p.208

<sup>34</sup> *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1909, Vol.148, September 1, p.217-218



**Illustration 3.** Rotorua's original swimming baths, 1885

(Source: Auckland Institute and Museum)

The first swimming bath, as opposed to a spa bath, was built in Rotorua in 1885, fed by the hot pool, Oruawhata. Separate women's baths were built in Rotorua in 1896, prior to that, only a few hours per week in the Blue Bath had been allotted to women, the authorities reinforcing the belief that swimming was not a suitable activity for women in Victorian society. In spite of early grand plans to provide a South Pacific spa to match the European resorts, the lack of access, the poor infrastructure of the towns and the lack of a leisured class meant that most developments took place in an *ad hoc* way, reaching its zenith in the 1920's. Shortly thereafter, the restorative benefits of balneology lost its appeal and New Zealand families took to the beach for rest and aquatic recreation of a different kind.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> For further information on the early development of spa resorts in New Zealand, refer to Ian Rockel's *Taking the Waters; Early Spas in New Zealand*, Wellington, 1976

## 2.4 Schooling, swimming and “pandering to childhood cravings for activity.”

Concomitant with these changing societal attitudes towards participation in physical activity were institutional developments in Britain towards compulsory schooling and the inclusion of military drill supplemented by games and sport out of school in the 1871 Education Act (Bray, 1992). Whilst this Act did not provide for the teaching of swimming, the Education Board did agree to allow it to be included in the same manner as physical drill. Sinclair noted optimistically that such was the commitment of local authorities, that “it will not be long before ample opportunity is afforded throughout England for every boy and girl to learn the art of swimming” (Sinclair, 1894, p.12).

Moves towards the provision of compulsory state-funded education were first promoted in New Zealand in the 1877 Education Act. In terms of the physical dimension of a child’s education, the Act provided that,

. . . in Public Schools provision shall be made for the instruction in military drill for all boys, and in such schools as the Board shall from time to time direct, provision shall be made for physical training and wherever practical there shall be attached to each school a playground of an least a quarter of an acre.<sup>36</sup>

As a consequence of this Act, children were compelled to attend school but, in keeping with the contemporary Victorian work ethic, school was not to be considered a frivolous affair. Moreover, the document reflected the conditions of the mother country with regard to land availability for playgrounds in much the same way as building architecture (for example, using high-pitched roofs) and aspect (for example, facing schools to the south) slavishly reproduced a British-oriented system. As pointed out by Campbell, so little adaptation was there to the conditions and opportunities of the new country that many New Zealand schools could have been “set down in one of the congested

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<sup>36</sup> New Zealand Statutes, 1877 - p.126

industrial areas of the homeland without appearing in any way out of keeping with its general surrounding” (Campbell, 1941, p.76).

The national curriculum focussed on the centrality of a traditional knowledge base and was disseminated through rigid forms of instruction so that the task of teaching was undermined by the necessity “to violate almost every principle or law of child-nature and child development” (Caughley, 1928, p.39). In the second reading of the Bill, Robert Stout, the Member for Dunedin City, contended that the greatest blot on the Bill was its failure to provide for secondary schooling.<sup>37</sup> He was supported in this concern by William Fox and Sir George Grey, the former of whom pointed out that systems of secondary education were already in place in countries such as Prussia, Scotland and the United States (Butchers, 1929).

The Education Reserves Act 1877 did recognise the role of secondary education through the allocation of one-quarter of education reserves to be set apart as endowments.<sup>38</sup> It also defined secondary education as any system of purely secular education carried on at ‘superior’ schools where the scholarly pursuit of a liberal education included English language and literature, Latin and Greek classics, French and other modern languages, mathematics, physics and other branches of science (Cummings and Cummings, 1969).

However, with regard to the physical education of the child at either primary or secondary level, there was no provision for regular organised physical activity other than military drill. A few enthusiastic teachers taught cricket and soccer outside of school hours, but generally school was a serious business unrelieved by “panderings to childhood cravings for activity” (Stothart, 1972, p.3). Furthermore, the curriculum was confined by the rigours of external inspection which focussed on the three ‘R’s’, a feature which, in no small part, was due to the departmental concern regarding the ability of teachers to instruct and assess the very rigidly conceived knowledge base of

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<sup>37</sup> New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1877, Stout, p.227

<sup>38</sup> New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1877, Bowen, p. 631

the curriculum at the time - the consequences of which have been aptly described as turning the inspector into an “educational policeman” and the teacher into a “hack examination coach” (Campbell, 1941, p.87). It was not until 1894 that internal examinations by teachers replaced the inspector’s examinations for Standard 1 and 2. Later, in 1899, George Hogben substituted internal examinations up to Standard 5, leaving only Standard 6 pupils to be examined in what became known as the Proficiency Examination, a situation which persisted and restricted primary teachers until its abolition in 1936 (Mitchell, 1968).

The O’Rorke Commission, established in 1878 to report on higher education, devoted much energy to secondary education and, in particular, recognised the financial precariousness that many schools operated under. For example, the Commission reported that Otago High School and Auckland Girls’ High School, the largest two secondary schools at the time, typified the plight of most secondary schools by having to operate under deficit budgets (Cummings and Cummings, 1969). Given the strictures of a curriculum bound by traditional academic pursuit, a cash-strapped operational environment, and even some public antipathy towards the role of secondary education in the first place, it is not surprising to see that aquatic education did not feature largely in the relatively bleak educational vista of the 1880’s. Given the propensity of New Zealand’s early secondary schools to follow the traditions of the British grammar school, swimming was viewed only as an extra-curricular activity with associated sporting connotations such as championship races as well as an after-school activity via unsupervised recreation. Secondary rolls actually declined during the 1880’s, a reflection on its perceived relevance in a time of high inflation, declining real income, and economic and political insecurity (Cummings and Cummings, 1969).

McKenzie, Lee and Lee suggest that such a decline reflects the relatively high opportunity cost of education for European settlers at the time, a time when families often needed the labour of their children to contribute to family income and additional time-out from opportunity to contribute was not deemed possible nor desirable

(McKenzie, Lee and Lee, 1996). Furthermore, since hard, unremitting labour was still considered very much the natural lot for children, physical activities such as swimming, exercise, or games, rather than being included or valued as part of the curriculum were more likely to be considered as frivolous and inconsequential to a child's 'real' education.

One of the casualties of these depressed times was the abandonment of enlightened plans to train teachers which, in turn, perpetuated the continuation of the pupil-teacher system. This lack of training stymied developments in all areas of the curriculum but especially those such as physical instruction which were not externally controlled by the strictures of examination and inspection.

Swimming was taught where swimming facilities were available at, or close to schools. Christ's College was arguably the first New Zealand school to develop its own swimming facility in 1884 under the enthusiastic direction of the school principal, C.C. Corfe (Butchers, 1950). It was noted that at the time of its opening, there were only four swimmers out of forty three pupils under the age of thirteen, but after the opening of the schools baths this number increased rapidly (Bedgood, 1954). Among the pool's unique characteristics was its dependence on four artesian wells for water and its ample dimensions, being thirty yards long and twelve yards wide (Hamilton, 1996). Boys were taught to swim using a pole and rope method of artificial support but, where this failed, the dubious pedagogic practice of throwing willing pupils in at the deep end was the last resort (*ibid.*). Both East and West Christchurch had pools in the 1880's and, by the early 1900's, schools on the outskirts of Christchurch as well as some outer rural townships also had pools (McGeorge, 1985). At Wellington College, swimming was taught by staff in non-school time, initially as a voluntary programme but with the building of a school pool in 1897, the ability to swim was made compulsory for all pupils (Heron, 1967). The pool was relatively sophisticated in its construction, having tiled surfaces and the luxury of a springboard. (Beasley, 1992).

The prohibitive influences on female behaviour in society in general had an obviously limiting influence on the physical education of girls in schools at this time, although swimming as a sport did show some foresight in catering for female competition from an early stage. Whether early attempts at female inclusion in sport and physical activity in the school curriculum reflect such participation as exemplifying an emancipatory force or, conversely, whether it provided opportunities for transmitting accepted values and attitudes towards appropriate feminine behaviour is difficult to ascertain (Fry, 1985). In noting the restrictive pressure that 1880's society placed on girls participation in vigorous recreational activity, Northey suggests that swimming was popular amongst pupils at Auckland Girls' Grammar School but difficult for them to take seriously as the public swimming pools, such as the Albert Street Baths previously referred to (see p.50), practised strict segregation with women and girls restricted to two hours use in the morning when the water was cold (Northey, 1988).

Private girls schools such as Woodford House in the Hawkes Bay established in 1894 and Girton College in Dunedin in 1886 were modelled on English private schools such as Cheltenham Ladies' College. Unlike their English counterparts, however, they tended to be more egalitarian and pragmatic and embraced such 'unwomanly activities' as cricket and swimming (Varnham, 1994). Sports days were initiated at Woodford House in 1896 with swimming activities taking place in the lake of a local landowner at Waikoko from 1898 until a pool was built by damming a stream adjacent to the school in 1913 (*ibid.*).

Barr reports that in her secondary schooling at Waitaki Girls School in the 1890's, tennis and swimming were the only sports encouraged for high school girls and these only to a limited extent owing to the restrictive nature of the serge bathing costumes and lack of swimming facilities (Barr, 1953). Similarly, Goodyear noted that, whilst ideas about modesty were changing, fewer girls than boys were taught to swim and that those who could were taught by parents rather than teachers (Goodyear, 1995). May recalled travelling to the nearby Otago Boys' High School for swimming lessons on a Friday afternoon but it is unlikely that such activity was universal practice at this time (May,

about modesty were changing, fewer girls than boys were taught to swim and that those who could were taught by parents rather than teachers (Goodyear, 1995). May recalled travelling to the nearby Otago Boys' High School for swimming lessons on a Friday afternoon but it is unlikely that such activity was universal practice at this time (May, 1980). Eileen Soper and her classmates at Southland Girls' High School were taught after school hours in a local river estuary to swim breast-stroke and side-stroke and envied their brothers who learnt the trudgeon, an over-arm stroke at the boys' school, a stroke considered too demanding and lacking grace for girls to perform (Soper, 1969).

It was not until almost the turn of the century that the concept of physical education was even mentioned in an Education Department document and this was in the form of an inspector's report in 1895 for the Westland region<sup>39</sup> which stated that the neglect of physical education was a serious defect in the educational work of the district. It was to be another five years before similar documents acknowledged the place of swimming as a worthy syllabus study with the inspector of the Southland region reporting thus,

In our annual reports we have over and over again referred to the desirability of making our pupils proficient in swimming and military drill. We again urge the Board to take some decided step in these directions, especially as so much could be done at a slight cost.<sup>40</sup>

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the emphasis on military drill in schools had become more pronounced, an emphasis which reflected the association with Empire and British military campaigns in the South African War (1899-1902), and which was stimulated by the imperialism of Premier Seddon and his colleagues. The mounting militarism in physical training was reflected in an allocation of £400 in 1900 for the purchase of 2000 dummy rifles for use in schools, an armament that increased to 14000 rifles by 1907. The wearing of quasi-military uniform also reflected this mood with

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<sup>39</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1895, - E-1b, p.26

<sup>40</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1900, - E-1b, p.43

Physical drill was made compulsory with the passing of the Physical Drill in Public and Native Schools Act, 1901, which stated that Boards were required to inform the Ministry of Education how the Act was being enforced (Stothart, 1972). However, whilst the Act required every Board to report to the Minister on the work done in its schools in the way of imparting physical drill to the pupils, little was done to enforce the requirements. In challenging the Prime Minister in the House in 1904, Mr. Ell, a Christchurch Member of Parliament, observed that only three Boards had forwarded valuable reports, some had presented only the briefest of comment whilst others, including Auckland, Taranaki and Wanganui had provided no reports at all.<sup>41</sup> The same politician also reported that, when visiting a Wellington school to see boys undergoing their drill, the teacher said that they had never been instructed in physical drill.<sup>42</sup>

A Parliamentary debate later in the same year gives an interesting indication of an emerging resistance to the militaristic nature of the physical drill being promoted in schools. Ell, who had previously expressed concerns about compliance with the 1901 Act, raised the issue that, whilst providing the services of men qualified to instruct teachers on military drill, the Department of Education had not been equally as attentive to the instruction of physical drill which, in his opinion, was “so necessary to the mental and physical welfare of the children”, an opinion shared by the “highest medical authorities of America and the Old Land” who had unanimously decided in a London conference (entitled the third Conference for the Protection and Welfare of Children) in 1902 that physical drill for children was a matter of supreme importance.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1904, Vol. cxxiv, August 26, p.699-700

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, p.699

<sup>43</sup> Two emergent themes expressed at the Conference were to gain currency in the early part of the twentieth century and support the case of physical education for children. Firstly, the importance of having a fit and healthy population for the defence of the Realm was raised. Mr Arnold White reported that of 11,000 men who volunteered at Manchester for the Boer War, only 3,000 were accepted as physically fit. In addition, Colonel Barrett, the Inspector-General of Recruiting, published a report which stated that of 75,560 men medically examined in 1901, nearly 23000 or 30 per cent were rejected for “various ailments or want of physical condition.” Secondly, the beneficial effects of physical instruction on the mental abilities of children was also promoted. Dr Francis Warner, for example, reported at the Conference that ‘an extended inquiry as to the mental and physical conditions of children conducted in schools, 1888-1892, showed a higher percentage of dull children in the schools without physical training.’ He concluded that “it has also been shown that good effects follow the employment of physical training at school in diminishing the number of children with signs of brain-disorderliness and the

In a similar vein, the member for Christchurch City, Mr. Taylor, asked the Minister of Education whether he would arrange for a system of scientific physical drill exercises to replace the “absurd military system of drill now in vogue”.<sup>44</sup> In supporting this position, Ell was again vociferous in his advocacy for such a move and urged the Department of Education to pay more attention to the physical instruction of children in the future.<sup>45</sup> Another problem of implementation, that of provision of an appropriate teacher resource, was raised in Parliament by Mr. Guinness (Grey) who suggested that the Department provide a manual of physical drill which could be universally applied throughout all public schools.<sup>46</sup>

As a consequence of such lobbying, the Government directed the Education Boards that had not reported on the implementation of the Education Act, 1904 with regard to instruction of physical and military drill to submit details of activity in their respective areas. Swimming instruction is not included in any of the returns of the six boards which, in the main, report in glowing terms of the military drill procedures in place in schools with some Boards giving additional reference to calisthenics and public displays as evidence of compliance with the requirements of the Act.<sup>47</sup>

In spite of the impediments above, the number of girls and boys over the age of eight years to receive physical drill in 1902 was 94,916, with the cadet movement reaching its zenith in the years 1906-1907 when the number of companies reached 280 with

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proportion of dull children.” For further information on the Conference, refer to the New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1904, Vol. cxxx, October 5, p.679-680

<sup>44</sup> New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1904, Vol. cxxx, October 5, p.667

<sup>45</sup> New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1904, Vol. cxxx, October 5, p.679-680

<sup>46</sup> New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1904, Vol. cxxv, September 16, p.556

<sup>47</sup> The six Education Boards that were requested to make a return were at Auckland, Wellington, Napier, Blenheim, Christchurch, and Invercargill. Included as evidence of the healthy state of provision of physical instruction and military drill were Napier who noted that “Great enthusiasm is aroused by the annual assembling of pupils at Gisborne and Waipawa” where “Sports are held and a shield and banner given to schools that acquit themselves best in drill and calisthenics.” In citing an extract from the Inspectors Annual Report from Christchurch, the Christchurch Education Board reports that “The huge attendance at the yearly display given in Lancaster Park by the Public Schools Amateur Athletic Association is an excellent indication of the interest taken by the public in this department of training.” Taken from a Report entitled *Education: Physical Drill*, Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1906, Vol. ii, E-1E, pp.1-2

enrolments of over 14,000 cadets (Butchers, 1930). However, as indicated from the Parliamentary debate above, poor training, the lack of a written syllabus, and little assistance for teachers to implement any physical training into their teaching meant that initiatives to establish any systematic instruction in the field of physical education in general were spasmodic and arbitrary.

## 2.5 Early twentieth century developments and a “suitable swimming bath for every public school”

The provision of aquatics education through institutionalised education, either state or private, became a political issue at the beginning of the twentieth century. Government initiatives in the form of special grants of £200 in 1899 and £300 in 1900 had been approved by Parliament for the encouragement of swimming in schools as part of the Manual and Technical Instruction Act,<sup>48</sup> a contribution that could be regarded as the first instance of government financial recognition of the need for education to combat high drowning rates (Edwards, 1952). Under the Act, a capitation payment of two shillings and sixpence was paid for each pupil who had received at least twenty lessons of swimming and lifesaving with each lesson being of a minimum duration of thirty minutes.<sup>49</sup> In the 1902 Annual Report of the Minister of Education, the Hon. W.C. Walker referred directly to the instruction of swimming being made possible under the auspices of the Manual and Technical Instruction Act via a capitation payment to participating schools. Particular reference was also made to a grant of £100 for the New Zealand Amateur Swimming Association in recognition of its efforts to foster swimming and lifesaving.<sup>50</sup> Such a move may well be recognised as the earliest instance of the Education Department recognising the role of external providers in aquatics education. The distribution of this funding was a matter for Parliamentary debate in 1903 when the Member for Dunedin City, Mr. Millar, asked the Government to make better provision for the encouragement of swimming and ensure that grants were distributed equitably amongst the swimming clubs of the colony.<sup>51</sup>

Whether such financial inducement as that contained within the Manual and Technical Instruction Act had any immediate effect on the teaching of swimming and lifesaving, and thus on pupil proficiency, is difficult to quantify. In 1902, the availability of

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<sup>48</sup> New Zealand Statutes, 1900 - p.215

<sup>49</sup> *The New Zealand Gazette*, 1901, Vol.1, p.9

<sup>50</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1902, - E-1, p.xviii

<sup>51</sup> New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1903, Vol. cxxvii, Nov 11, p.455

appropriately qualified swimming instructors for public schools with access to suitable facilities and the means with which to pay them was raised by Mr. Arnold (Dunedin City) in Parliamentary debate who stated that

Now very many schools of the colony, and especially in and around Dunedin, had been supplied with baths, and had formed swimming classes which all members must recognise were not only necessary, but beneficial to the boys and girls in the point of view of cleanliness and health, and so far as lifesaving was concerned. Very many of the teachers, however were not expert swimmers and those who were had not the time to give out of school hours to teach pupils swimming.<sup>52</sup>

In his annual report in 1903, the Minister of Education reported that 37 schools had been granted capitation payments, the majority being allotted to North Canterbury (18) and Otago (9).<sup>53</sup>

The problem of availability of swimming pools in which to conduct lessons was the subject of several questions in parliamentary debate about this time. In 1903, Mr. Ell (Christchurch City), asked the Government to introduce a Bill to enable local authorities to contribute towards the cost of erecting baths in connection with public schools.<sup>54</sup> In 1905, a Christchurch member of Parliament, Mr. Witty (Riccarton), asked the government if they would consider placing a sum of money on the estimates for the purpose of subsidising swimming baths when erected in school-grounds.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, in October of that year, the member for Eden asked the Minister of Education whether he would place a pound-for-pound subsidy on the supplementary estimates, not to exceed one hundred pounds, for the purpose of assisting the Mount Eden District School Committee to construct a swimming bath in the school-grounds on condition that the

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<sup>52</sup> New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1902, Vol. cxx, September 17, p.369

<sup>53</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1903, - E-1, p.xxxi

<sup>54</sup> New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1903, Vol. cxxvii, November 11, p.454

<sup>55</sup> New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1905, Vol. cxxxiii, July 26, p.46-47

Committee collect £100 by voluntary contributions.<sup>56</sup> Such requests bore striking similarity in their structure to those subsidies which became accepted government procedure and formed the backbone of the spectacular and unique growth of school swimming facilities fifty years later.

However, the response of the Prime Minister at the time, the Right Hon. Mr. Seddon was to decline the requests on the grounds that, under the Manual and Technical Instruction Act of 1902, a capitation of two shillings and sixpence for swimming and lifesaving was available and that because of the potentially high cost of pool construction he could not agree with building subsidies. In addition, Seddon also suggested that, in view of the likely use of the facilities by members of the general public, swimming bath construction was more appropriately the concern of Borough Councils rather than Government - a comment that was to herald the existence of a tension between local and national government on the provision of swimming pools for another half-century.

Two years later, in 1907, Mr Arnold (Dunedin City) had asked, and received negative response to, questions with regard to the provision of suitable school swimming-baths and whether the Government intended to provide qualified swimming instructors for schools teaching swimming.<sup>57</sup> The same question of a pound for pound subsidy for swimming pool construction was again raised in Parliamentary debate in 1908 by Mr Witty (Riccarton) and evoked the same response from the Minister of Education, the Hon. Mr. Fowlds, who re-iterated Seddon's previously expressed view that local councils were the appropriate body to assist in swimming pool construction.<sup>58</sup>

Witty, however, responded in a speech later that year that whilst local bodies in towns and cities may be able to provide centrally placed facilities, his concern was more for the rural children and his suggestion was that government assistance to country schools

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<sup>56</sup> New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1905, Vol. cccxxxv, October 4, p.448

<sup>57</sup> New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1907, Vol. 140, August 28, p.513

<sup>58</sup> New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1908, Vol. 144, August 5, p. 79

would be “a benefit to the community, giving healthy exercise, and teaching the children cleanliness, and putting them in a position of being able to save the lives of their fellow-creatures”.<sup>59</sup> The question of qualified swimming instructors re-emerged in Parliamentary debate in 1909 with a question to the Minister of Education by Mr. Arnold (Dunedin Central) on the provision of funds to either public schools or swimming clubs for instructors.<sup>60</sup>

With the provision of swimming pool facilities providing a regular source of political debate, public subscription to building costs was emerging as a driving force in secondary schools in particular in the first decade of the twentieth century. Such schools to capitalise on the goodwill of its parents and community included: Nelson College (Boys), 1907;<sup>61</sup> Wanganui District High School, 1909;<sup>62</sup> Ashburton High School, 1911;<sup>63</sup> Wanganui Collegiate School, 1911;<sup>64</sup> Palmerston North High School, 1912<sup>65</sup> and Christchurch Boys and Girls’ High Schools, 1913.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1908, Vol. 144, August 5, p. 121-122

<sup>60</sup> In reply, The Minister of Education, the Hon. Mr. Fowlds reported that 103 classes had been recognised under the Manual and Technical Instruction Act as against seventy-five for the previous year, which seemed to indicate to him that Education Boards were able to make suitable arrangements under existing legislation. New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1909, Vol. 148, November 18, p.216

<sup>61</sup> The 1906 Annual Report indicates that “a commodious swimming-bath has been constructed and is greatly appreciated by the pupils” recorded in the Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1907, E-12, p.23 and subsequently that “it is now the exception to find a Nelson College boy who is unable to swim”, comment from the Annual Report recorded in the Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1908, E-12, p.26

<sup>62</sup> The Annual Report of the District Inspector in 1909 noted that in many of the schools in the Wanganui district, “classes are taken to the public baths for swimming instruction, while at the Wanganui District High School and the Sedgebrook School swimming-baths have been erected by public subscription, and are fully made use of.” Recorded in the Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1910, E-2, p.48

<sup>63</sup> The Annual Report of 1911 stated that the grounds of the school had been improved on and “a swimming-bath, 75ft. by 36ft. is now in the course of construction which, when finished, will add much to the educational value of the institution.” Recorded in the Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1912, E-6, p.39

<sup>64</sup> The Annual Report of Wanganui Collegiate School, 1911, stated that within the building of the new College, subsidiary buildings included “gymnasium, sanatorium, and a swimming-bath”. Recorded in the Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1912, E-6, App., p.28

<sup>65</sup> The Annual Report of Palmerston North High School, 1912, stated that “the completion of the baths has added still another necessity to an up-to-date school, and the work has been rendered possible by the splendid generosity of the parents and others interested in the progress of the school.” Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1913, E-6, p.30

Advocacy of the teaching of swimming and lifesaving began to emerge from the newly re-established educational institutions at this time. At the Auckland Teachers Training College, the Principal, Mr. H. A. R. Milne, commented in his Annual Report of 1906 that he wanted to see three things made compulsory for all students in training - swimming and lifesaving, first aid, and rifle shooting for men on the basis that

in a country where so much of the land is water, the first is a necessity; when one remembers that the teacher in the backblocks is often the only approach to a doctor for twenty miles, the second - a simple corollary to physiology - is also a necessity; and the third is excellent hand and eye training even if we do not agree about its necessity. The addition of these subjects would not be felt and there is little question about their utility.<sup>67</sup>

Milne advocated similar sentiments with regard to the physical well-being of school pupils by publicly promoting the notion of healthy physical growth as being essential to intellectual growth. In a speech entitled 'Common Sense in Education' delivered to the New Zealand Education Institute, Milne argued that

common sense wants a totally different attitude towards the care of the body, an attitude that will no longer be content with the quarter of an hour per day devoted to physical culture, but will put physical development first, even taking precedence over that fearsome fetish Arithmetic with a capital A. It wants the enthusiasm of both teacher and taught, an earnest desire to see children well-developed, well-nourished, full of energy and 'go', able to run and swim. . . (reported in Pengelly, 1964, p.86).

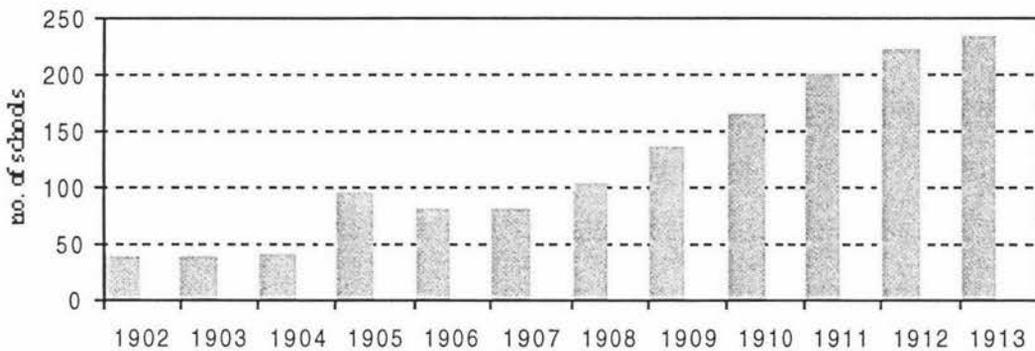
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<sup>66</sup> The Annual Report of the Christchurch Boys and Girls' High Schools, 1913 noted that, amongst other important building developments, a swimming-bath had been constructed in the basement of the new school buildings. Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1914, E-6, p.39

<sup>67</sup> Auckland Teachers College, Annual Report, 1906

In 1907, the Chairman of the Wellington Board of Education reported that swimming was taught in several schools, some of which had earned capitation but others had not claimed it.<sup>68</sup> In a similar vein, the Inspector of the Canterbury Board reported in the same year that the inducements held out by the Department to encourage the formation of swimming classes had only in one instance been taken advantage of.<sup>69</sup> By 1909, a total of 136 schools were claiming capitation for the conducting of swimming and lifesaving lessons as part of their handwork or manual classes with schools in the South Island claiming the majority of funds.<sup>70</sup> However, by 1913, the number of schools claiming capitation had risen to 233 with much stronger representation from North Island schools particularly in Auckland, Wanganui, Hawkes Bay and Wellington.<sup>71</sup>

**Figure 5.** School capitation claims for teaching swimming and life-saving: 1902-1913



Source: Appendices to the Journal of House of Representatives: 1902-1913

It is significant that, with a change of personnel in the Inspectorate of the Auckland region in 1912, the role of swimming and life-saving is first mentioned in an annual report thus,

All people will agree that every boy and girl should know how to swim. The exercise is pleasant, invigorating and healthy, and the ability to swim frequently

<sup>68</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1907, - E-1b, p.16

<sup>69</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1907, - E-1b, p.47

<sup>70</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1910, - E-5, p.15

<sup>71</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1914, - E-5, p.17

means the difference between life and death. And yet a considerable number of boys and girls are yearly passing through our schools without having been taught this most necessary accomplishment.<sup>72</sup>

The Report goes on to suggest that with the improved bathing accommodation already to some extent provided by the city (Auckland's Tepid Baths opened in 1914), greater attention should be given to swimming. Furthermore, the Inspector dismissed the contention that there was no time to teach swimming as 'an idle one' if swimming was rightly recognised as an essential subject of instruction.<sup>73</sup>

An idea that emerges in this era is the notion of certification as a form of motivation and recognition of swimming proficiency, a strategy that has characterised much aquatics education throughout the century. In his annual report of 1907, the inspector of the Nelson district noted that one form of encouragement given by the Headmaster of Nelson Boys High School was worthy of imitation, that of bestowing upon each swimmer a certificate stating the distance - 25 yards, 50 yards, 75 yards etc. - that the recipient could swim.<sup>74</sup> In a similar vein a year later, the Inspector for the Marlborough district noted that one headmaster, who claimed that all his boys (no mention of girls) were swimmers, argued that all schools could benefit from the already proven practice of issuing certificates so as to provide greater incentive for further improvement.<sup>75</sup> Napier High School reported in 1910 that nearly every boy could swim (again no mention of girls) and a "large proportion had received certificates for distances ranging from 220 yards to one mile."<sup>76</sup>

McGeorge notes that the capitation funding made available to promote swimming instruction primarily affected boys' skill development and this was probably the result of male teachers teaching boys to swim but, "possibly for reasons of supervision and

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<sup>72</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1913, - E-2, Appendix C, p.ii

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p.ii

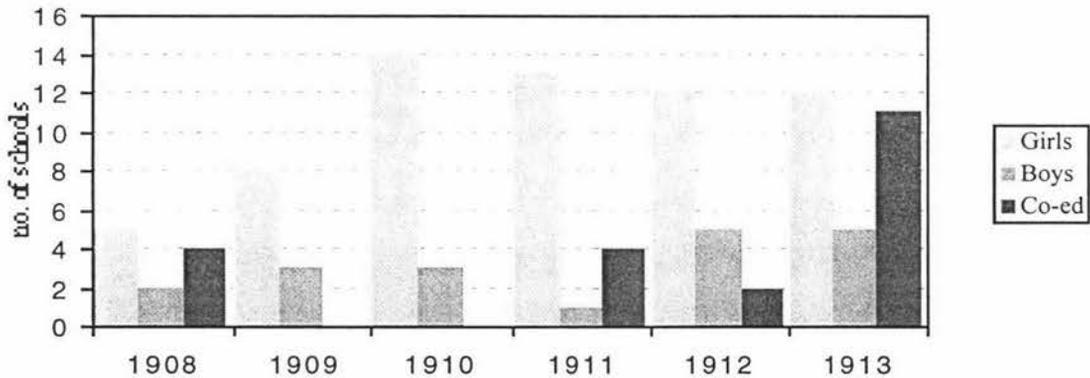
<sup>74</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1907, - E-2, Appendix D, p.x

<sup>75</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1908, - E-2, Appendix D, p.xi

decorum, not teaching girls” (McGeorge, 1985, p.698). Female teachers rarely taught anyone to swim since it was again not considered appropriate. The annual report for the Inspector of the Marlborough region in 1907 highlighted concerns regarding the uneven nature of swimming instructions for girls by recommending that more attention should be given by ‘lady’ teachers to their female pupils.<sup>77</sup> In 1911, the Principal of the Auckland Teacher’s College lamented that, whilst he had vigorously promoted the practice of at least an hour’s exercise a day for student teachers, he had had difficulty in convincing the women students that exercise should not be looked upon as ‘a waste of time’.<sup>78</sup> Such resistance may be reflective of a residual current of female passivity reminiscent of Victorian society or it may be a reflection on the way that female students were taught that actually did make it a waste of time.

However, there is evidence to suggest that attitudes and practices were changing in the secondary school arena where capitation claims for swimming and life-saving instruction for girls’ high schools consistently outnumbered boys’ high school claims.

**Figure 6.** Secondary school swimming and life-saving capitation by type of school: 1908-1913



Source: Appendices of the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1908-1913

<sup>76</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1911, - E-6, Appendix D, p.36

<sup>77</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1907, - E-1b, p.31

<sup>78</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1911, - E-2, Appendix D, p.ix

A very valuable insight into pupils' ability to swim at this time was recorded in the Principals Report on the Auckland Teachers College for 1912 when referring to figures provided by the Headmaster of the Normal School who shared the site in central Auckland with the College.

**Table 2.** Auckland Normal School, 1912 - Swimming Capacity of Pupils.

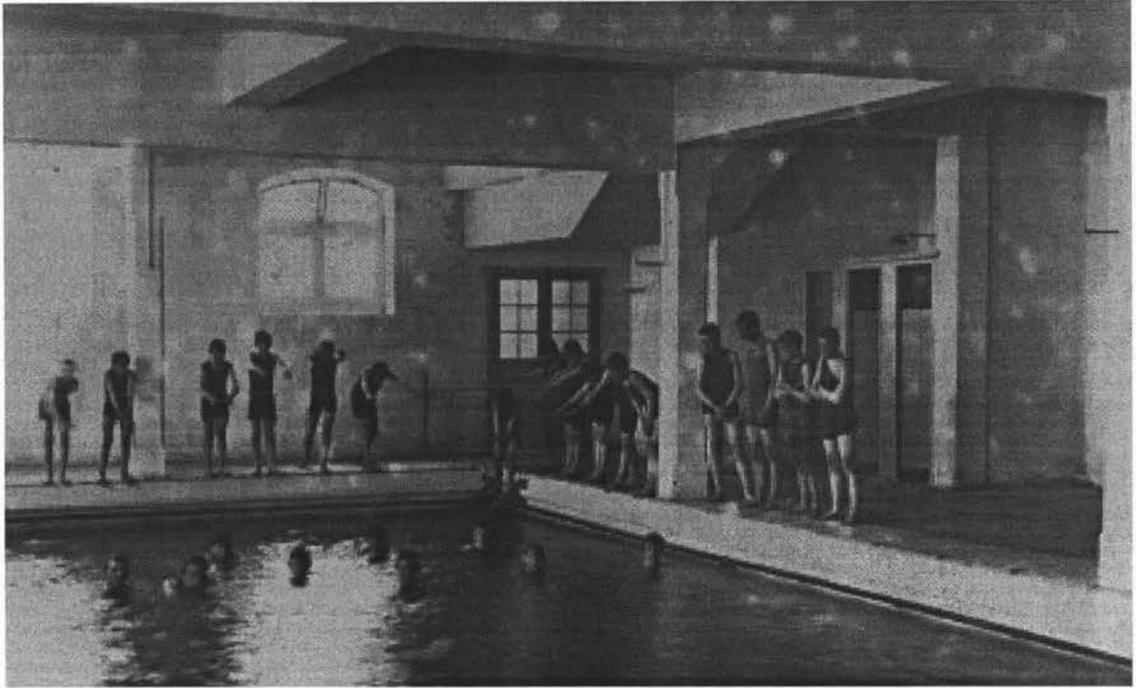
| Class       | Boys          | Girls         |
|-------------|---------------|---------------|
|             | % of swimmers | % of swimmers |
| Primer 2    | 6             | 0             |
| Standard 1  | 22            | 26            |
| Standard 2  | 53            | 30            |
| Standard 3  | 56            | 59            |
| Standard 4  | 45            | 50            |
| Standard 5  | 80            | 85            |
| Standard 6  | 89            | 76            |
| High School | 92            | 78            |

Source: Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1913 - E-2, App.D, p.x

The data provides what is probably the first attempt by educationalists to quantify the results of swimming teaching in New Zealand but, as the original contributor, Mr H.A.R. Milne astutely observed, it would be very instructive to find out how these figures compare with the corresponding figures of contemporary schools which did not enjoy similar access to a swimming pool on site.<sup>79</sup> Whilst such success rates are unlikely to be representative of the times, they do provide an interesting benchmark for comparison with swimming ability levels of today's pupils in similarly privileged schools which are endowed with good facilities. The figures also suggest relatively minor differences in reported ability between boys and girls in the survey up until Standard Four, a situation that may suggest that swimming as a form of female physical

<sup>79</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1913, - E-2, Appendix D, p.x

activity was socially acceptable by this time at least for primary school-age pupils although the disparity evident in the High School age group may suggest otherwise.



**Illustration 4.** Auckland Teachers College, 1908.

(Source: Auckland College of Education Archives)

Whilst the Auckland Normal School was probably the exception rather than the rule, there was a considerable body of public support for the provision of, not only municipal facilities, but also for swimming baths in public schools as indicated by the following editorial from the *New Zealand Herald* which reported that,

Educationalists agree that this is pre-eminently desirable. The *Herald* has repeatedly pointed out that no school can be regarded as well equipped which lacks a swimming bath and a miniature rifle range. Of the former it can be said that if every citizen should know how to swim every child should be taught to swim. . . . The occasional schools, which by individual generosity or by public subscription, have been provided with swimming baths, have secured an advantage which teachers and scholars would be loath to forego, and possess unquestionably a valuable educational asset. The cost of school swimming baths

is exceedingly small when compared to the benefit received, and to the large number regularly benefited. We would suggest that. . . while steps are being taken to enlarge school playgrounds, a simultaneous effort could not be made to attach a suitable swimming bath to every public school in Greater Auckland.<sup>80</sup>

One of the problems associated with the promotion of aquatic education at the time was the lack of teachers with appropriate training in swimming instruction. Training colleges at the time were not actively engaged in the teaching of physical education. Dunedin Teachers College had introduced physical training in 1878, but it was not until 1908 that the Auckland College had added a special course in swimming instruction at the opening of the new purpose-built institution in Wellesley Street (Bedgood, 1954). In his annual report of 1908<sup>81</sup>, the Principal of the Teachers College in Auckland indicated that all men students could swim but very few of the women. He did express optimism at the forthcoming completion of the baths when every effort would be made to teach every student to swim at least a length as well as establishing a life-saving class. A year later, the principal reported<sup>82</sup> that he would like to see some practical test added to requirements of all *male* (writer's italics) students that they should be able to shoot, swim and save life, and take part in ordinary school games. No further comment was made on the expressed intention of increasing all students' ability to swim although, by 1913, the Principal was able to report that all men in the College were able to swim at the conclusion of their training and that ninety per cent of women could also swim.<sup>83</sup> A year later, all but three of the 65 graduates of the Auckland institution were reported as being able to swim.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, March 18, 1911, p.4

<sup>81</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1908, - E-1C, p.5

<sup>82</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1909, - E-1C, p.142

<sup>83</sup> Appendix of the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1913, - E-2, Appendix D, p.x

<sup>84</sup> In somewhat strident support of his claim to the values of participation in physical activity of student teachers, the Principal, Mr. Milne, also stated that "I can account for 104 out of 108 as playing some game - the other four are weakly, and, in my opinion, though they passed the medical inspection, should have been rejected. A student unable to take part in a game is not in my opinion, suited for school-teaching: playing with your children is the surest help to influencing them that I know, and if the teacher is unable to do this he loses an opportunity he cannot get in any other way." Noted in Annual Report of the Principal of the Auckland Training College, Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1914, - E-2, Appendix D, p.ix

One of the early problems with teacher training programmes was the lack of consistency in what was being promoted in each institution as 'physical instruction' within the school curriculum. This was resolved to some extent by the establishment of training college regulations in 1911 and 1913 following meetings between the Department of Education and the Training College principals. The regulations, which were published in 1913, contained clear requirements of the colleges' programmes and made compulsory, courses in "physical instruction (including swimming and lifesaving), singing, drawing, military drill and rifle shooting (for men), needlework (for women)."<sup>85</sup>

Gradually, other training colleges followed the lead of Auckland and the enthusiastic advocacy of Milne for the physical education of students teachers. In 1911, the Principal of Wellington Training College provided a synopsis of the College's two-year course in his Annual Report which indicated that swimming was taught in March and November of each year.<sup>86</sup> In the same year, swimming gained further recognition by being included in the training of male students at Canterbury.<sup>87</sup>

A year later the Principal of Canterbury College, Mr. T.S. Foster, reported that, whereas in previous years, instruction in swimming was given to men students only, in 1912, 48 women students were enrolled in the course conducted at the municipal tepid baths. Almost all student teachers had learned to swim and six men and two women had

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<sup>85</sup> The regulations however, did not stipulate how much time was to be devoted to each of the areas, other than to stipulate that military drill was to be undertaken for two hours per week. For further information on the training college regulations, refer to the Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1913, Vol.111, E-12, Appendix D, pp. 18-20

<sup>86</sup> Under the heading of 'Drill', the following subjects were taught, "(a) Physical drill, fifteen minutes every day, (b) Military drill, one to two hours per week....(c) Swimming, taken in March and November." For further information on Wellington Training College courses refer to the Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1912, Vol.111, E-2, Appendix D, p.x-xii

<sup>87</sup> Swimming was offered as an extra-curricular activity at the conclusion of the second term along with 'ambulance', a course in first aid. The courses were only available to male students and "owing to the enthusiasm of the students and their capable instructor, Mr. G. Bilson, a good many lessons and practices in swimming were arranged for, and several of the students passed a good examination in swimming and lifesaving." The Report concludes on an optimistic note that "it is to be hoped that during the current year arrangements may be made to hold a swimming class for women students." Report of Mr T.S. Foster, Acting Principal, Canterbury Training College, Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1912, Vol. iii, E-2, Appendix D, pp. xiii-xiv

gained bronze medallion awards from the Royal Life Saving Society, an accomplishment that may distinguish itself as one of the earliest examples of external certification being used in teacher qualifications.<sup>88</sup> In 1914, prior to the outbreak of war, the Principal again reported positively on the teaching of swimming at the municipal baths in Christchurch and also noted that “special facilities were offered for training the more expert swimmers for the tests imposed by the Royal Life Saving Society.”<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1913, - E-2, Appendix D, p.xiii

<sup>89</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1915, - E-2, Appendix D, p.xii

## 2.6 Swimming and the “physically defective child”

In spite of developments indicated, lack of specialist instruction and inadequate facilities were characteristic of pre-war teacher training and schooling.<sup>90</sup> In his first report in 1912 to the Minister of Education, the newly appointed Director of Physical Education, Royd Garlick, noted that “Dunedin possessed a gymnasium equipped for military gymnastics, but lacked the very necessary accompaniment of a swimming bath.”<sup>91</sup> Consequently, in that College, regular swimming and lifesaving classes for all students did not become a reality until two decades later in 1927 (Johnston and Morton, 1976). Christchurch also had no facilities and, as previously indicated, relied on local authority facilities for the promotion of any aspect of physical instruction. Garlick also noted that Wellington had “a most unattractive and unsuitable room, called, by courtesy, the ‘gymnasium’, but lacks swimming-baths and other necessary equipment. Auckland has a suitable swimming pool but lacks other good facilities for training.”<sup>92</sup> He concluded that “a well-equipped gymnasium and swimming-bath is required for the proper training of students and the former at least is essential for the extension of the scheme with regard to the treatment of the physically defective children.”<sup>93</sup>

The Education Amendment Act of 1912 had recommended that a complete system of physical training be substituted for the Junior Cadet System which had become the focus of military drill and reflected the jingoistic appeal of defence of the Empire so prevalent at the time. Such activity reached its zenith in the mass school displays for the visiting dignitary Lord Kitchener in 1910 but declined rapidly thereafter.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> For example, in 1913, no permanent staff members were employed in full-time positions to teach swimming and lifesaving. Only Auckland and Christchurch employed part-time instructors whilst Wellington and Dunedin recorded no staffing payment allocated to swimming and lifesaving. Reported in the Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1914, E-2, Appendix D, p. vii, Table P6

<sup>91</sup> Report of the Director of Physical Education, Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1914, E-2, Appendix G, p. v

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p.v

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p.v

<sup>94</sup> In his initial report to the Minister of Education, Royd Garlick noted that “Out of a former total of 573 primary schools at which Junior Cadets Corps formerly existed, with a total strength of 30,623, there now only remains twenty-eight schools, with a total strength of 1,055.” Reported in the Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1914, E-2, Appendix G, p. viii

Subsequently, the influence of reformers including George Hogben, Inspector-General of Schools, and Royd Garlick gradually shifted the emphasis away from militarism and towards physical exercise (Stothart 1972). Individual initiatives introduced by Royd Garlick recognised the problems which confronted the provision of quality physical education in schools from a provider-driven perspective and attempted to rectify them by giving some semblance of specialist training through peripatetic courses.

Garlick was also responsible for the introduction of a new syllabus which he had observed in operation in Australia. In 1913, following Garlick's recommendation, the Department of Education adopted the British 1909 Syllabus of Physical Exercises for Schools as the official syllabus in New Zealand. Under Garlick, ten instructors (6 male and 4 female) were appointed in 1913 to act as Inspectors of Physical Training as well as to promote the new syllabus. In the first year of operation as the Physical Education Branch of the Education Department, Garlick and his team had presented the new syllabus to 1,469 teachers representing 629 schools and 61,600 pupils.<sup>95</sup> Within two years, 3,728 teachers had attended training classes representing 1,606 schools (Butchers, 1930). The course of training for teachers attending these in-service programmes consisted of both theoretical and practical instruction in five key areas, one of which was swimming, lifesaving, and resuscitation drill.<sup>96</sup>

The advent of the First World War tended to stifle many of the well-intentioned initiatives of enlightened educationalists such as Milne and Garlick. Furthermore,

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<sup>95</sup> This represented about one-third of the total teaching force and was revolutionary in that teachers attended twelve day-long courses throughout the country with schools closed for the duration of the course. The courses were often conducted at the Training Colleges but six were held at residential camps (for men only). For further information on the nature of the courses, refer to the Extract from the thirty-seventh Annual Report of the Minister of Education, Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1914, E-2, Appendix G, pp. i-ii

<sup>96</sup> Other areas of the syllabus included: the theory and practice of exercise in relation to healthy growth and development, both physical and mental; daily progressive lessons in physical drill and breathing exercises; personal hygiene and daily habits; and a course in organised games. For further information on the content of the courses, refer to the Report of the Director of Physical Education, Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1914, E-2, Appendix G, pp. ii-viii

Garlick's untimely death on February 20th, 1915, also tended to slow down the advancement of physical education through the training of teachers.<sup>97</sup>

The Syllabus of Physical Exercises for Schools which had its origins in Britain reiterated a utilitarian focus of creating a fit labour force and was in part a reaction to fitness concerns expressed with regard to British youth entering the armed services (Bray, 1992). Similar sentiments were expressed at the outbreak of the War in New Zealand when the need for fit and healthy young men for 'the defence of the Realm' became a necessity. In his Annual Report of 1915, the Chief Inspector of Secondary Schools whose concerns had hitherto focussed on the intellectual capacities of students, stated that,

The European War has directed attention to the physical education of the people, and the need for turning out of our school boys and girls who are strong and healthy, for it is evident that considerable power of endurance is a very important factor in this struggle.<sup>98</sup>

The Syllabus emphasised exercises based on the Swedish system of educational gymnastics and its tone remained distinctly military in delivery. Its success as a public policy document was severely curtailed by the inability to implement it during the War years. It was reprinted in 1919 and included "important additions and modifications made as a result of the experience gained during the past ten years in peace and in war, in the gymnasium and in the battle zone" (Department of Education, 1919, p.3).

Aquatics education in schools continued to grow spasmodically and unevenly throughout the country in spite of efforts by the instructors to promote a uniform

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<sup>97</sup> Garlick suffered a fatal heart attack whilst assisting the driver of a vehicle stuck in difficult road conditions typical of the time whilst visiting schools on the West Coast of the South Island. Notice of his death appeared in the Minister of Education's annual report thus, "A man with high ideals of physical training, he was animated with an earnest desire to place physical education on a sound and scientific footing." Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1915, E-1, p.18

syllabus of study. The restrictions imposed by lack of appropriate swimming facilities continued to hamper the developments of any systematic national swimming programme. Furthermore, swimming was included, somewhat idiosyncratically, as part of Manual and Technical Instruction (since the payment of costs via capitation was made through the regulations in place since 1900) rather than being included within the mainstream of curriculum under the emergent physical education banner.

Individual initiatives did give some cause for optimism, for example, in 1915, nearly 700 Dunedin pupils at senior primary level in the city and suburban schools attended swimming classes at the municipal baths<sup>99</sup> whilst in 1916, nearly 1,200 children in Wellington schools had been instructed in swimming and life-saving.<sup>100</sup> In Taranaki, swimming was reported as being a prominent feature of the physical training in a number of schools and whilst swimming-baths were available in several centres, “a pool in an adjacent creek furnishes a substitute in other places.”<sup>101</sup> In 1918, the Wellington Education Board reported that 1649 pupils from 19 schools had received instruction; the Canterbury Board reported completion of 75 classes containing over 1,000 children as well as rural courses at ten district high schools and the Otago Board reported over 1,500 pupils from thirty-one schools had attended swimming and life-saving classes.<sup>102</sup> However, other regions either did not include comment on swimming instruction or made negative comments. For example, in 1916, both Hawkes Bay and Nelson presented reports which gave testimony to the difficulties encountered and the need for official redress of the facility shortage.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Report of the Chief Inspector of Secondary Education, Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1916, E-6, p. 13

<sup>99</sup> The Inspector for Otago reported that 681 boys and girls were taught to swim but added that “it was surprising that more rural schools had not taken up this important and necessary subject.” Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1915, E-2, Appendix B, p. xxxiv

<sup>100</sup> The Inspector of Wellington schools reported that 1,194 pupils had received instruction. Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1917, E-2, Appendix A, p. ix

<sup>101</sup> Report of the Inspector of schools for Taranaki, Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1917, E-2, Appendix B, p. ix

<sup>102</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1918, E-2, Appendix A, p. iv-v

<sup>103</sup> The Education Board in Nelson stated that “swimming was not extensively taught and it is a matter of regret that more opportunity is not afforded for instruction in swimming and life-saving” (E-2, Appendix A, p. xi) and the Inspector of schools in Hawkes Bay commented that “We are glad to note in one school at least systematic instruction is afforded in swimming and life-saving, and we hope that this important

Another area that received scant regard at this time in the facilitation of swimming, and arguably in terms of any form of physical instruction, was the domain of the native schools. Situated often in remote rural areas, the small, often single-room, single - teacher, schools were not well disposed to the teaching of physical skills as part of their official curricular practice. A separate syllabus provided for the special needs of Maori, especially with regards to language, although, by 1909, a new syllabus was introduced which approximated very closely to the new public schools syllabus of 1904.<sup>104</sup> Inspectors' reports throughout this time suggest that physical instruction and military drill were given scant attention, for example, the Annual report of 1911 suggests that in some schools physical instruction is excellent, while in some it is "entirely perfunctory in character and without benefit."<sup>105</sup> Frustration about the lack of provision for physical activity is evident in the 1917 report of the Inspector of Native Schools where he states that,

The importance of organised games does not appear to be as generally recognised as it should be, and only in a comparatively small number of schools is it found that attention is given to this branch of the subject. In future some explanation will be required in the cases of those schools where there is no system of organised games.<sup>106</sup>

Swimming is only mentioned three times in Parliamentary reports on Natives Schools between 1900 and 1931. In the first instance in 1911 a recommendation was made that, during hot weather, swimming should be substituted at regular intervals for ordinary

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subject will receive more attention, especially where facilities for bathing are provided" (E-2, Appendix B, p.xii). Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1917, E-2

<sup>104</sup> For a concise official history of native schools systems, refer to the Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1931, E-3, p.5-6

<sup>105</sup> The report also states that "the introduction of games would afford the teacher the opportunity of getting into closer touch with his pupils, and since they would be carried on under his supervision, the disorganised rough-and-tumble that is sometimes complained of would be prevented." Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1911, E-3, p.9

<sup>106</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1917, E-3. p.4

physical drill as was already being done in Te Kao School, Northland.<sup>107</sup> Two years later, the Inspector of Native Schools wrote “Meanwhile we would again urge upon the teachers the advantages to be derived by the children from organised games during the winter months and from swimming, where the opportunity occurs, during the summer months.”<sup>108</sup> In 1915, mention is made of life-saving drill being taught at Waima and Te Kao Schools in the Far North.<sup>109</sup>

The paucity of physical activity in the education of Maori children may be ascribed to a number of factors in addition to the lack of facilities or size and remoteness of schools. Many schools were located close to beaches or rivers and were undoubtedly used for unofficial swimming activity on a regular basis during the summer months with and without teacher approval. Since such activity was likely to be deemed frivolous by both Maori parents, who viewed schooling as a serious Pakeha business, and officialdom, which promoted a rigidly-bound syllabus of study designed to ‘educate’ the Maori for assimilation into the Pakeha world, it was not participated in during times of inspection and therefore not reported in official documents. Secondary education for Maori children, where it existed, suffered similar constraints and, in spite of a drive towards a practically-oriented curriculum, the focus was on the development of utilitarian skills such as agriculture and domestic skills rather than any aspect of physical education. Maori females fared even worse than their male counterparts in Native and Convent schools where the emphasis between 1900 and 1939 was notable for the over-riding concern of educational officials with domesticity and motherhood (Carson, 1991).

An important influence to emerge at this time was the practice of school medical examinations which were initiated in 1912. This practice arose as a consequence of public concerns of childhood deformity and poor health which were estimated to have

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<sup>107</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1911, E-3, p.9

<sup>108</sup> At the time this report was written, the new Syllabus was being promoted around the country by Royd Garlick and his instructors but the remoteness of many of the Native Schools meant that many teachers had not been exposed to it or could not attend courses.

<sup>109</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1915, E-3, p.10

affected between one-half to two-thirds of schoolchildren.<sup>110</sup> Such moves were linked closely with the corrective role that physical education played in the health of the child, a role that was vigorously promoted by Garlick and his instructors in their training of teachers in the field. The symbiotic relationship between physical education and health is reflected in official documentation of the time when, for example, in 1915, separate reports on Physical Education and Medical Inspection were submitted to the Minister of Education, whilst in 1916 and 1917, the reports are presented as one.<sup>111</sup>

The potential, real or imagined, for swimming to provide a corrective role in such postural deformities as rounded shoulders or flat feet, was advocated by the medical profession involved with school medical inspection at the time. For example, when reporting on the results of 4,000 Otago children in 1916, Dr A.G. Paterson pointed out that “the exercise of swimming is a splendid preventive of deformity, which is much rarer among swimmers than non-swimmers.”<sup>112</sup> A year later, in addition to promoting the role of swimming as a corrective exercise to counter physical deformities, the chief medical inspector also argued that more schools should possess swimming-baths and gymnasia.<sup>113</sup> In the same Report, the underlying concern for a fit and healthy nation for the nation’s defence was reiterated thus,

It has for some time been recognised that the physical condition of the race is very far from satisfactory. Recently the War has emphasised this lamentable

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<sup>110</sup> From their inception in 1912 to 1916, the medical inspectors of schools had examined over 100,000 children and ascertained that between 50-70,000 had needed the services of a dentist, oculist, or physician. Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1917, E-11, p. 1

<sup>111</sup> In 1916 and 1917, the abridged reports from the Director of Physical Education and the School Medical Inspector are combined as Medical Inspection and Physical Education, Appendices to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1916 and 1917, E-2, Appendix F

<sup>112</sup> Report of the Medical Inspection and Physical Education, Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1916, E-2, Appendix F, p.iv

<sup>113</sup> Amongst the seven recommendations made by the Chief Medical Inspector of Schools was “(5) That, wherever facilities exist, swimming should be taught, and should be an integral part of the school-work. We would like to see more schools with swimming-baths and gymnasia. We know that at present a very great deal is being done by the personal interests of teachers in the matter of open-air bathing and swimming where natural facilities exist and we heartily endorse their efforts” Report on the Medical Inspection of Schools and Schoolchildren, Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1917, E-11, p.8

fact, and has aroused the public as nothing else could have done to the fundamental importance of physical fitness. The nation realises at last that the duty it owes to each individual child is to equip him as well as possibly physically and mentally, for the battle of life.<sup>114</sup>

In summary, the period before the First World War had witnessed a change in emphasis away from military drill and towards a regulated syllabus of physical instruction with, more latterly, an emphasis on medical health and fitness. It had also witnessed the emergence of a centrally controlled, provider-driven and state-owned curriculum in physical education promoted by the machinery of state through the establishment of a branch of the Department of Education complete with a Director and a team of instructors/advisers/inspectors. Furthermore, a two-fold investment in the ability of the teaching profession to teach the physical education component of the curriculum was made. Firstly, the Government invested in the pre-service training of teachers via the re-establishment of training colleges and the institution of regulations governing the teaching of physical education. Secondly, it invested in the in-service training via the work of the Physical Education Branch.

Advances in aquatics education were made during this time but, given the restrictions placed upon it in terms of facility availability and teacher knowledge, it is not surprising that growth was not uniform. One constant in its gradual recognition as a worthy part of the part of the curriculum was the official rhetoric of education agencies of the time. The efforts of enthusiasts within these ranks, the likes of Milne and Garlick, were to provide considerable impetus for change rather than just provide well-intentioned promissory notes and it is interesting to speculate what further changes might have been effected had not both of these pioneers met with untimely deaths. The continued legitimisation of bathing as an acceptable form of recreational activity in the public domain and the continued liberalisation of the female in society, together with the emergence of swimming as a valued sporting practice were social influences that were to

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<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.* p.1

provide fertile ground for continued curriculum change and will be the subject of subsequent discussion.

## 2.7 Swimming as sport of “peculiar but powerful strokes”.

Sport has long been recognised as a major socialising agent of society and its development has often been viewed by sociologists as a reflection of the cultural shape of society at any given time. Given this reflective capacity, Pearson (1978) suggests that sports ideology was diffused, not only through the education system, but throughout society and harmonised with work values in the developing economy in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Sport, as it developed, increasingly came to emphasise skill, performance, achievement and efficiency. In other words, sport was to become part of the productive ethic of Victorian society and, after being a site of contestation during the early years of colonisation, experienced a period of high legitimacy at the turn of the century.

The development of swimming as a sport in New Zealand had its genesis in the latter part of the nineteenth century. In the mother country, one of the earliest attempts to organise swimming as a sporting activity took place with a meeting of enthusiasts at the German Gymnasium, at Kings Cross, London, which included clubs such as Serpentine and North London who agreed to combine together for competition purposes in 1869 (Sinclair, 1894).<sup>115</sup> It was known as the Metropolitan Swimming Association but only operated in the London region from a relatively small membership base and limited funding. The first Championship race was held in 1869 in the Thames over a distance of one mile, with the first still-water event held at Ilfracombe Baths in 1873. Over the ensuing two decades, events were gradually added to the Championships to include: one hundred yards, two hundred and twenty yards, quarter mile (salt water), five hundred yards (still water), half mile, one mile and long distance events (*Ibid.*). After several

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<sup>115</sup> A tension between amateur and professional was to exist in the formative years of its development but by the 1880's much of the professionalism had been removed. A further tension at this time was the intrusion of British class system into the sports arena with the oldest clubs, which were principally composed of public school men, promoting an exclusivity of membership. Sprawson (1992, pp.82-83) suggests that the first formalised institution for swimming was the Swimming Society, formed by a group of Old Etonians in 1828 which had as its motto -'ariston men hudor'- water is best and in which members recorded which rivers, lakes and streams of Europe they had bathed in. For further information on the formation of the British swimming associations in the nineteenth century, refer Archibald Sinclair's *Swimming*, London, 1894, p. 9-12

name changes and much internal wrangling, a national governing body was formed in 1886 to become the Amateur Swimming Association, four years before similar moves in New Zealand.

Breaststroke was the stroke employed in races by the early English exponents of the art of competitive swimming although the influence of forms of overarm stroke recovery and sidestroke were beginning to make inroads by the latter part of the century. The trudgeon stroke, a combination of overarm crawl action and breaststroke leg action became the vogue after John Trudgeon used it to good effect in winning races, whilst frontcrawl was first used in 1898.<sup>116</sup>

In Australasia, Australia was also developing swimming as a sport, with its earliest championship, a 440-yard race, being held at the Robinson Baths in Sydney in 1846 and a world swimming championship being held at St Kilda, Melbourne over 100-yards in 1858, although national championships were not held until 1889 (Wilkie & Juba, 1996). The first swimming club in New Zealand was established in Christchurch in 1880, at Hamilton in 1881, and at Auckland in 1888 (Todd, 1966).



**Illustration 5.** 1910 National Swimming Championships, Auckland

(Source: New Zealand Swimming Centennial, Vol. 2. Photo: Mulvihill Collection)

<sup>116</sup> For a review of the development of competitive swimming strokes, refer David Wilkie and Kelvin Juba's *The handbook of swimming*, Chap. 1 - The history of swimming, pp.1-22

The New Zealand Amateur Swimming Association was established in 1890, with the first national swimming championships being held at Calliope Dock, Devonport in 1890 (in which there was only one championship event but 10,000 paying spectators!), the first water polo championship in 1892, and the emergence of diving as an organised sport in 1895 (Williams, 1990). In February 1895, a Mister Placke was reported to have swum from Queen Street Wharf to Devonport Wharf for a wager of £25, a distance estimated to be three miles and which took the swimmer about one hour and forty minutes to complete (Walsh, 1924).

Christ's College held their first swimming sports in 1871, the Board having railed off an enclosure in the Avon river with events ranging from 75 yards downstream for juniors to 250 yards downstream and 50 yards upstream for seniors (Hamilton, 1996). Wellington College began holding championship races in 1881 and reported a particular claim to fame in the use of the crawl stroke by a new arrival to the school from Honolulu, George Hutchinson, which was described at the time as being of 'peculiar but powerful strokes' and, in winning the under-14 race, may have been the first instance of a swimmer to use the stroke competitively in New Zealand (Beasley, 1992). The first public swimming carnival held in Otago in 1876 attracted 100 competitors and was second only to the Caledonian Sports in that year in terms of participation (Crawford, 1985).

In 1891, records show that 62 entries had been received for the Ladies Bracelet Race conducted by the East Christchurch Club, although women had to wait until 1912 to be included in national championships, the same year that the Olympic Games in Stockholm first featured Ladies events in swimming and diving (Williams, 1991).

Trembath has reported that 'aquatic sports' were first organised by the pupils themselves at Auckland Grammar School in 1888 and also held at the Calliope Docks, Devonport, two years earlier than the national swimming championships at the same venue. A comment by the Principal of the school at the time, in response to a request to the Board of Governors for financial assistance to run the aquatic sports, indicates

support for the value of swimming whilst challenging the necessity for the school to pay,

On the one hand, I feel strongly that all manly exercises, and especially that of swimming, deserve encouragement; on the other, I feel as strongly that in asking help from the endowment, the boys ought to show that they have helped themselves.<sup>117</sup>

In contrast to the innovative stance of this school with regard to their male pupils, it was not until a decade later in 1898 that Auckland Grammar Schools' female pupils were given the opportunity to hold swimming sports, with competitors having to wear neck-to-ankle bathing costumes and male spectators banned from attending (Northey, 1988). Swimming sports continued to be an annual event held at the Albert Street Baths, a fresh water pool renowned for its coldness.

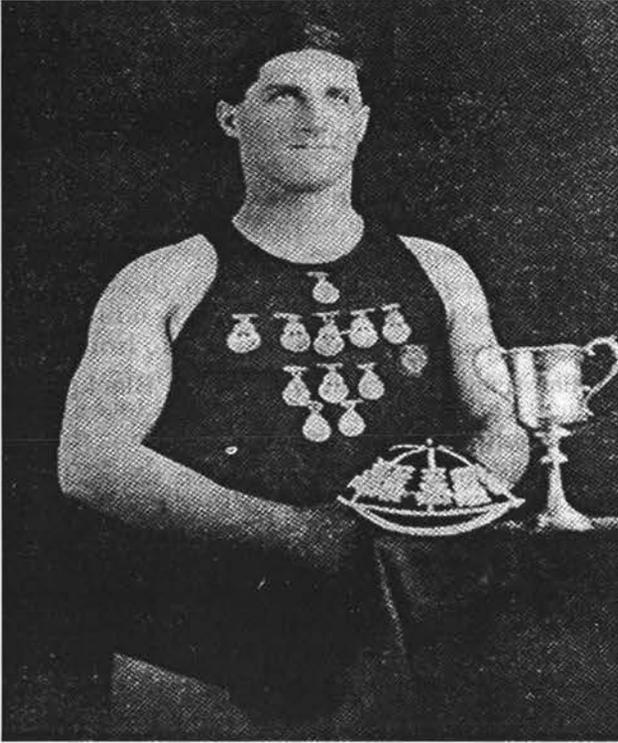
In 1913, attempts to move the event to the new salt water baths at the bottom of Shelley Beach Road in Auckland were thwarted by the intransigence of the City Council who would not permit women swimmers at hours convenient to the school timetable, an intransigence which typified the sedimented attitudes towards women amongst local and national government, a decade after the pioneering granting of voting rights for women in 1893. A running battle continued between the Council and the School over swimming facilities for the girls.

In 1915, after years of non-cooperation, the pupils were finally allowed to use the newly-constructed Tepid Baths at Hobson Street which had separate pools for each sex. However, the women's pool was much too small to cater for the increased interest among the girls and, in 1918, after a year when the School had been unable to have any swimming except for the annual sports, the Council finally relented and agreed that the

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<sup>117</sup> Auckland College and Grammar School Board, correspondence, March 29, 1890/19 - Auckland Public Library, NZMS 824

Shelley Beach Baths would be 'reserved for ladies' each Tuesday from 3.30 to 4.30 pm. (Northey, 1988).



**Illustration 6.** 1912 Olympic gold medallist, Malcolm Champion

(Source: New Zealand Swimming Centennial, Vol. 2, photo, Miles Dillon)

National championships for schoolboys were first held in each regional centre by the 1903-04 season and schoolgirls' championships were approved for each centre in 1907 (Williams, 1994). An indication of the influence of an emergent sports culture on school curriculum practice within New Zealand society is evidenced by the impact made by the appearance of the Olympic champion, Dick Cavill of Australia, at the Easter swimming carnival in 1907 at the Graving Dock, Auckland. Members of the Auckland Education Board were so impressed by his demonstration of over-arm front crawl that they named it the Cavill Crawl and added its' teaching to the curriculum.<sup>118</sup> Local inter-school competition also began to appear at about this time. In Auckland, the Principal of the

<sup>118</sup> Reported in *Totis Viribus*, 1907, p.3. Auckland College of Education, AKTC, 13/21

Auckland Teachers College, Mr. Milne, noted in his Annual Report of 1914 that at the annual swimming sports, a large number of certificates were awarded to children who had “qualified for competency (one length) or proficiency (four lengths and lifesaving). Inter-school contests were held with the Mount Eden and Devonport Schools. These took the form of relay races, as many as possible from each standard competing.”<sup>119</sup>

Elements of parochialism in the fledgling national sports organisations were evident in these formative years. For example, when the national swimming championships were held in Auckland in 1910, Wellington threatened to boycott the event. Part of the problem of holding national championships in the first instance was the difficulty of travel to the championship venue for all regions and the fact that not all events were centralised in the same venue. The difficulties encountered are well illustrated by the following detail from the Auckland Team Manager’s Report of 1908 which noted that the team left Hobson Wharf at 4 pm on Saturday, March 14th, and reached the championship venue, Napier, by noon on the following Monday. The championships were then postponed because of inclement weather which meant that the team finally returned to Auckland on the *U.S.S. Monowai* on Tuesday, March 24th, and then had to compete in other championship races in Auckland ( reported in Williams, 1991).

Events were little better organised at international level. The first modern Olympics held at Athens in 1896 had no New Zealand swimmers and the earliest attempts to establish an international swimming body suffered from parochialism in much the same way that national organisations did. World records were inaccurately recorded and subject to a variety of inconsistencies such as tidal effects, river flows, currents, inaccurate buoy setting, variable pool lengths, inadequate lane marking and poor water clarity. The first New Zealand swimmer to compete at Olympic level, Malcolm

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<sup>119</sup> In what appears to be an early instance of competition aimed at participation of the many rather than of the elitist few, Milne goes on to say, “No pot hunting is involved, as the honour of the school is all that is at stake, but the sceptic who hears the school ‘barracking’ is compelled to admit that the *all* begins with a capital A. The teams are selected by the children themselves, and the way they manage affairs speaks well for their course of civics.” Noted in the Annual Report of the Principal of the Auckland Training College, Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1914, - E-2, App.D, p.ix

Champion, actually did so as a member of a gold medal-winning relay team representing Australasia at the 1912 Olympics at Stockholm. However, such success was hardly likely to have provided a stimulus for growth such as that which might be expected as a consequence of gold medal-winning performances of current performers such as Danyon Loader. Spectator interest was high at local events but international events suffered in terms of media coverage and had not, at this stage at least, achieved the elevated status in society currently afforded to such sporting extravaganzas.

The debilitating effects of the 1914-18 World War also influenced the shape of swimming and surf life-saving competition at this time. By 1918, over 43% of New Zealand men of military age were enlisted and nearly half of these were posted overseas (Openshaw, 1988). The national swimming championships were abandoned during the war years as whole clubs disappeared. Wellington College Old Boys Club, for example, lost everyone from the president to the youngest member when all joined the 'colours' (from Baxter O'Neil's *Brief History of the N.Z.A.S.A.*, reported in Williams, 1991).

Life-saving clubs, which had developed in association with either swimming clubs (such as Worsler Bay) or the Royal Life Saving Society (such as Maranui, Wellington), first began holding inter-district carnivals in conjunction with the New Zealand Swimming Championship in Napier, 1915, but this practice was also truncated until 1920 and a return to peacetime conditions (Todd, 1966). In a similar vein, surf life-saving clubs had difficulties operating as a rescue service due to the heavy enlistments in the war. St Clair in Dunedin, for instance, was reported to have had less than fifty members by 1918, a condition which was rectified by the work of a ladies' committee and hastened the development of junior surf club membership for "it was to the children that they must look forward for the swimmers of the future".<sup>120</sup> The 1918 national swimming championships were so depleted of adult swimmers that it was decided to include juniors, a practice which met with initial resistance but was to have a profound effect on

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<sup>120</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 1918, October 4

the future nature of the sport. The net effect of this radical departure from regarding championships as the domain of adults was to demonstrate that children could participate with equal ability and in many cases “fourteen year-olds slipped through the water at speeds greater than the national senior champions of a very few years before” (Williams, 1991, p.59).

At an international level, the 1916 Olympic Games were cancelled and it was not until 1920 that New Zealand competed as an individual nation in Antwerp where, reflecting the limited technology and resources of the time, the races were held in a plank-lined outdoor pool without lane ropes or starting blocks. The selection of swimmer Violet Walrond as New Zealand’s first Olympian is significant for a number of reasons, firstly, she was the first New Zealand female sports representative in Olympic competition and secondly, she was only fourteen years of age at the time of her selection for the Games. Both conditions necessitated judicious supervision of officialdom such that her father travelled with the team acting as an unofficial coach and chaperone. An indication of the social mores still prevalent at the time was that she had to remain in her room whilst her father attended team meetings because “Ladies were not permitted in the public rooms without a suitable escort”(Ibid).



DUNEDIN GIRL WINS HARBOUR SWIMMING RACE AT AUCKLAND.  
Miss Minnie Jepson (left), of Dunedin, first woman to win the annual harbour race from Northcote Wharf to Shelly Beach Baths (Auckland), with Miss Jean Bell (second) and C. R. Watson (third).

### Illustration 7. Harbour Race winners in 1936

Note the dominance of the male third place-getter in the photograph (Source: *Otago Witness*)

## 2.8 “The bathing nuisance” - the beach as a site of public contestation

Within the public recreation domain, a visit to the beach in the 1880's did not precipitate aquatic activity other than children paddling in shallow water. Rather, the beach was regarded as the ideal picnic venue and city beaches such as St Clair in Dunedin, New Brighton in Christchurch (its name significant for its identification with the famous resort in the Mother Country), Takapuna and Cheltenham beaches in Auckland, Lyall Bay in Wellington, all provided ideal locations for dressing up and promenading in true Victorian tradition regardless of the summer heat and inappropriateness of contemporary attire. However, an incident reported in the *Observer* in 1880 suggests that the tradition of nude male bathing was causing concern on some public beaches after an incident when a number of young ladies came across a party of young men and youths swimming naked in Freemans Bay, Auckland in which the men were embarrassed but the women “passed on as innocently and as unconcerned as possible”.<sup>121</sup>

Pearson suggests that the advent of sea bathing provides a classic illustration of how cultural values influence sporting and recreational participation and as such is a fascinating historical study involving “the numerous overt clashes between representatives of a counter cultural minority and representatives of mainstream conventional society” (Pearson, 1978a, p.11). In examining the forces at work in society in Australia at the turn of the century, Booth suggests that, rather than being reflective of an anti-authority sub-culture opposed to prohibitive or repressive legislation, the sea bathing debate reflected the oppositional forces of “on the one side, petite-bourgeois moralists and, on the other side, elements of the bourgeoisie and economically and socially ambitious petite-bourgeoisie” (Booth, 1991, p.137).

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<sup>121</sup> *Observer*, December 18, 1880

A good example of the beach as a site of contestation is provided by the local history of sea bathing on Auckland's North Shore around the turn of the century. Bathing sheds were erected in Devonport on the Windsor Reserve as early as 1878 and later, with the establishment of the Devonport Borough Council in 1889, municipal sheds were built and available for use in 1891 (Walsh, 1924). They became a much advertised attraction befitting a seaside resort but created considerable local tension in that the sheds were reserved exclusively for males. Council by-laws governed bathing on the beaches with men being restricted to the hours before 8.00 am and after 6.00 pm whereas females could swim between these hours. Such restrictions created a great deal of dissatisfaction amongst the district's males as illustrated by letters to the *New Zealand Herald* in January, 1891 one of which pointed out that 'the tide is not always suitable therefore gentlemen cannot bathe until the tides suits these hours'.<sup>122</sup> Another letter expressed similar dissatisfaction by suggesting that

such a by-law as this is, I should think, in force in no other part of the civilised world' and could be resolved if "separate portions of the beach were set apart for ladies and gentlemen to bathe from and the law as to wearing bathing dress were enforced, there could be no possible objection to men bathing at any time."<sup>123</sup>

Mixed bathing was not even considered amongst the by-laws governing sea bathing and it was found increasingly difficult to compel the majority of male bathers to use any sort of bathing costume (Titchener, 1979). Among local complaints to the Borough Council were those that cited visitors from Auckland who were in the habit of bathing during church hours on Sundays, an indication of the regulatory influence of religion in societal attitudes at the time (Titchener, 1984). Even as swimming at the beach became increasingly popular towards the end of the nineteenth century, its popularity still met with considerable resistance from a public still strongly influenced by Victorian

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<sup>122</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, January 22, 1891, p.4

<sup>123</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, January 23, 1891, p.4

convention which frowned upon mixed bathing and its attendant semi-nudity. A report in the *New Zealand Herald* in 1893 typified mainstream concern thus,

The bathing nuisance along the beach at the North Shore is once more becoming apparent. At the meeting of the Devonport Borough Council last night, several of the members spoke very strongly of the disgraceful behaviour of some of the bathers. At five o'clock last evening several young men were bathing in full view of the passers-by, in a perfectly nude condition. If complaints continue, bathing will probably be completely prohibited, thus inflicting a grievance on innocent persons through no fault of their own (reported in Barnett and Wolfe, 1993, p.17).

However, by the turn of the century a liberalisation in attitudes towards mixed public bathing and increased accessibility to suburban beaches through growth in public transport in the main centres of population guaranteed the future popularity of beaches and swimming as part of our lifestyle. Public attitudes gradually changed towards mixed bathing and, by 1905, such bathing was becoming more commonplace (Titchener, 1984). In 1901, the *New Zealand Graphic* argued that sea bathing should be afforded the same respectability it enjoyed in more enlightened parts of the world such as France and the United States by proclaiming that

one of the most delightful and healthful of summer recreations - and one to which our climate and unrivalled opportunities invite us - would become ten times more popular than it is. As it is now, we swelter through the dog days, and cast longing glances at the cool blue sea, but how comparatively few of us know the luxury of a noon-day dip. Yet there is every reason why such a thing should be as common as our noon-day meal.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> *New Zealand Graphic*, January 18, 1901, p.16

Council regulation of the wearing of appropriate swimming costume however, ensured against a loosening of public morality. Dunedin city's 1898 regulation, which typified municipal authority at the time, decreed that 'no person over 10 years of age shall be permitted to bathe except in proper costume' and the nature of proper costume was specified as late as 1916 thus,

IN THE CASE OF MALES: In a bathing costume reaching from neck to knee with trunks or slips worn either inside or outside thereof.

IN THE CASE OF FEMALES: In a loosely fitting bathing costume consisting of two garments and reaching from neck to knee (reported in Barnett and Wolfe, 1993, p.24).

Attempts to enforce such legislation met with limited success. Booth suggests that failed prosecutions such as the ones that occurred in Christchurch in December, 1909<sup>125</sup> and in Dunedin in March, 1910<sup>126</sup>, paved the way for daylight bathing in New Zealand but not without resistance from self-appointed moralists and some religious groups (Booth, 1998).

In 1904, the *Otago Witness* thought the growing popularity of mixed bathing was a move in the right direction towards a time when it would be considered "quite acceptable for ladies and gentlemen to promenade the streets in warm weather in nothing more cumbersome than an artistically-designed bathing suit" (cited in Reader's Digest, 1984, p.197). In the summer of 1911, the editor of the *Triad* wrote approvingly of mixed bathing on St Clair Beach in Dunedin by reporting that about 4000 people indulged in sea bathing and that

they were a merry crowd and in Dunedin the sight of them did me good. Mixed bathing under decent conditions is a good thing for any community. It brings men and women back to a healthy basis and is an excellent antidote for the folly

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<sup>125</sup> *Evening Post*, March 1, 1910, p.5

<sup>126</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, April 5, 1910, p.3

of peering prudes. . . . There is no evil suggestion in bathing-dress. And the bathing itself is a fine and wholesome tonic.<sup>127</sup>

Pearson (1978) has suggested that the popularisation of beach bathing activities was a project involving many crises of legitimation. Initially, aquatic activity at the beach was legitimated by the voluntary acceptance of responsibility for the protection of fellow bathers, something considered important to the local bodies as they sought to provide bathing facilities in the face of increased public demand. Drowning maintained its high profile as the leading cause of violent death in the latter years of the nineteenth century. At the same time, swimming proficiency was still the domain of a few and not yet part of organised sport so rescues from drowning took on a far greater significance than they do now.<sup>128</sup> As an indication of the frequency and significance of such rescues in New Zealand, a total of 181 awards had been made by the Royal Humane Society of Australasia between 1874-1898 (Bannister, 1996). Examples of rescues, retold in heroic style, began appearing in newspapers in the latter part of the nineteenth century. In 1888, for example, a young man drowned whilst going to the rescue of a woman at Ocean Beach, Dunedin, and was recognised posthumously with the awarding of a gold medal from the Royal Humane Society of Australasia.<sup>129</sup> In 1893, local newspapers reported in glowing terms of the efforts of a local man, Matt Scott, of 'renowned swimming ability' who saved a young boy from drowning at Devonport (reported in Titchener, 1982). In 1896, the *Auckland Star* reported on the heroic actions of 59 year-old Rowley Hill who saved the life of 15 year-old Miss Christine Spinley by plunging

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<sup>127</sup> *Triad*, February 19, p.191

<sup>128</sup> Between 1874-1885, fresh and salt water drowning incidences accounted for 256 of the 298 rescues (86%) recorded by the Royal Humane Society of Australasia. Between 1886-1900, they accounted for 594 of the 762 rescues (78%). For further information on drownings and rescue statistics, refer Colin Bannister's *7000 Brave Australians*, Royal Humane Society of Australasia, Melbourne, 1996, p.205

<sup>129</sup> In the incident which occurred on the February 29th, 1888, Jon McCutcheon set out to rescue a woman drowning in heavy surf. Before he set out he said, "I am not a good swimmer but I'll do my best." He got through the breakers and swam on only to sink in the waves. For further information, refer to Colin Bannister's *7000 Brave Australians*, Royal Humane Society of Australasia, Melbourne, 1996, p.40

into the water fully clothed at Torpedo Bay.<sup>130</sup> The rescue was officially recognised with the awarding of a Bronze Medal of the Royal Humane Society, the second such award for the rescuer whom had previously performed a similar deed in 1860 whilst rescuing a fellow seaman who had fallen overboard off HMS Hannibal in the Mediterranean (Titchener, 1980b).

Favourable media commentary in the early twentieth century then, had a strong legitimising effect on the status of aquatic activity. In light of this increasing respectability, councils, rather than being seen as repressive agencies, were acting in some cases as strong advocates for the provision of sea bathing facilities. Examples of this advocacy can again be found on the North Shore where, in 1905, the Council held a poll of ratepayers to determine a scheme to provide bathing houses at three beach locations. However, in spite of such initiatives, ratepayers remained resistant to the municipal provision of facilities in the area until 1918 (Titchener, 1984). Indeed photographic evidence of the popular Auckland beaches at this time suggest that, whilst beaches were obviously an attractive holiday venue, the major focus of activity was still on promenading and paddling rather than sea bathing (Johnson, 1994).



**Illustration 8.** Cheltenham Beach, Auckland.

The popularity of promenading fully dressed in best attire and sparsity of bathing activity is well illustrated in this 1890's photograph. (Source: Auckland Public Library)

<sup>130</sup> Typifying the heroic style of reporting characteristic of the time, the newspaper reports that the hero "with characteristic daring, followed her and with great caution, managed to get her to clutch hold of his jersey with both hands till he got her to shallow water. For further detail refer to the *Auckland Star*, February 29, 1896, p.2

The Takapuna Borough Council, formed in 1913, recognised the value in promoting itself as a seaside resort by approving the commercial provision of bathing sheds in conjunction with the 'Mon Desir' hotel but passed by-laws which stipulated that no male or female could use the foreshore for the purpose of bathing unless attired in a proper suit extending at least from the neck to the knees (Sayers, 1973). Ensuring that such by-laws were upheld was the responsibility initially of an inspector appointed and paid by the borough council whose duties also included traffic control. When the practice of sun bathing became popular at about the same time, such was the concern of religion, that church services were held on the beach at Milford in Auckland to condemn the practice (*ibid.*). As beaches became heavily populated with summer crowds in the early twentieth century, police constables were also drawn in to assist bathing administration as the following comment from Constable Wood from Takapuna indicates,

It was a most unenviable job to police such matters as the more daring of the male population would sunbathe on the beach in contravention of the by-law. I well remember getting an official complaint from a resident of Clifton Street that some man was walking up the street without a top to his bathing suit-displaying his torso-a most terrible thing to do in those days" (Reported in Sayers, 1973, p.90).

Whilst the tide of public opinion changed in favour of more liberal interpretation of public decency, religious groups and self-appointed guardians of morality did achieve some success in kerbing bathers' costumes, mixed bathing and the act of sunbathing. In 1913, the Auckland City Council passed by-laws aimed at maintaining decency on the city's beaches and baths by requiring bathers to wear costumes of neck-to-knee design as well as commanding that all bathers must go straight to and from the water.<sup>131</sup> In

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<sup>131</sup> Auckland City Council By-laws, 1913

1914, the Mayor of Auckland, C.J. Parr, complained to the *New Zealand Herald* about the state of indecency seen on beaches not covered by the city by-laws by arguing that

My observations lead me to the conclusion that stringent regulations are badly needed. People should not be allowed to lie about on the sand in an almost nude condition. This conduct would not be tolerated for a minute on our city beaches.<sup>132</sup>

Editorial comment in the *New Zealand Herald* in 1911 advocated the council provision of no less than three swimming pools on the southern shore of Auckland harbour to compensate for the gradual absorption of waterfront facilities by interests with which swimming associations were unable to contend. This public recognition of the existence of a proper organisational structure reinforced the acceptability of the activity in society. Furthermore, the paper went on to adopt a highly moral tone in suggesting that, whereas in the early days there were ample facilities for bathers in every part of the foreshore, business activities such as reclaiming land, building commercial premises and constructing wharves had marginalised the bathers rights but “fortunately, we are now experiencing a reaction against the complete sacrifice of civic life to merely material interests”<sup>133</sup> as evidenced by the recent Auckland City Council and Auckland Harbour Board support for pool construction. The editorial justifies the expenditure on the basis of a revival in public appreciation of swimming as “not only a pleasurable and wholesome exercise but as a life-saving accomplishment”.<sup>134</sup>

Similar demands were being put to other local councils at this time, for example, the *Otago Daily Times* advocated the provision of a paid custodian and facilities at St Clair which “would make the beach a great asset to the city”<sup>135</sup> whilst at Lyall Bay in

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<sup>132</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 1914,

<sup>133</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, March 18, 1911, p.4

<sup>134</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, March 18, 1911, p.4

<sup>135</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, January 17, 1911

Wellington, facilities which included bathing sheds drew comparison with Sydney's already famous North Shore surfbathing beach at Manly.<sup>136</sup>

Attempts to provide public beach and water safety were, however, not to become the responsibility of either local or national government authority but rather be taken up by voluntary organisations.<sup>137</sup> The earliest body to show concern for public water safety was the Royal Humane Society of Australasia, founded in Victoria in 1874 and modelled on the Royal Humane Society in Britain.<sup>138</sup> In its early days, the Society, apart from recognising acts of bravery and humanity, initiated swimming and lifesaving training for schoolchildren as well as providing lifebuoys along river banks and at popular beaches.<sup>139</sup> In terms of public education, the Society not only provided posters on resuscitation but, in 1881, also established certificates for swimming proficiency and knowledge of lifesaving techniques for schoolchildren, the first instructional programme of its kind to be promoted in Australasia.

Six years later, in 1887, the Society introduced a bronze medallion programme for schools as well as a certificate for passing "a written examination in the theoretical knowledge of lifesaving in cases of drowning, snakebite, choking, sunstroke, bleeding, fainting and apoplexy" (Bannister, 1996, p.24). Such a programme laid the foundation for future lifesaving programmes introduced in the twentieth century. The response of Australian schools to the practical and theoretical tests was at first enthusiastic but this enthusiasm waned in time and the scheme was abandoned altogether in 1936 when it

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<sup>136</sup> *Dominion*, January 8, 1910

<sup>137</sup> In other countries such as the United States of America, early lifesaving roles were undertaken by local authorities, a trend that was to see lifesaving in that country enter into a professional, paramedic mode from the outset, in contrast to the British tradition of volunteer work subsequently developed in Australia and New Zealand. For further information, refer Kent Pearson's *Surfing Subcultures of Australia and New Zealand*, Brisbane, 1979, pp. 37-43

<sup>138</sup> The Royal Humane Society was founded in Britain in 1774 and had as its medal of honour the Victoria Cross of Swimming. It issued instructions on the rescue and resuscitation of water victims but lacked a club structure in which to promote its message. For further information on lifesaving prior to the establishment of the Royal Life Saving Society, refer Archibald Sinclair's *Swimming*, London, 1894

<sup>139</sup> In 1875, twenty lifebuoys were placed on the banks of the Yarra river and by 1904, at the peak of this practice, 418 lifebuoys had been supplied, with New Zealand being allocated 47 lifebuoys. For further information, refer to Colin Bannister's *7000 Brave Australians*, Royal Humane Society of Australasia, Melbourne, 1996, p.26-29

was decided that lifesaving instruction was best done by other organisations whose focus was specifically aquatic.

One influential aquatic institution to have its genesis in this era was the Royal Lifesaving Society which was founded in England in 1891 to combat a high drowning toll. The Society established itself in Australia in 1894 with a branch in New South Wales but it was not until 1910 that the New Zealand voluntary organisation was formed in six provinces following a visit by the Society's founder, William Henry. (Royal Life Saving Society New Zealand, 1985). Prior to this, the Otago centre had affiliated directly with the parent organisation in London in 1906 and in that year a challenge shield was established for life-saving competition in Canterbury schools, the rules being decided by the Royal Humane Society and the Canterbury branch of the NZASA (Royal Life-Saving Society NZ, 1992). Mention was made of life saving in Auckland before Henry's visit in 1910 with the *New Zealand Herald* noting that "some twelve years ago there was a life saving boom in this city, under the auspices of the Auckland Swimming Club" and "at a later period, about six years ago, members of the Northern Swimming Club interested themselves in the movement, but both clubs became defunct and the lifesaving method died with them."<sup>140</sup>

William Henry's visit to New Zealand received considerable coverage with mayoral receptions, visits to schools and colleges, and the conducting of examinations. It also provided a number of valuable insights into contemporary perceptions. For example, in a speech at Wanganui, Henry talked of the same defect he had witnessed in Australia as in New Zealand in the art of swimming breast stroke (RLSSNZ, 1992). In another instance, a public demonstration at Lyttleton Pier held on a Sunday which had raised the ire of some drew the comment from Henry that a victim would hardly attach much importance to the day of the week. On the availability of suitable swimming pool facilities, Henry was quite scathing, pointing out to a Dunedin audience that London had

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<sup>140</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 1910, 12 November

128 tepid baths at the time and that 100,000 youngsters had passed the Society's test for 50- and 100-yards swimming as well as attend twenty four lessons every year in London alone (*Ibid.*). He also tackled the vexed question of female participation by suggesting that "those interested in swimming should give the ladies a chance and they would soon prove their worth"(*Ibid.*) As a consequence of Henry's visit, over four hundred candidates were awarded certificates, with one instructor, Mr George Bilson, custodian of the Tepid Baths in Christchurch (who was later to pass on his skills to Canterbury Teachers College students) becoming only the second person outside Britain to gain a RLSS Diploma.<sup>141</sup>

About this time, as a consequence of the increasing popularity of surf swimming and the continued concern for high rates of drowning<sup>142</sup>, members of swimming clubs and the newly-formed Lifesaving Society began providing lifeguard supervision on popular beaches. Seven surf life-saving clubs were formed within a year of the establishment of the RLSS in New Zealand. They included: New Brighton the first club to be established in July, 1910; Lyall Bay in August, 1910; Worser Bay in December, 1910; St Clair also in December 1910; Castlecliffe of Wanganui in January, 1911; Sumner in August, 1911; and Maranui in October, 1911 (Todd, 1966). Surf rescues using reels were common practice on Sydney's city beaches by that stage, the world-famous Bondi Beach having been credited with the establishment of the first surf-lifesaving club grandly titled the Bondi Surf Bathers Life-Saving Club in 1906 (Barnett and Wolfe, 1993). Similar developments were reported in the first annual report of the Hawke's Bay branch of the RLSS in 1910 thus,

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<sup>141</sup> Details of this award were extensively reported in the *Press* as "a very severe one, including as it does, rescue work in full clothes, undressing on the surface, swimming constantly for twelve minutes with different styles, diving from the surface of the water to a depth of at least five feet, raising a weighted object, floating motionless for 30 seconds, diving from two heights (five feet and twenty feet), plunging a distance of not less than forty feet, turning somersaults in the water, performing fancy and scientific swimming and swimming fully clothed with boots on." The *Christchurch Press*, 1910, 19 October

<sup>142</sup> Between 1904-1910, an average of 164 people drowned each year, a rate of 16.4 per 100,000. Source: Royal Life Saving Society New Zealand, 1992, p.5

Owing to the treacherous nature of our beach, and the impossibility of rescuing a drowning person in distress in any of our rough seas, it was deemed advisable to purchase a surf-lifesaving reel for use in case of accidents to surf bathers (reported in Ingram, 1953, p.5).

By 1912 then, seven lifesaving clubs had been formed in Christchurch, Dunedin, Wellington and Wanganui - localities that had surf beaches very close to urban populations. The notable exception to this development was Auckland, a reflection perhaps of the inaccessibility of the west coast beaches at that time and the relative safety of the inner Hauraki Gulf beaches. Surf life saving competitions were first held in conjunction with the national swimming championships in 1915 at Napier (Todd, 1966). The existence of lifesaving clubs under the auspices of the Royal Lifesaving Society continued until 1932 when a separate national body, the New Zealand Surf Lifesaving Association was formed.

## 2.9 The inter-War years: “. . . heads above water metaphorically rather than literally”.

The 1920's was a time of relative austerity and recovery from the hardships of the First World War was slow. Real wages had fallen to their lowest since the beginning of the century and prolonged economic recession exacerbated social and political divisions (Openshaw, 1988). In spite of this, Butchers, in a characteristically congratulatory and optimistic tone, reported that advances in the physical health and stature of children from 1913 to 1925 were due, not only to the Dominion's "salubrious climate, virile stock and uniformly high standard of prosperity" but in no small part to the success of medical and education interventions (Butchers, 1930, p.482). Similarly, Campbell argued that the period from 1915 to 1935 was perhaps most notable for the increased attention given to the physical well-being of schoolchildren (Campbell, 1941).

In contrast to the alarming report by school medical officers in 1917<sup>143</sup> which had estimated that up to two-thirds of the children examined since the establishment of the school health services in 1912 were in need of medical attention, an Education Department report in 1928 claimed that a physical fitness conscience was being widely cultivated.<sup>144</sup> It further claimed that since the inception of the physical training scheme in 1913, the physical condition of children had improved to such an extent that the more obvious and preventable deficiencies had almost disappeared. This claim was substantiated by the following table which compared physical examination of pupils in 1913 and 1927.

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<sup>143</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1917, E-11, p.1

<sup>144</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1928, E-1, p.11

**Table 3.** Comparative Analysis of Physical Defects: 1913-1927

| Nature of Disability     | 1913  | 1927  |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|
|                          | %     | %     |
| General Physical Defects | 41.3% | 20.2% |
| Obstructive Breathing    | 33.0% | 2.9%  |
| Spinal Curvature         | 7.0%  | 0.07% |
| Stooped shoulders        | 22.0% | 5.0%  |

Source: Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1927, E-I, p.12

The introduction of a new Syllabus of Physical Instruction in 1919 reflected the new impetus given to the field of Physical Education in the Fisher Education Act of 1918 in Britain which stressed the fact that social training and physical training were linked. Similar sentiments had been expressed before the War in New Zealand, for example, in their Annual Report of 1913, the Inspectors of Auckland schools had supported the inclusion of organised activities (of which swimming and life-saving were a part) in school life because of their ability to inculcate “self-reliance, decision, and a power to obey as well as to, command’ and by such means develop ‘habits of obedience and manliness, of unselfishness and cooperation, of fortitude and endurance’”.<sup>145</sup>

In Britain, the Fisher Act had allowed local education boards to provide such additional facilities as school and holiday camps and, more particularly, school swimming pools. Whilst this may appear to be an enlightened piece of legislation, its effect was merely permissive although five schools in the London region did consequently develop swimming facilities (McIntosh, 1968). It appears unlikely that any initiatives of a similar nature can be attributed to facility developments in post-war New Zealand although signs of independent educational thinking are reflected in policy documents about this time.

<sup>145</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1913, E-2, Appendix.C, p.ii

Rather than copy the English version *en masse*, the new syllabus contained a distinctly New Zealand flavour as a result of the input of H.E. Longworth, Garlick's successor as Director of Physical Education from 1919. The syllabus was made available to schools from 1920 onwards although lack of advisory staff made its' nation-wide implementation rather fragmented.<sup>146</sup> A report to the Minister of Education in 1920 noted that 1,100 schools were visited by physical instructors and that the drill of about 85,000 children was inspected. It was also noted that "games and recreational exercises have become very popular with the children, and as a result better school-work is done. . . It is also felt that an extension of the time allotted in the curriculum for physical training should be increased from 15 to 20 minutes, which is the time given it in England."<sup>147</sup>

Specific mention was made of swimming in the 1919 Syllabus and its inclusion is worthy of quoting at length,

Ability to swim is a permanent possession of much practical value. It makes possible the enjoyment of a particularly invigorating and healthful form of exercise, attractive in its sporting possibilities for younger people, and capable of being indulged in with benefit until well on in life. Its importance for our seafaring population is tragically emphasised by the many lives that are lost for want of early instruction in swimming.<sup>148</sup>

The Syllabus further identified that children should not only be taught to swim but should also be instructed in methods of rescue and resuscitation of the 'apparently drowned'.

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<sup>146</sup> From its inception in 1912, the number of instructors/advisors employed by the Physical Education Branch had increased from ten to fourteen by 1920 but was to remain at this level throughout the 1920's in spite of the introduction of the new syllabus in 1920

<sup>147</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1920, E-2, Appendix F, p. 1

<sup>148</sup> *Syllabus of Physical Instruction*, 1919, p.225

Breast stroke was recognised as the foundation of all good swimming and was to be the first stroke taught. Traditional links between breast stroke and rescue work were stressed and backstroke was included also as a means of lifesaving and considered of ‘almost equal value’ to breast stroke. Interestingly, the Syllabus, in keeping with its British public and grammar school ethos, advocated “other swimming strokes and diving may be taught later as opportunity occurs for the sake of interest and enjoyment and the inducement to practice”.<sup>149</sup> The ascendancy of breast stroke was to remain as a fundamental of aquatic practice for many years to come, the influence of European practice overriding the emergent development of the overarm, crawl stroke from indigenous Australasian origins.

The 1919 Syllabus also devoted attention to the importance of land drills in the teaching of breast stroke, the justification for its inclusion being that

. . . if the instruction is given wholly in the water, the children’s attentions and efforts are lost, and timid children are much more likely to become frightened and discouraged. Land drill, therefore, effects a considerable economy in the use of the available bath accommodation.<sup>150</sup>

Also worthy of note, the Syllabus advocated the use of reciprocal instruction methods of pupil self-help (on the basis that it minimised water-based teacher participation!), the use of teaching aids such as floats and handrails, and a maximum class size of thirty pupils.

In spite of the inclusion of swimming and lifesaving in the mainstream document covering physical education, aquatics education still appeared in official reports under Manual Instruction because of the capitation system of payment for classes introduced more than twenty years previously in 1900. Under this structure, regional initiatives

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<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, p.226

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, p.226

continued in much the same as they had done prior to the introduction of the new Syllabus in 1919. For example, the Otago Education Board reported in 1920 that swimming and life-saving were held for over 1,000 Standard Four pupils.<sup>151</sup> The Hawkes Bay inspectors noted that physical training was suspended during the hottest weather in the early part of the year in favour of swimming and life-saving<sup>152</sup> - a trend that was to become the norm a decade later with the removal of restrictive timetable and matriculation requirements. One report that highlights some of the difficulties faced with regard to inadequate facilities is a report from Southland which pointed out that, because of inclement weather, only one school was able to complete its course of instruction.<sup>153</sup>

The payment of a capitation fee to schools for swimming and lifesaving classes was terminated in 1923, a move that brought immediate demands for reinstatement from education bodies, for example, the Wellington Education Board argued that the “withdrawal of recognition of swimming as a subject of instruction after the 30th June, 1923, has discouraged the teaching of this subject, but the Board hopes that the Education Department may be able at an early date to resume the recognition.”<sup>154</sup> Similar sentiments were expressed by Southland Board which went as far as suggesting that “In the opinion of the Board every encouragement should be given to enable school-children to receive instruction in a subject which should be compulsory wherever facilities are available.”<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> These classes were held at the Dunedin Municipal Baths, Oamaru Municipal Baths, and at Alexandra, Coal Creek, and Tapanui. Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1920, E-2, Appendix A, p. iv

<sup>152</sup> These classes were held at Hastings and Napier and, in order to encourage further participation in swimming, a challenge cup was to be provided for competition among the schools. The report concludes that “the importance of this subject warrants a greater amount of attention from teachers in the district” Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1920, E-2, Appendix B, p. x

<sup>153</sup> The Report goes on to suggest that “the lack of baths of any description where swimming can be indulged in is a serious drawback. Were such facilities available, town and suburban schools at least would be independent of the weather and practically every boy and girl would be only too eager to become proficient in an art that has so much to commend it.”

<sup>154</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1923, E-2, Appendix B, p. ix

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p.xx

The Board was to persist with its demand for reinstatement of the capitation fee the following year<sup>156</sup> and, when pressed to justify the stance in Parliamentary debate, the Minister of Education, the Hon. Mr Parr, responded that no additional payment was necessary since classes were held at times when teachers were already paid, and that very little instruction was being done. Furthermore, the Minister reasoned that in many large schools with swimming-baths attached, not more than twenty five percent of the children could swim, an indication of the under-achievement of the teaching.<sup>157</sup> He concluded that “Though the Department is anxious to promote swimming in schools, it is satisfied that the withdrawal of the grant has had very little material effect on the number of children learning to swim.”<sup>158</sup>

At the same time as funding available through the Manual and Technical Instructions Act of 1900 was being withdrawn, demands for Government assistance from outside providers of swimming and life-saving instruction in the community and in schools were also being made. As reported previously, Government grants had been awarded from the turn of the century to the New Zealand Amateur Swimming Association. After the establishment of the Royal Life-Saving Society in 1911, grants were initially channelled to the RLSSNZ through the NZASA as a “Humane Grant” but this practice ceased in 1913 and a grant of one hundred and fifty pounds was paid directly (RLSS, 1992).

An early request for financial assistance for swimming clubs was predicated on the need to stimulate club membership as a consequence of losses sustained during the War.<sup>159</sup> In 1921, a request for increased funding was made on the basis of the number of certificates

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<sup>156</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1924, E-2, Appendix B, p. xv

<sup>157</sup> It is unclear on what evidence the Minister made the claim that only twenty-five percent of children at large schools with baths attached could swim, since no evidence of a survey of swimming abilities appears in any of the official documents of the time.

<sup>158</sup> The Minister of Education was responding to a request by Mr Masters (Stratford) to reinstate the capitation payment to schools for swimming and life-saving lessons. New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1923, Vol. 203, p.256

<sup>159</sup> Mr Brown (Napier) asked the Minister of Internal Affairs whether he could add to the one hundred pounds already paid to the NZASA. New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1919, Vol. 185, Oct. 15, p.396

issued by the South Auckland Amateur Swimming Association.<sup>160</sup> In 1923, a request was made to the Minister of Internal Affairs to reinstate the annual grant of fifty pounds to the Royal Life-Saving Society of New Zealand,<sup>161</sup> a request that was subsequently granted. In 1924, similar pressure was brought to bear on behalf of the New Zealand Amateur Swimming Association to increase the annual grant of one hundred pounds in view of the “valuable work carried on among the children of the Dominion.”<sup>162</sup> A further demand for an increase of the grant to five hundred pounds on the basis that there had been a two-fold increase in the number of certificates issued from 1923 to 1924 was partially successful and resulted in an annual payment to the Association of two hundred and fifty pounds.<sup>163</sup>

Evidence of increased activity through the certification process was again used in 1925 when it was noted, in support of a request to increase the grant to five hundred pounds per annum, that the Association was actively engaged in 262 schools as opposed to 136 in the previous year.<sup>164</sup> A novel request to provide funds to the Royal Life-Saving Society for the employment of a full-time instructor to promote life-saving, the first of many such requests in future years, was declined by the Minister of Internal Affairs at this time.<sup>165</sup>

A new line of attack appeared in Parliamentary debate a year later, one that reflected the increasing role of the Life-Saving Society in front-line rescue activity. The member for

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<sup>160</sup> Mr Young (Waikato) reported that 2,602 certificates had been issued in South Auckland and wanted an assurance that funds to cover costs would be available. *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1921, Vol. 192, Dec.2, p.769-770

<sup>161</sup> Mr Smith (Taranaki) to the Minister of Internal Affairs, the Hon. Mr Bollard, *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1923, Vol. 202, July 23, p.24

<sup>162</sup> Mr Wright (Wellington Suburbs) to the Minister of Internal Affairs, the Hon. Mr Bollard, *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1924, Vol. 203, July 16, p.531

<sup>163</sup> Mr Young (Waikato) stated that during 1923, 5,388 certificates had been issued but that during 1924, “a total of 11,814 certificates were issued covering territory from Russell to Bluff.” *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1924, Vol. 204, Aug 20, p.241

<sup>164</sup> Mr Young (Hamilton) noted that 12,539 certificates had been issued nation-wide, whilst, in his constituency, 434 certificates had been issued compared to 59 the previous year. *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1925, Vol. 207, Aug 19, p.443

<sup>165</sup> Mr De La Perrelle (Awarua) to the Minister of Internal Affairs, the Hon. Mr Bollard was declined on the grounds that the Royal Life-Saving Society already received a grant of fifty pounds for its voluntary work. *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1925, Vol. 206, July 22, p.629

Avon, Mr Sullivan, appealed to the Minister of Internal Affairs during a debate on Supply, that a more generous grant would enable the Society not only to employ a full-time instructor for work in schools but would also enable them to maintain in better condition the equipment on the beaches, the consequences of which would be a "wider knowledge of scientific methods of resuscitation that would, undoubtedly, have the effect of saving many lives."<sup>166</sup> The request drew further support from the Member for Christchurch North, Mr Holland, who cited the following drowning statistics in support of his demand for increased Government funding, and from the member for Napier, Mr Mason, who reiterated the Society's involvement in running certificated life-saving courses for schoolchildren.<sup>167</sup>

**Table 4.** Distribution of drownings in New Zealand: 1921-1926.

| Province    | No. of persons drowned |
|-------------|------------------------|
| Auckland    | 260                    |
| Taranaki    | 42                     |
| Hawke's Bay | 42                     |
| Wellington  | 156                    |
| Marlborough | 11                     |
| Canterbury  | 70                     |
| Otago       | 58                     |
| Southland   | 31                     |
| Westland    | 22                     |
| Total       | 719                    |

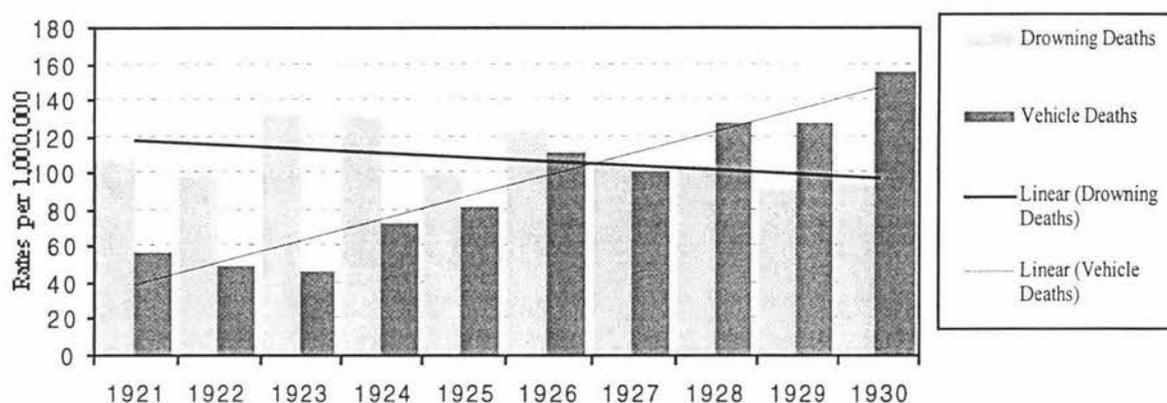
Source: New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1926, Vol. 209, July 23, p.994

<sup>166</sup> Mr Sullivan noted that "At such places as Sumner, New Brighton, and Caroline Bay, the affiliated surf clubs patrolled the beaches and rendered magnificent voluntary service, again and again saving life. These clubs were put to considerable expense in providing equipment. If the Government could see its way to do something worth while for the Society, he understood the Society would undertake the work of training the school-teachers in life-saving methods, as well as the elder pupils." This is the first instance of an association between the rescue role and the preventative role of education being simultaneously promoted in seeking central government aid. New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1926, Vol. 209, July 23, p.993-994

<sup>167</sup> In response to these pressures, the Minister of Internal Affairs, the Hon. Mr Bollard, said he would bring the question of increasing the grant before the Cabinet. New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1926, Vol. 209, July 23, p. 994

Concern for child safety was, in part due to the continued rise in the annual drowning toll in which young children were disproportionately represented (Frohlich, 1978, p.55). When records were first systematically kept in 1928, 164 deaths in a population of under 1.5 million represented a rate of slightly over 100 per 1,000,000 per population, a figure to be unsurpassed in New Zealand's future.<sup>168</sup>

**Figure 7.** Deaths by drowning and vehicle accidents, 1921-1930



Source: New Zealand Official Year Books, 1922-1931

As can be seen from Figure 7 above, the 1920's also witnessed the emergence of vehicle accidents as the primary cause of accidental death in New Zealand society, a reflection not only on the increasing dependence on the motor car for transport but also on the poor state of roading and road safety education. The loss of pre-eminence of drowning in the statistics however, did not diminish the need for aquatics education of children especially as aquatically-oriented recreational activity at the beach was becoming enshrined as part of the New Zealand society.<sup>169</sup>

One final avenue of assistance for the promotion of aquatics education that became evident in the 1920's was the payment of subsidies on the cost of the building of

<sup>168</sup> *New Zealand Official Year Book*, 1929, p.86

<sup>169</sup> For a good example of how beaches gained popularity as venues for summer recreation in the 1920's, refer to Sandra Coney's *Piha: A History of Images*, Auckland, 1997

swimming pools. Set against a background of slow economic growth and the repayment of war loans, it is interesting to note a Cabinet decision in 1920 approving a subsidy of one pound for every two pounds of voluntary contribution towards the cost of erecting school pools with a limit of one hundred and fifty pounds.<sup>170</sup> Subsequent pressure to increase the subsidy was applied which led to an increase in Government assistance to a pound-for-pound subsidy with an upper limit of two hundred pounds by 1924.<sup>171</sup> Another attempt at extracting assistance, that of subsidising the maintenance costs incurred by schools in running their pools was declined in 1927.<sup>172</sup>

Towards the latter end of the decade, official documents generally spoke in optimistic tones of the advancement in the physical education of New Zealand children, with the Minister of Education reporting in 1927 that in nearly all schools “some form of organised games, field or athletic sports, and where possible, swimming and life-saving are taken, the teachers devoting their spare time to do this work”.<sup>173</sup> In 1929, the Chief Inspector of Primary Schools reported that, with regards to the field of physical instruction, “a new spirit is in evidence in this essential part of school-work” and that in addition to playground activities, swimming and life-saving were receiving increased attention because

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<sup>170</sup> The Minister of Education, the Hon. Mr Parr, in response to a question from the Member for Palmerston, Mr Nash, regarding the payment of a pound-for-pound subsidy to School Committees for the erection of baths at primary schools so as “to encourage the children to learn the art of swimming”. New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1920, Vol. 187, Sept. 13, p. 854

<sup>171</sup> Mr Nash (Palmerston) to the Minister of Education, New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1920, Vol. 189, Nov. 8, p. 767 and Mr De La Perrelle (Awarua) to the Minister of Education, New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1924, Vol. 204, Sept. 12, p. 885

<sup>172</sup> In declining a request from the Member for Wanganui, Mr Veitch, for assistance to School Committees who paid for the maintenance of swimming-baths out of their ordinary revenue, the Minister of Education, the Hon Mr Wright, responded that the Department had no regulation whereby such payment could be made as the subsidy was only given on capital expenditure. New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1927, Vol. 216, Oct. 19, p. 96

<sup>173</sup> The Minister of Education, the Hon. Mr Wright, in his Annual Report of 1927 went on to say that it was estimated that 30% of primary children could swim and that all training college students were required to receive instruction in swimming and life-saving, and provision was being made for the endorsement of their certificates for excellence in physical training. Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1927, E-1, p.12

apart from its value as an accomplishment, swimming is considered to be one of the best means of physical development and it is therefore pleasing to note an increasing number of school-children receive the swimming certificates issued by various societies interested in this work.<sup>174</sup>

In 1931, before the economic ravages of the Depression had really started to curtail education spending, the Minister of Education, the Hon. Mr H. Atmore, reported that “steady progress was being made towards improving the physique of school-children through the medium of an improved system of physical instruction”<sup>175</sup> whilst the Chief Inspector of Primary Schools, Mr N.T. Lambourne, noted that, in Physical Education (the terms Physical Education and Physical Instruction appear interchangeably in reports at this time) “very good progress” was being made, with 14,168 swimming certificates being issued to primary and secondary school pupils.<sup>176</sup> Whilst the number of certificates is certainly substantial and may not fully reflect the level of swimming activity or pupil proficiency in schools at the time, it is worth adding a cautionary note that in 1933 there were nearly 200,000 children enrolled in primary schools and approximately 25,000 children enrolled in secondary schools.<sup>177</sup>

In his authoritative work *Education in New Zealand: An Historical Survey*, Butchers reflected this mood of optimism and reported ‘steady progress’ with regard to swimming proficiency, by suggesting in 1930 that the institution of graded swimming certificates and the earlier encouragement of swimming lessons via capitation grants had

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<sup>174</sup> The Chief Inspector cited, as evidence of this progress, regional reports, for example, Taranaki reported that swimming was taught in nearly every school which had access to baths as well as acknowledging the voluntary extra-curricular efforts of many teachers and the invaluable assistance of the Amateur Swimming Association. Wanganui noted that 1,277 certificates (359 merit certificates for swimming 880 yards; 368 proficiency certificates for 220-880 yards; and 550 learner certificates) had been awarded to forty-one schools as compared with 785 awards in nineteen schools the previous year. In addition, 563 life-saving awards had been awarded by the R.L.S.S. In the Manawatu region, 908 certificates (237 merit awards; 247 proficiency awards; and 424 learners’ awards) were distributed among twenty-two schools and 76 life-saving certificates had also been issued. The results were attributed to a combination of exceptionally fine summer weather and the efforts of teachers and the societies. Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1929, E-2, p.23

<sup>175</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1931, E-1, p.3

<sup>176</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1931, E-2, p.22

<sup>177</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1934-35, E-2, p.12

'enormously increased' the number of pupils able to swim with an estimated 30% of primary pupils able to swim (Butchers, 1930, p. 495).

Anecdotal evidence of individual initiatives is to be found in some secondary school records around this time. For example, in 1928, Wellesley College in Wellington provides an interesting account of swimming and life-saving practice for its boys by reporting that, as a consequence of two full months of instruction over a fine summer period, daily swimming lessons at the Te Aro Baths on Wellington's Oriental Parade, and a concerted effort to teach non-swimmers, only two non-swimmers were reported in the Upper School and only nine in the Lower school (Harcourt, 1989). The lack of shallow water led to the somewhat precarious teaching method based upon the 'sink or swim' mentality but this did not prevent the instructor responsible for the programme, Captain Duffy, receiving special praise from the educational officer of the New Zealand Amateur Swimming Association thus,

I wish to congratulate Wellesley College heartily on its fine showing in swimming. It is particularly gratifying to find that practically all the boys that have reached an age when they should be able to swim have qualified for certificates. Such schools are a great factor in encouraging and developing swimming generally, and Wellesley College can be looked on as an entirely exemplary school in that respect . . . A word of praise is due to the management of the School . . . and to Mr Duffy the officer responsible for the training of the boys (Harcourt, 1989, p.45).

Towards the end of the 1920's, developments in physical education were significantly influenced by the input of Dr James Renfrew White, a noted orthopaedic surgeon who managed to persuade the Minister of Education that a change in direction was required and that greater emphasis should be placed on corrective therapy and body posture. His book, *The Growing Body*, was promoted in 1930 as a manual of instruction and included a series of systematic exercises requiring an understanding of anatomy which few

teachers possessed.<sup>178</sup> In addition, teachers railed against the book because they were required to purchase it. A comment in the Chief Inspector of Primary Schools Annual Report of 1934 testifies to the hostility of teachers towards the prescribed programme by comparing it to swimming thus,

Swimming yearly grows in popularity especially where facilities are available. Concerning the state of primary swimming and field games, little but good is to be said; with the more formal and corrective exercises the same high standard has by no means been reached. . . . the inertia of custom has hindered many of the older teachers from becoming well acquainted with it as is necessary for efficient instruction.<sup>179</sup>

Teacher resistance to the prescribed formal and corrective physical training persisted and coincided with the run down of pre-service and in-service training so that teachers were, for the large part, “untrained in the method, failed to grasp the principles enumerated and have lost faith in a system they never really understood.”<sup>180</sup>

Swimming, however, did profit in status to some extent in this unhappy time because it was recognised as an activity that had “a corrective effect on spinal curvature or any minor defect”.<sup>181</sup> It also noted that in most towns, municipal baths were available and in many other places the river or sea was accessible. The importance of land drill, the need for minimal class size, and the practice of reciprocal care of pupils by pupils were again emphasised. As an official document, it differed from its predecessor, however, in recognising not only the primacy of breast stroke but also the value of the crawl stroke. The emergence of the overarm crawl stroke as the fastest stroke in the Olympic Games and the popularity of cult figures such as Johnny Weismuller probably assisted the

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<sup>178</sup> Renfrew White's book, *The Growing Child*, stated in its frontispiece that the “system of Physical Training contained herein has been prescribed by the Department of Education as the one to be used in the State Schools of New Zealand”.

<sup>179</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1934-35, E-2, p.3

<sup>180</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1936, E-2, p.3

<sup>181</sup> *Syllabus of Physical Training for Schools*, 1929, p.210

promotion of the stroke although the dominance of breast stroke was to prove remarkably resilient especially in high schools that faithfully replicated British grammar and public school practice and traditions.

Expansion in any part of the school syllabus was substantially curtailed against a backdrop of the political unrest and economic crises associated with the Depression years of 1929-1932. In his ministerial report of 1931, the Minister of Education, the Hon. Mr Harry Atmore, prefaced his comments with the stricture that “although the prevailing financial depression has made it exceedingly difficult to give effect to a number of the recommendations made by the Committee”<sup>182</sup> (that is the Select Committee of Education), interest in educational initiatives had not dampened enthusiasm for reform. A year later, in comparison, the Minister reports a much more sombre mood of spending cuts and curtailment thus,

The severe financial depression through which the country is passing, in common with most other countries to-day, made it imperative that economies should be effected in all Departments of the State, and it is impossible to avoid reducing expenditure on education. Every care has, however, been taken to effect economies that will have the least harmful effect on the system as a whole.<sup>183</sup>

Organisations involved with the promotion of swimming and lifesaving understandably felt the full effect of the financial hardship because of their dependence on government assistance and voluntary labour. The situation was succinctly put by one member of the lifesaving fraternity at the time, Mr Jack Brewer, who suggested that most people were concerned “more with keeping their heads above water metaphorically rather than literally” (RLSSNZ, 1992, p.12). Training Colleges, another group in the vanguard of curriculum change and aquatics education promotion, also suffered during this period

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<sup>182</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1931, E-1, p.1

<sup>183</sup> The Minister went on to announce cuts of more than 700,000 pounds on such items as grants to school committees (through which swimming pool subsidies were paid), student teaching and building maintenance. Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1932-33, E-1, p.2

with Dunedin and Wellington Training colleges closing from 1932-1936 and the remaining colleges at Auckland and Christchurch also forced to close their doors for a year in 1934.<sup>184</sup> In 1936, the Minister of Education reported that the teaching of physical education received “a severe setback, the financial stringency causing the suspension of the system of itinerant instructors and the curtailment of the training of teachers” whilst adding significantly that “in the older countries no other subject is receiving more attention at present both inside and outside of the schools.”<sup>185</sup>

In spite of this troubled background, there is evidence of some regional initiatives in the development of swimming and swimming facilities, for example, the Auckland Education Board expected its young teachers to give instruction in swimming as part of physical training and in 1930, the first primary swimming carnival took place at the Tepid Baths with 28 schools taking part (Cummings, 1959).

Individual schools, acting on their own initiatives and operating from a privileged socio-economic base, did build their own pools, for example, Butchers (1950) reported that Craighead Diocesan School, St. Andrew’s College, Rangiruru Presbyterian Girls’ School, Christchurch Boys’ High School, and Timaru Girls’ High School in the Canterbury region had built pools in the 1920’-30’s period. In Auckland, St. Cuthbert’s College, after a series of fundraising activities including school galas, gifts from benefactors and donations of building materials, completed a very modern and grandiose facility in 1927 which was reported in the press to be equipped with ‘thoroughly up-to-date lines’ including filtration, an electrical vacuum system for cleaning the pool walls and floor, technology which led to it being proclaimed that “nothing has been spared to justify the claim that the bath is the best of its kind in the Dominion”.<sup>186</sup> A few years later, in 1930, another private girls’ school in the same vicinity, Diocesan School, also opened its

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<sup>184</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1934-35, E-2, p.3

<sup>185</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1936, E-1, p.29

<sup>186</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 15 December, 1927

new swimming pool: its mosaic border; its size, depth and clarity; and its white and green colour scheme filling the pupils and staff “with joyous anticipation.”<sup>187</sup>

Woodford House in Havelock North constructed a slightly less grandiose pool in 1927 to replace the original stream enclosure although this new facility’s life was short-lived as it was irreparably fractured during the 1931 Napier Earthquake and replaced by a much more elaborate pool complex in 1935, complete with arc lighting for night swimming. However, as Varnham notes, Woodford’s pool had been built at a time when it was still hard for many girls’ schools to get funding for sports facilities (Varnham, 1994). She cites the plight of Wellington Girls’ College which had been given only three-quarters of an acre of land, compared to fifty acres of Wellington College for boys as an indication of the tendency to rate female sport and physical activity as far less important than that of males, a sentiment that had persisted from earlier Victorian times. In another instance, Epsom Girls’ Grammar school had inaugurated a pool fund in 1922 but were to wait until 1933 before the pool was finally built (Epsom Girls’ Grammar School, 1991). In 1934, the Principal of Auckland Girls’ Grammar suggested that the reservoir on the corner of Ponsonby and Karangahape Roads be converted into a warm-water pool but the combination of public antipathy towards female participation and the austere economic and business climate at the time mitigated against such action (Northey, 1988).

As the economy recovered in the mid-1930’s, the educational facilities that had been withdrawn were gradually replaced.<sup>188</sup> There was corresponding evidence of fresh change in school curriculum direction, in particular, the freeing up of the school timetable from the constraints of proficiency tests for primary pupils and secondary school entrance examinations. This liberalisation had a particular impact on the aquatic education offered by primary schools when schools were,

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<sup>187</sup> *Diocesan High School Chronicle*, December, 1930. p.8

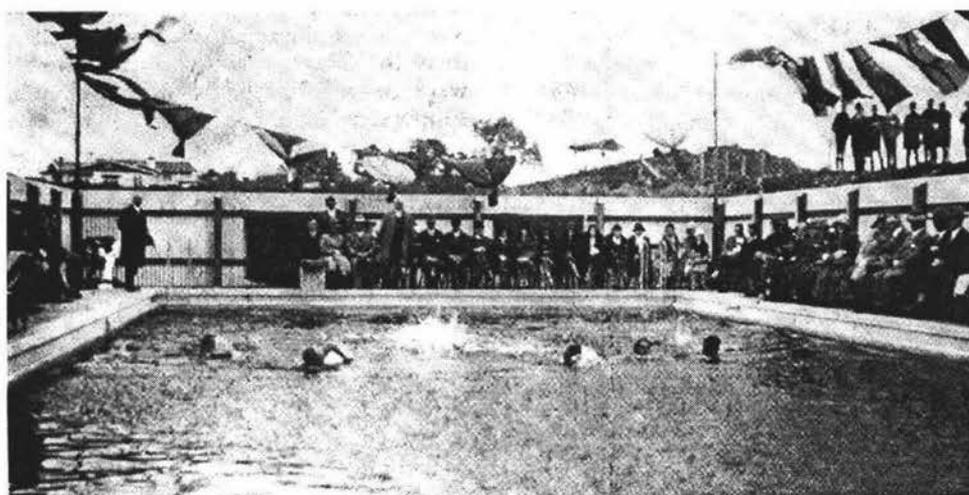
<sup>188</sup> The Minister of Education announced the resumption of teacher training at Wellington and Dunedin Teachers’ Colleges and the return of the physical education instructors. Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1937, E-1, p.3

officially advised to modify the normal curriculum during February each year and to concentrate as much as possible on children's welfare through the teaching of swimming, lifesaving, and road safety. Such a request would have been unthinkable in earlier years. (Ewing, 1970, p.193)

Furthermore, the advent of the third-year specialist teachers (which had first been advocated in 1916 but became a reality in 1928), meant that a dramatic increase in the number of specialists and leaders were available to spearhead change. In Dunedin, eighteen students attended the College for a third year, of which twelve returned to specialise in Physical Instruction under Mr J. Renfrew White - the renowned principal's son - appointed supervisor in 1928. Regular swimming and lifesaving classes were taught under the instruction of Mr 'Jock' Hanna at the YMCA Baths over a period of ten weeks (Johnston & Morton, 1976). A group of students arranged further practice in life-saving at the Municipal baths focussed on the attainment of proficiency certificates and the bronze medallion and, in 1930, regular morning instruction of beginners by the proficient students was an indication of enthusiasm. Sadly, in 1931, the Depression closed the YMCA Baths, the tuition grant from the Department of Education ceased as part of the austerity measures of the time, and students swam at their own expense in the Municipal Baths (*Ibid.* p.71).

In Auckland, the new site for the Auckland Teachers College was established in 1926 but without facilities for the promotion of physical activities such as swimming. The newly-appointed Principal, Mr. D. R. Rae, who was a strong advocate of physical accomplishment and himself a prominent sportsman in many fields, took it upon himself to obtain better facilities. In his first letter to the Director of Education, Mr T. B. Strong, he pointed out that the male students had summer swimming lessons at the Mount Eden baths, a mile and a quarter from the College at a cost of four pence each, and winter swimming lessons at the Tepid baths, three miles away at a cost of one

shilling. Women were given no instruction at all, there was a tremendous loss of time and Rae concluded it was imperative that the College be equipped with a pool.<sup>189</sup> Evidence of local support for the supply of a College pool is reflected in the pressure applied to the Department of Education, local Education Board and Ministers of Education, through the lobbying of the local member for Eden and Minister of Health, the Hon. Mr. A.J. Stallworthy, who was a stalwart supporter of the scheme to build a pool that could be used by children of the Normal School and used to “enable all the young teachers to become teachers of the art of swimming and lifesaving”.<sup>190</sup>



**Illustration 9.** Auckland Training College pool opening, 1931.

(Source: Auckland College of Education Archives)

The pool was completed with the assistance of unemployed workers used by the Education Board under the Number Five Unemployment Relief Scheme and officially opened in 1931<sup>191</sup> with the College journal, *Manuka*, noting that having baths available now meant that women as well as men could now have lessons “with the result that a marked improvement was shown in the ladies swimming in 1931”.<sup>192</sup>

<sup>189</sup> Correspondence from Rae to Director of Education, 30th August, 1929 - Auckland College of Education Archives

<sup>190</sup> Correspondence from Stallworthy to Minister of Education, 17th February, 1930 - Auckland College of Education Archives

<sup>191</sup> The pool was officially opened on the 8th May, 1930, by the Hon. Minister of Education, Mr Atmore and the Hon. Minister of Health, Mr Stallworthy. Report of the Principal, Auckland Teachers College, Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1931, E-2, p.45

<sup>192</sup> *Manuka*, 1931, p.39 - Auckland College of Education Archives

With the availability of a pool, the employment of a specialist swimming instructor, Mr. Ken Reid, and the support of the Principal, it is hardly surprising that particular emphasis was given to the teaching of swimming and life-saving with all students in the two-year training programme having to meet the requirements of the Bronze Medallion in Swimming and Lifesaving. In support of such emphasis, the Principal reasoned that “the student who has benefited personally from daily participation in healthy physical exercise, will be the best teacher of this very important work”.<sup>193</sup> It is also interesting to note that, whilst the major portion of the money was provided by the Education Department and the Auckland Education Board, the parents of the Normal School and the Epsom School each contributed £150 to provide instruction in swimming for their children and the college students guaranteed to meet the cost of water supply at a time when this was a considerable expense to the College.<sup>194</sup>

In other institutions, graduates of the third-year programme studied swimming in a 50-hour course, a figure that compares very favourably with current training allocation (Bedggood, 1954). Not all Colleges were blessed with appropriate facilities, a point made by the Principal of Wellington Teachers College in 1931 when he suggested that “with the exception of the Boys’ Institute in Tasman street, no adequate arrangement exists to carry on this work in the colder months of the year.”<sup>195</sup>

However, concern regarding the knowledge base of teachers and instructors (advisers) was publicly recognised in 1930 when an in-service course was held in Wellington which focused on folk dancing and swimming. As reported by Beard,

. . . this represented the first organised attempt to develop swimming as a specialised branch of physical education. The subject had received wide recognition as to its values but the methods used in teaching and the styles

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<sup>193</sup> *Notes on Physical Education*, Teachers College Auckland, foreword by Principal - Auckland College of Education Archives

<sup>194</sup> Manuka, 1931, p.8 - Auckland College of Education Archives

<sup>195</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1932-33, E-2, p.46

taught, were many and diversified. The Training Colleges placed importance, for instance, on life-saving ability, neglecting to teach methods of swimming; while the principal method used in schools incorporated artificial support of rubber floats and towing ropes. (Beard, 1947)

How much of this instruction filtered down to the teacher-pupil interface is debatable. In recalling his early primary school education, Cliff Williams noted that he seemed to remember that swimming was taught in the summer months but it was “not a schoolteacher who took us - it was a retired engine driver - an old man called Bernard.”<sup>196</sup> Similarly, Norma Williams recalls that whilst growing up on Auckland’s North Shore, her first memories of being taught to swim were not in the formal setting of her primary school but after school at Duders Beach where there was a concrete terrace where all the mothers would sit, pushing their children to Mr Dougall, a swimming enthusiast, to see if he would teach them to swim. She noted that “It was very informal and a joy to these people who went to the beach and did this for no benefit whatsoever but just because it was something they liked doing.”<sup>197</sup>

The 1929 *Syllabus of Instruction for Public Schools* which had proved so unpopular was eventually replaced by the import of a newly developed syllabus from England. The 1933 *Syllabus of Physical Training for Schools* made some interesting observations on the teaching of swimming. Whilst again acknowledging the unique and special nature of swimming as a branch of physical training, the *Syllabus* informed teachers that the younger a child learned to swim, the more at ease they would be in the water but, speaking generally, a child of eleven was mentally and physically more likely to progress further in a limited time than a child of eight. It also recommended that

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<sup>196</sup> Interview with Cliff Williams in Auckland on May 1, 1998, former professional swimming coach and New Zealand’s first full-time Technical Officer to be employed by the NZASA.

<sup>197</sup> Interview with Norma Williams in Auckland on May 1, 1998, currently an Olympic and Commonwealth Games Selector and author of an autobiography entitled *Between the Lanes*, about her lifetime involvement in competitive swimming

the aim of swimming instruction should be to produce the maximum number of swimmers and not to concentrate on the attainment of a few specially apt pupils. It reinforced the value of swimming activities as a personal safeguard in emergency, and possibly a means of saving others. It was equivocal on which stroke was to be taught first but suggested that confidence exercises should always precede stroke instruction. Finally, it noted that some pragmatic solutions to the shortage of facilities had been presented by suggesting that “in some rural areas much enterprise has been shown damming up streams to make safe pools, and even in digging small swimming holes”.<sup>198</sup>

One initiative in aquatics education which was to blossom with the relaxation of timetable constraints was the practice of concentrated blocks of school time dedicated to teaching pupils to swim. The first planned ‘Learn to Swim’ week had to be cancelled in 1936 because of an occurrence of an epidemic of infantile paralysis.<sup>199</sup> A year later the institution of the ‘Learn to Swim’ week in December, 1937 proved to be “a popular and successful innovation, and the proposal to suspend the ordinary February timetable and conduct school activities principally out of doors should do much to foster the art.”<sup>200</sup> Strong political support for the community-based initiative was forthcoming from the Labour Government who allocated £2,000 towards the cost of the promotion as well as establishing a “National Committee on Swimming and Life-Saving” in 1938.<sup>201</sup>

In 1939, the Chief Inspector of primary schools reported that, although climatic conditions were not favourable, the ‘Learn to Swim’ week was conducted enthusiastically with the total number of certificates issued for competency in swimming reaching 33,054, an increase of 1,052 over the 1938 figure.<sup>202</sup> Again it is necessary to curb the official enthusiasm for use of such figures to justify the practice by noting that there were approximately 190,000 pupils enrolled in primary schools at

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<sup>198</sup> *Syllabus of Physical Training for Schools 1933*, Board of Education, London, p.66

<sup>199</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1937, E-2, p. 6

<sup>200</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1938, E-2, p. 6

<sup>201</sup> Reported in the maiden speech of Mr Cotterill, Member for Wanganui. *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1951, Vol.295, November 1, p.641

<sup>202</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1940, E-2, p. 6

the time. Cautionary note notwithstanding, the success of these initial 'Learn to Swim' weeks was such that it was to form the backbone of future water safety campaigns in post-war New Zealand well into the 1950's and 60's.

The 1933 Syllabus was reinforced in 1937 with the passing of the Physical Welfare Act (1937) to provide direction in the recreation and fitness needs of youth and adults. This move was set against a background of social and political change which witnessed the establishment of the five-day, forty-hour working week, the first Labour Government in 1935, the success of Jack Lovelock at the 1936 Berlin Olympics and the ominous rise of Hitler in Germany. The Labour Government, coming to power during the aftermath of the Depression, were determined to promote every type of social welfare under its banner cry of 'An equal chance for all' and the Act provided an ideal opportunity for egalitarian participation and wellbeing in agreement with its espoused ideology.

Furthermore, as Buchanan points out, many people still had an abundance of disposable leisure time in spite of relief schemes and a feeling of despondency which still prevailed for many as a legacy from the Depression years (Buchanan, 1977). One of the prime intentions of the Act was to make available recreation loans for local authorities to develop recreation facilities and, between 1937-1950, five loans were granted for swimming pool development (*Ibid.*).

The impetus for aquatics education provided by the promotion of recreation in society was recognised within the school system by a growing recognition that recreational activity and instruction should not be confined to an extra-curricular role. Furthermore, the increased public interest in the number of child and adult drowning accidents was advanced as a reason for curriculum change. In 1938, the Chief Inspector of primary schools suggested that "owing to the geniality of our climate and to improvements in transport facilities, there is a rapidly increasing interest in the pastime (of swimming), an interest that demands a corresponding attention in the schools."<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1938, E-2, p. 6

Swimming and life-saving had been included in the Syllabus of Instruction for Primary Schools since 1928 with the proviso that it should be taught wherever facilities exist. However, even where facilities did exist the conditions were somewhat primitive by today's standards. Cliff Williams recalls that he was lucky to go to one of the few primary schools in Auckland that had a pool. He remembered that, as a pupil at Mangawhau School, Auckland, he had access to a twenty-five yard pool which was "Drain and fill, it used to be clean as a whistle but cold as hell on a Monday but by Friday it was filthy dirty -you couldn't see the bottom - but it was warm."<sup>204</sup> In a similar vein, education districts differed widely in the facilities provided and, in 1938, the Chief Inspector of primary schools gave the example of towns like Wanganui having four school swimming-baths in comparison with one unnamed whole education district possessing only one.<sup>205</sup> He concluded that,

as better highways and swifter transport are taking people in fast increasing numbers to seaside, lake, and river, and the cult of personal cleanliness and physical fitness comes more and more into favour, more local initiatives, particularly as far as children are concerned, is simply not enough.<sup>206</sup>

Similar concerns were expressed a year later with a similar plea for greater access to swimming pools and it is interesting to note that the proponent draws a comparison between water safety and road safety funding and regulation in support of better facilities.<sup>207</sup> One of the consequences of this and other political lobbying at the time was the granting of a subsidy by the Department of Education of up to half of the cost

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<sup>204</sup> Interview in Auckland, May 1, 1998 with Cliff Williams.

<sup>205</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1938, E-2, p.6

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, p.6

<sup>207</sup> The Chief Inspector of primary schools, Mr McIlraith, argued thus, "The lack of school baths or freely accessible municipal baths is forcing children inadequately trained or wholly untrained to take this pleasant and health-promoting form of pastime in imperfectly supervised places. Concentration is necessary on this problem with something like the intensity with which the problem of safety on the highway has been dealt with, where regulations providing for certificates of fitness for both car and driver have been supplemented by the provision of roads so constructed as to reduce the possibility of accidents to a minimum." Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1939, E-2, p. 6

of materials for the construction of swimming pools to a maximum of £200 - a consequence that was to have a far reaching impact on post-war developments in aquatics education in New Zealand.

The Physical Welfare Act (1937) was supported by two manuals published in England which were adopted in New Zealand. The fitness manuals are of particular interest in that they provide separate syllabus for male and female, and recognised that opportunities for recreation and, in particular, facility availability, were historically inequitable in favour of males. The manual suggests that swimming is especially suited to the recreational needs of women and girls although the reasons for this are of somewhat dubious merit and reflect gender stereotypes which typified contemporary beliefs. For example, whilst appropriately recognising the beneficial cardiovascular benefits of swimming, it also patronisingly suggests,

...while to the woman who has allowed herself to get out of condition it provides a pleasant and safe alternative to land exercises which will, in time, reduce bulk and restore muscular tone.<sup>208</sup>

It goes on to suggest that the rhythmic nature and beauty of the movements, the consciousness that it gives to personal attainment, and the benefits to physical poise are further justification to the value of swimming for girls and women. In contrast, the language used to extol the virtues of swimming to youth (not boys) and men is much more befitting society's perception of the masculine role, for example,

Swimming has *strong* claims for inclusion in any scheme of physical recreation in that it makes a *powerful* appeal to the normal youth and provides a valuable form of bodily exercise.<sup>209</sup> (Author's italics for emphasis)

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<sup>208</sup> *Recreation and Physical Fitness for Girls and Women*, 1937, Board of Education, London, p.224

<sup>209</sup> *Recreation and Physical Fitness for Youths and Men*, 1937, Board of Education, London, p. 11

The manual also raised another point of interest with regard to the rigour of the swimming exercise engaged in, advocating the application of fitness training principles thus,

If it is possible to use a bath, attendance thereat should not mean just a bathe for the class. There is the same need for a worked out programme as in the exercise room . . . into which the whole class can be drawn, and from which all can derive beneficial exercise.”<sup>210</sup>

Sadly, the opportunity to substantially impact on the physical welfare of contemporary youth was seriously hamstrung by a lack of political commitment, direction and funding as well as the disruption brought to the programme by the War. Furthermore, Buchanan suggests that the disruption brought about by the War caused many of the apparent difficulties in establishing a recreation programme, but the “weaknesses inherent in, and associated with, the whole programme were fundamental and would have eventually caused insuperable problems” (Buchanan, 1977, p.143). Lack of communication between the Departments of Internal Affairs and Education meant that the programme was initiated before an effective relationship was established with the physical education programme already being undertaken by the Department of Education. Buchanan adds that this is surprising because not only did the Education Department have a real influence over physical training activities of school children, but it “also promoted keep-fit and community recreation outside of the school system through Adult Education.” (*Ibid.*, p.143)

It is important to note that whilst the above Act focused on adolescent youth, all syllabus development prior to the Second World War had been specifically related to primary-age schooling. Selection to secondary schools had been subject to the passing of a stiff examination known as ‘Proficiency’, and thus according to Stothart,

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<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*,p.11

. . . secondary schools, with the exception of a small group of Technical Schools, tended to cater for an academically able elite. While selection pressure occurred at the bottom, the pressure of academic preparation at the top-end made its weight felt throughout the curriculum (Stothart, 1974, p.18).

In spite of such pressure for academic achievement however, individual schools, through enlightened principals or enthusiastic teaching staff, did promote aquatics education, for example, at Auckland Grammar School the notion of a remedial swimming programme was reported thus,

Swimming was further strengthened in 1932 when a beginners class ('no ducking allowed') was set up for the thirty or so boys who had the courage to admit that they could not swim. A year later, the annual Swimming Sports were transferred from the Tepid Baths to Mount Eden Pool. By 1935 the entry had grown so large that preliminary event had to be held a week before the main meeting. (Trembath, 1969, p.404)

Cliff Williams, a pupil at Auckland Grammar School at the time however, recalls a rather different attitude towards swimming inside the curriculum thus,

Grammar had no pool and no swimming teaching. They didn't know what swimming was. In fact, in my fifth form year, I was asked to organise the school swimming sports as a schoolboy and that was a feather in my cap to be able to do that. The Headmaster said thank you very much for doing that and put it in my reference. It was a pat on the back from the Head for having some organisational ability. I didn't know anything really, it was just a mess looking back.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Interview in Auckland, on May 1, 1998, with Cliff Williams

Victorian attitudes referred to previously with regard to public bathing and costume regulation still exerted considerable influence on female participation in aquatic activity in the late 1930's. The Tepid Baths in Auckland, which were built in 1914, typified public swimming amenities of the time by having separate male and female swimming pools. Chaperones at the poolside ensured propriety at all times and even on the beaches, inspectors were employed to enforce strict costume codes. Norma Williams recalls that on a family visit to Takapuna beach in the 1930's, her father was reprimanded by a beach inspector for baring his chest and also remembers the unspoken disapproval of her employers when returning to work from a lunchtime swim with wet hair.<sup>212</sup> In a similar vein, Gordon McLachlan recalled that his mother, who was a fine swimmer as a girl would not have swum or exercised in any vigorous way after she had had children and 'lost her figure' since it would have constituted "a solecism endlessly commented upon."<sup>213</sup>

Swimming as a sport showed early signs of maturity with regard to equal opportunity of the sexes although it too did not entirely escape many of society's taboos. Chaperones, for example, to protect the female members were an essential part of an international team as late as the 1970's. Norma Williams recalls, as a young female competitor, the onset of menstruation thus,

My introduction to womanhood came unexpectedly and for which I had not the slightest preparation. The discovery after I had got home from an interclub meeting that I had actually 'swum with it' was treated with alarm. Next day was a visit to the doctor to see what damage had been done. Serious discussion ensued. Feet were 'never' to get wet during menstruation (Williams, 1996, p.29).

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<sup>212</sup> Interview in Auckland, on May 1, 1998 with Norma Williams

<sup>213</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, November 21-22, 1998, H3, p.3

### 2.10 Post-War Optimism and Aquatics: “. . . nearly every child can swim.”

The onset of the Second World War signalled another major disruption to the country's education system but, as with the First World War and the South African War before that, the field of Physical Education was to experience growth albeit for somewhat dubious reasons - that of providing a physically fit and strong fighting force for the defence of the nation. Whilst not promoting militarism and jingoistic patriotism in quite the same overt way as previously, veiled comments on the functional need for a fit military force were implicit in many of the official comments of the time. For example, in 1941, when commenting on the appointment of four assistants to the newly appointed Chief Superintendent of Physical Education, the Minister of Education noted that the avidity with which the new syllabus had been taken up by teachers was evidence of the growing realisation that “education that neglects the body is woefully one-sided” and that “at no time in New Zealand's history could this drive for Physical Education have been more opportune.”<sup>214</sup> As evidence of this new-found commitment to the physical education of the nation, the number of advisers employed increased during the war years from four in 1941, to sixteen in 1942, and eventually to seventy specialists by the end of hostilities in 1945.<sup>215</sup> In addition to this increased staffing, the time allocation to Physical Education for children in both primary and secondary schools was increased to three half-hourly periods per week in the primary schools and at least one hour a week in the post-primary schools.<sup>216</sup>

In spite of the upheaval associated with the Second World War, developments in aquatics education took a significant step forward in the 1940's as a consequence of a number of initiatives, particularly those associated with the foresight and tenacity of one individual, K.C. Reid of Auckland. Reid was a college lecturer in Physical Education at

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<sup>214</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1942, E-1, p.1

<sup>215</sup> In his Annual Report of 1945, the Minister of Education drew attention to the fact that in 1935 there had only been half a dozen full-time Physical Education specialists employed whereas, in 1945, there were seventy. Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1946, E-1, p.5

the Auckland Teachers' College who, after initial experimentation at Cornwall Park School, introduced the prototype learners' pool in 1940. In the finest of pragmatist traditions, Reid and the School Principal managed to persuade the School Committee to fit a large concrete curing pool formerly used by Humes Pipes, a local concrete firm, into the school grounds and convert it into a swimming pool.<sup>217</sup> It was of considerable import that the Chairman of the School Committee was the owner of that local concrete firm who donated the curing pool free of charge!

A second pool soon followed at Edgecumbe and in 1940, the new Director of Education, Dr C.E. Beeby visited the Cornwall Park School and was so impressed by the concept of the learners' pool that, in 1941, he persuaded the Department of Education to provide a subsidy for the building of learners' pools in primary schools across New Zealand (Stothart, 1997). In the same year, and in spite of building supply shortages,<sup>218</sup> the Minister of Education, the Hon. Mr H.G.R. Mason, reported that the teaching of swimming was progressing rapidly and that "a large number of miniature learners' pools have been constructed with the help of government."<sup>219</sup> Departmental reports from regional offices at the time reinforced this significance of this development and indicated that, among its many benefits, the learners' pools offered "lower initial cost and suitability for all grades of learners, even the infants."<sup>220</sup> In 1945, the Chief Inspector of Primary Schools noted that "throughout the Dominion there has been considerable

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<sup>216</sup> *New Zealand Official Yearbook*, 1943, p.111

<sup>217</sup> Reid described the construction thus "On Wednesday morning carrots were growing in the spot selected for the pool; that afternoon the kids had cleared it of veges and removed the surplus soil, and levelled it on to the firm subsoil. Thursday - the staves (slabs) were brought in from the works, and the shingle, cement and reinforcement for the base. Friday evening - the committee men took their levels and put in levels for the foundations. Saturday morning - the men mixed and laid the foundations 30x12 with a 6-inch step. . . . Monday morning - the bath was filled with water. At midday, I worked out the amounts, tested and chlorinated the pool, rang up the Health Department and at 3 o' clock on the same day the President of the Swimming Association and the Chairman of the Board etc., opened the bath." Ken Reid, Senior Organiser of Physical Education, correspondence to Miss Bach, 19/8/1949, Education Department, Auckland (RMU), National Archives, Mt. Wellington, Auckland

<sup>218</sup> For example, the Newmarket Olympic Pool was completed in 1940, just months before a ban on the use for cement for non-defence building was implemented. Source: Norma Williams' *Between the Lanes*, 1996, p. 20

<sup>219</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1941, E-1, p.4

<sup>220</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1941, E-2, p.4

increase in the number of learners' pools" and that "it was particularly pleasing to see the progress made in the far South where climatic conditions are a limiting factor."<sup>221</sup>

In addition to this far-reaching development, Reid was also responsible for introducing what is possibly the first example of an audio-visual teaching resource for teaching swimming. Support for this development and official recognition of the importance of aquatics education was evident in the production of both a special report entitled *The Teaching of Swimming* and a complementary film of swimming technique entitled *Learn to Swim*.<sup>222</sup> These resources promoted the principle of progressive practice and became a national coaching method for schools for a further five years before being revised by a panel of expert teachers of swimming.<sup>223</sup> One of the underlying principles of swimming teaching espoused by Reid was the necessity for the early acquisition of good habits in terms of technique rather than speed of swimming or distance swum, a point reinforced by the Minister of Education in his foreword to the *Teaching of Swimming* Report.<sup>224</sup> To this end, confidence in flotation and ease of progress through the water were more important than struggling to win recognition from having covered, no matter in what style, a certain distance. In reinforcing the appropriateness of Reid's guiding principles, Beard reasoned that

In the past, distance certificates have attracted children to earn awards which were beyond their level: the style of swimming in such performances was in

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<sup>221</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1945, E-2, p.3

<sup>222</sup> In the Foreword to the Report, the Minister of Education, the Hon. Mr H.G.R. Mason stated in a characteristically celebratory manner that "the Dominion has reason to be proud of its achievements in swimming and of the great interest shown in this healthy activity, both within and outside the teaching profession." Foreword to the *The Teaching of Swimming*, Special Report on Educational Subjects, No. 18, Education Department, Wellington, 1940

<sup>223</sup> The Chief Inspector of Primary Schools noted in his annual report of 1950 that the film, *Learn to Swim*, was re-made and used extensively in the 'Learn to Swim' campaigns conducted by schools throughout the summer months. Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1950, E-2, p.2

<sup>224</sup> The Minister of Education, the Hon. Mr H.G.R. Mason, noted that "it may be that the methods advocated here will make the gaining of distance certificates a somewhat slower process than it has hitherto been. However, I feel confident that the final results will be a raising of the general standard of swimming competence and the building of a nation of real swimmers." From the Foreword in *The Teaching of Swimming*. Special Report on Educational subjects No. 18, Education Department, Wellington, 1940

most cases, very poor. To circumnavigate this situation, the Education Department in conjunction with the Amateur Swimming Association, had printed progress certificates for style in crawl swimming. These awards are based on the pamphlet progressions, and act as an incentive to the child to perform each stage well, so earning an award on the certificate. (Beard, 1947, p.140)

The sentiments expressed above concerning the pursuit of certificates and distance swimming are, perhaps, the first public utterance of what was to become firm departmental policy in later times.<sup>225</sup>

Another significant development during the war years was the wholesale revision of secondary education initiated by the Thomas Committee established in 1942 which led to what has been claimed as the “most momentous” period of post-primary education development in New Zealand’s history (Marshall, 1989, p.121). With its avowed intention of ensuring, as far as possible, that all post-primary pupils, irrespective of their varying abilities and their varying ambitions, would receive a “generous and well-balanced education”, the Thomas Committee recognised that “both personal and social needs have all too often been pushed into the background, especially by economic pressures” and that, consequently, the nature of the education a pupil has been given has frequently been determined by “the demand for attainments that can be readily marketed” (Thomas Report, 1942, p.5). Furthermore, the Report was predicated on the belief that the traditional academic approach was, up to a point, suitable for the select few but was quite inappropriate for the ordinary pupil (*Ibid.*p.7).

Physical Education was well served by the sentiments expressed in the final report, especially with the recognition of Physical Education as a core subject, a condition that

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<sup>225</sup> Refer NZ Ministry of Education - *Post-primary Regulations*, 1954

was later to become the cornerstone of major developments.<sup>226</sup> A sub-committee on Physical Education set up by the Thomas Committee recommended that there should be: a specialist teacher for every two hundred pupils; a place in the school where physical education could be taught; provision for health education; and corrective work for individuals (Marshall, 1989).

However, chronic shortages of appropriate facilities and equipment, as well as minimal specialist training of staff and no cohesive teaching syllabus, meant that development at the secondary level continued to be erratic in the post-war years. Murdoch (1943) however, reported very positively on the state of aquatics education thus,

The standard of swimming and life-saving in our schools is more satisfactory. Nearly all school pupils can swim, and an impressive number of certificates are awarded annually. During the past five years, for example, the Auckland Centre has awarded on the average some 250 certificates of various kinds to high school pupils in their area. . . . In the 1940-1 season, the five Auckland high schools gained 86 elementary certificates, 135 intermediate, 8 resuscitation certificates, 176 bronze medals, 28 bronze bars, 15 second-class and 17 first-class instructors' certificates, and 9 awards of merit (including 2 bars).  
(Murdoch, 1943, p.193)

Murdoch's claim that 'nearly all' school pupils could swim is not supported by any substantive proof and must thus be viewed with some doubt. His reference to Royal Life Saving Society awards above is significant for two reasons; firstly, it reflects the long-standing association between the established secondary schools and the use of these particular awards and, secondly, because of the paucity of the numbers of awards

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<sup>226</sup> Refer NZ Department of Education - *The Post-primary School Curriculum* - a Report to the Minister of Education, November, 1942.

granted at a time when there were over 3,000 pupils in attendance in these Auckland secondary schools and over 14,000 post-primary pupils nationally.<sup>227</sup>

Murdoch does recommend caution against the use of the figures quoted by stating that the obtaining of swimming certificates may prove an obstacle to the mastery of good swimming style. He also noted that since most children learn to swim during their summer holidays (an interesting though unsubstantiated observation which may suggest something about the inadequacy of formal school swimming teaching practice), then they inevitably acquire bad swimming habits. He further reasoned that the lack of suitable facilities was an impediment to raising swimming standards but reaffirmed the active encouragement of the Department as evidenced by the construction of the learners' pools in primary schools. Finally, he stated, again in optimistic tone,

The secondary schools must obviously be prepared to continue the teaching of swimming in the more scientific way now being adopted with junior children. Most of them have their own full-size swimming baths, or can find adequate substitutes. They need only the opportunity to use them to the full, well-qualified instructors, and adequate time." (Murdoch, 1943, p.194)

However, it is unlikely that Murdoch's optimistic portrayal matched the reality of aquatics education provision or the development of appropriate facilities. The inconsistency of facility availability throughout the country continued to make national aquatics education provision problematic.<sup>228</sup> Travel restrictions, petrol rationing and even the short supply of chlorine during the war years meant many aquatic activities both formal, for example, national swimming championships and informal, for example, beach holidays, were truncated or postponed altogether.

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<sup>227</sup> Source: Post-Primary School Rolls as at 31 December, 1941. Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1942, E-2, p.6

<sup>228</sup> For example, in 1946, the Chief Inspector of Primary Schools reported that one of the smaller education districts had twenty-two learners' pools in use but another much larger district had very few. Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1946, E-2, p.5

A spate of reports emanating from regional offices of the Education Department in the immediate post-World War Two years shed some light on the state of aquatics education although it is unclear whether developments were provider-driven or whether they were a reaction to increasing public concern regarding drowning mortality. In 1947, a report on the Primary School Swimming Scheme conducted by the Wellington Education Board<sup>229</sup> provides an interesting insight into the state of aquatics education in the period immediately after the cessation of hostilities. Table 5 illustrates the number of swimmers classified as proficient and those classified as learners, and suggests that only a minority of primary school pupils could swim fifty yards or more, with some areas such as Horowhenua reporting that less than one-fifth of the primary school population could achieve this competency.

**Table 5.** Number of Proficient and Learner Swimmers, Wellington Region, 1947

| Area            | Proficient Swimmers<br>(50 yds. or more) | Learners<br>(10 and under 50 yds.) |
|-----------------|--|------------------------------------|
| Wairarapa North | 40%                                      | 83%                                |
| Wairarapa South | 39%                                      | 68%                                |
| Marlborough     | 36%                                      | 70%                                |
| Wellington      | 27%                                      | 55%                                |
| Hutt Valley     | 29%                                      | 50%                                |
| Horowhenua      | 17%                                      | 41%                                |

Source: Wellington Education Board, Report on Swimming Scheme, 1947

The same report also gave an analysis of the facilities used by primary schools to teach swimming and it is interesting to note (see Table 6. below) that as many schools used open rivers as used learner or municipal pools and that less than one-third of all schools had access to any form of swimming pool at this time. The report also noted the difficulty experienced in rural areas of transport to and from facilities, but pointed out

<sup>229</sup> *Report on Swimming Scheme, 1947*, written by the Senior Organiser, Physical Education, Mr D. O'Connor, to the Wellington Education Board. Source: Education Department, Auckland Residual Management Unit (RMU) files, National Archives, Mt. Wellington, Auckland

that in special cases, the Education Board was able to make a limited amount of money available to supplement local contributions.

**Table 6.** Facilities used by primary schools for swimming instruction, Wellington Region, 1947

| Area            | Big or<br>Municipal<br>baths | Learners'<br>pool | Rivers | Beach | Nil | Total |
|-----------------|------------------------------|-------------------|--------|-------|-----|-------|
| Wairarapa North | 3                            | 1                 | 35     | 1     | 5   | 45    |
| Wairarapa South | 8                            | 5                 | 10     | -     | 6   | 29    |
| Marlborough     | 2                            | 8                 | 10     | 4     | 4   | 28    |
| Wellington      | 10                           | 10                | -      | 8     | 2   | 30    |
| Hutt Valley     | 12                           | 5                 | 3      | 1     | 0   | 21    |
| Horowhenua      | 1                            | 1                 | 8      | 3     | 5   | 18    |
| Totals          | 36                           | 30                | 66     | 17    | 22  | 171   |

Source: Wellington Education Board, Report on Swimming Scheme, 1947

A report by the Canterbury Education Board entitled "*Swimming in Schools*" in 1950 also belies Murdoch's optimistic portrayal by stating that more than half of the children in the Standard classes within the Board's district were unable to swim. When challenged by this alarming statistic in Parliamentary debate, the Minister of Education acknowledged the concerns raised and re-affirmed that it was the aim of the Education Department to ensure that every child was able to swim on leaving primary school.<sup>230</sup>

In a similar report for the Auckland region for the 1949-50 season, the Senior Organiser of Physical Education, Ken Reid, noted that,

Although we are still suffering from a serious shortage of cement and re-inforcing steel our schools managed to increase the number of learners' pools from 142 in

<sup>230</sup> The Rev. Mr Carr, Member for Timaru, to the Minister of Education, the Hon. Mr Algie, on the teaching of swimming in schools and seeking support for the recommendations contained within the Report on *Swimming in Schools*, Canterbury Education Board. New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1950, Vol.293, November 8, p.4082

1948 to 162 at the present time. I feel that this is quite an achievement, even though many country cowsheds may have one inch less concrete on their floors.<sup>231</sup>

Reid did report however, slightly better statistics on the swimming ability of Auckland's primary school-children, noting that of 49,000 children classified in the Region's 470 schools, 22,000 children above Infants were recorded as swimmers, a figure of approximately forty per cent of the total. It also appears (see Table 7 below) that Auckland primary schools had substantially greater access to pool facilities than was reported by the Wellington Education Board in 1947.

**Table 7.** Swimming facilities used by primary schools, Auckland region, 1949-50

| Facilities      | Number of schools |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| Learners' pools | 171               |
| Municipal baths | 82                |
| Swimming baths  | 32                |
| Streams/rivers  | 15                |
| Beaches/seaside | 40                |
| Total           | 331               |

Source: Report on swimming in Auckland, 1949-50

The situation in post-primary schools did not appear as favourable with Reid noting that there had been little progress in the number of swimming pools available as well as a need for swimming in the post-primary sector to be regarded as an integral part of Physical Education. Life-saving was taught in twenty-seven schools with the awarding of approximately 450 certificates and Reid observing that "the work in the girls' surpassed by far anything in any of the boys' schools."<sup>232</sup>

<sup>231</sup> Memorandum for the Superintendent, Physical Education Branch entitled *Report on Swimming in Auckland 1949-50*, from K.C. Reid, Senior Organiser of Physical Education. Source: Education Department, Auckland (RMU) files, National Archives, Mt. Wellington, Auckland

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4

In the same year, 1949, a survey of swimming instruction was also undertaken in Otago schools. Of the 160 schools surveyed, 135 schools carried out swimming instruction and lack of teaching space was the reason given for the remaining twenty-five schools not offering swimming.

**Table 8.** Swimming facilities in the Otago region, 1949

| Facilities      | Number of schools |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| Learners' pools | 19                |
| Municipal baths | 50                |
| Swimming baths  | -                 |
| Streams/rivers  | 54                |
| Beaches/seaside | 12                |
| Total           | 135               |

Source: Report on swimming instruction in Otago schools, 1949

Only three primary schools in Dunedin had learners' pools and the figures for swimming competency for pupils attending those schools are given below in Table 9.

**Table 9.** Swimming proficiency of pupils in three Dunedin Schools, 1949

| Swimming details                               | Totals |
|--|--------|
| Roll of the three schools                      | 1496   |
| Number receiving instruction                   | 975    |
| Number who can swim any method 10 yds. or more | 232    |
| Number who can swim 10 yds. or more            | 196    |
| Number learning to swim 10 yds. this year      | 104    |
| Number who swim breaststroke                   | 71     |
| Number who swim crawl stroke                   | 182    |

Source: Report on swimming instruction in Otago schools, 1949

The post-war years witnessed a gradual return to normality and a period of growth and increasing prosperity as New Zealand agriculture helped feed the war-ravaged countries of the Northern Hemisphere. The implementation of the recommendations of the

Thomas Report was optimistically reported on in official documents during the late 1940's but it is likely that such reports were self-congratulatory (Openshaw, 1995). A concern for the tardiness in the schools' building programme in general and the provision of swimming facilities in particular was raised, for example, in Parliamentary debate in 1950, when it was pointed out that Otahuhu College, at that time the largest college in New Zealand with fourteen hundred pupils, had no pool anywhere near it in which to teach the children to swim.<sup>233</sup> In the same year, in reply to a request for similar subsidies to be made available for post-primary and intermediate school pool construction, the Minister of Education responded that a subsidy of £1,000 may be granted according to the size of the bath but added the restrictive corollary that grants would only be awarded if the construction of the pool did not adversely affect "essential classroom instruction".<sup>234</sup> Even as late as 1963, a survey of 144 state secondary schools reported that only 53% (n=77) of schools possessed swimming pools (Bassett, 1965, p.25). In addition, whilst one half of primary schools were reported to possess pools in 1963, only a handful of intermediate schools did so, even though money raised for their construction was eventually covered by the same government subsidy available to primary schools (Watson, 1964).

A stimulus for change in the shape of aquatics education occurred shortly after the Second World War when the New Zealand Government became concerned about the continued high incidence of drowning. Records, which were first collated in a systematic and comprehensive way in 1927, had shown drowning to be a major cause of accidental death, for example, between 1927 and 1939 nearly 2,000 New Zealanders had drowned, in the War years between 1939 and 1945, 706 had drowned, and in the five years after the War, a further 636 had drowned (NZWSC Annual Report, 1986). These figures were in spite of an increasing number of rescues being performed by the NZSLSA, a

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<sup>233</sup> Mr Gotz, Member for Otahuhu, to the Minister of Education, the Hon. Mr Algie, in a debate on Supply. New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1950, Vol.292, October 10, p.3183

<sup>234</sup> Mr McCombs, Member for Lyttelton, to the Minister of Education, the Hon. Mr Algie, asking for a statement on present government policy on school swimming-baths. New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1950, Vol.292, October 11, p.3203

point that was to be made frequently in the post-War years when government funding was sought for front-line life-saving activities.<sup>235</sup>

This situation prompted the establishment of a consultative committee in 1949 which included representatives from major aquatic sporting and safety bodies and was called the Prevent Drowning Committee which had the two-fold purpose of promoting a national educational campaign on drowning risk and supporting national aquatic groups in their specialist areas of water safety promotion. The Government-sponsored committee included representatives of several Ministries and Departments in an attempt to coordinate the water safety messages to the public at large.<sup>236</sup> An example of the application of this publicity aimed at schools was published in the *New Zealand Gazette* as follows,

Publicity through press, radio, film, posters, post office franking, etc. will call attention to the need for care in, on, or near water, and teachers are asked to assist in whatever ways they can. It is, of course, realised that this publicity will not take the place of the normal Safety First lessons given by teachers throughout the swimming lesson, but it will provide opportunities for the more effective discussion of the need for care. . . .

Children should be warned of the dangers of tides and drifts; if they go swimming outside school hours, parents should make sure that they swim only in places that are known to be safe, and that they be accompanied by a responsible adult.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Requests for funding of surf-lifesaving activities via the Ministry of Internal Affairs were commonplace in political debate at the time. For example, in 1950, Mr McKeen, Member for Island Bay, in requesting funding for the SLSA noted that the Association had become a permanent organisation and had saved the lives of 144 people in 1949. *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1950, Vol.292, October 25, p.3709

<sup>236</sup> It included representatives of the Prime Minister's Department, the Department of Health, the Broadcasting Service, the Printing and Stationery Department, the Post and Telegraph Department, the Physical Welfare and Recreation Branch of the Department of Internal Affairs, and the Department of Education. Source: *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1951, Vol.295, November 1, p.641

<sup>237</sup> *The New Zealand Education Gazette*, 1951, p.278

In addition to the publicity campaign, other initiatives to promote aquatics education included a Safety in Swimming campaign and a re-introduction of the 'Learn to Swim' programme through the combined efforts of swimming organisations and the Physical Welfare Branch, although concerns were occasionally raised about the funding of the campaign and who would bear the cost of the promotion.<sup>238</sup> The first 'Learn to Swim' campaign to be undertaken since the end of the War was planned for February, 1947 but was cancelled because of the outbreak of poliomyelitis that closed all schools from December through until March.<sup>239</sup> Buchanan reported that between 1948-1951, the Branch helped to conduct swim courses in Wairarapa, Wellington, Canterbury and Southland as well as 'prevent drowning' classes in other districts (Buchanan, 1977).

An emerging pattern of post-War prosperity, increased discretionary spending power, increased leisure time and greater mobility through public and private motor vehicle availability, meant that New Zealand experienced increased fatalities on the road and on the water and especially during the summer months.<sup>240</sup> Comparisons between the costs of road and water safety campaigns were frequently drawn in the political arena, especially by one of the most vocal Parliamentary advocates for water safety education at the time, Mr Joseph Cotterill (Wanganui). He noted that road safety received £22,000 in 1952 when the water safety budget was less than a quarter of this figure at £5,000.<sup>241</sup> Similar comparisons were made by the same Parliamentarian in support of the funding of surf life-saving clubs by comparing the way that Fire Boards were financed through Government levy, local bodies and insurance companies.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> Mr Freer, Member for Mount Albert, raised concerns expressed in the *Auckland Star* of the 7th November, 1950, which suggested that swimming and surf life-saving clubs were expected to finance the planned Learn-to-Swim campaign. *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1950, Vol.293, Addendum, p.4852

<sup>239</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1948, E-2, p.6

<sup>240</sup> During the two-month holiday period of December and January, 57 were killed on the roads and 60 were drowned. *Annual Report of the Minister of Internal Affairs*, Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1957, H-22, p.51

<sup>241</sup> Mr Cotterill, Member for Wanganui, in his maiden speech to the House. *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1951, Vol.295, November 1, p.642

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, p.644

Two years later in 1955, comparisons between road and water safety expenditure were again presented which indicated that as many had drowned as had been killed on the roads during the preceding five and a half summer months (107 drowning accidents as opposed to 111 motor fatalities) and death by drowning was the same as deaths on the roads over the Easter Holiday period of that year.<sup>243</sup> In 1956, there were more deaths from drowning than from road fatalities in the month of January, an occurrence that added great pressure on Government to increase public funding of both water safety campaign funds and swimming pool subsidies.<sup>244</sup> Another comparison to highlight the significance of drowning in the community was made by the Member for Waitomo, Mr Seath, who stated that “drowning has truly been described as a sneak-killer” and went on to point out to the House that in the six years from 1950-1956, forty-two children had lost their lives through drowning on farms which accounted for forty-six percent of all childhood accidents, a much higher figure than deaths through tractor accidents which had been given a much higher safety profile.<sup>245</sup>

Justification for increased spending on the drowning problem focused on the increased incidence of drowning. For example, in the five years from 1952-56 the Physical Welfare and Recreation Branch of the Ministry of Internal Affairs reported significant increases in the incidence of drowning (See Figure 8 below). Whilst the increase may also reflect population growth at the time, it was nevertheless alarmingly high and prompted further Government funding. In 1954, the Minister of Internal Affairs reported that the ten officers of the Physical Welfare and Recreation Branch were involved in the Prevention of Drowning campaign and that a merit scheme consisting of

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<sup>243</sup> Mr Johnstone, Member for Raglan, noted in his address in reply that the Transport Department had a staff of 26 trained instructors giving road safety instructions to school pupils and that an amount of £52,000 was devoted to road safety education and publicity. *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1955, Vol. 305, 15 April, p.321-323

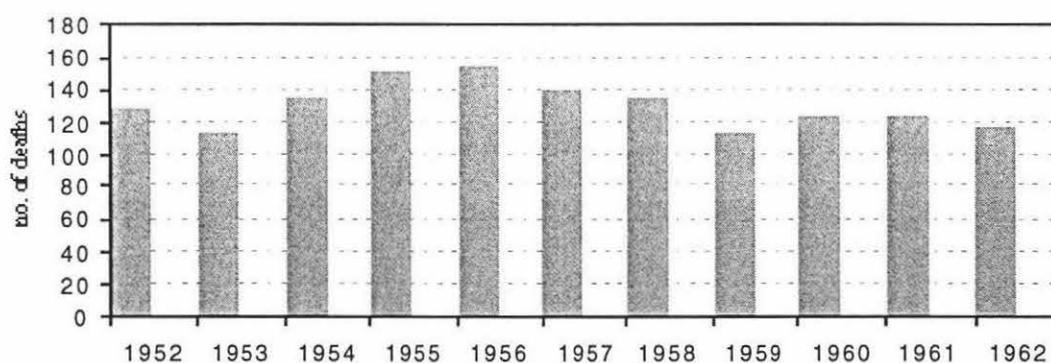
<sup>244</sup> Mrs McMillan, Member for North Dunedin, raised the issue of increased learners' pool subsidies to combat the drowning problem (*New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1956, Vol.310, p.296) and Mr Seath, Member for Waitomo, also asked for increases in Government spending and noted that 32 deaths by drowning had occurred in January compared with 31 road deaths. *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1956, Vol.308, p.253

<sup>245</sup> In response to the concerns raised by Mr. Seath, the Minister of Education, the Hon. Mr Algie announced that Cabinet had decided to increase the subsidy to schools by fifty percent to £450. *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1956, Vol.308, p.253

four levels of water skills would form the basis of the water work. In addition, a survey of monthly drowning statistics was included which, for instance, showed that of the total of eighty-five drownings between November and April, 1953, “sixty-five resulted from boating, fishing, open drains etc., and twenty while people were swimming.”<sup>246</sup> As the seasonal promotion of water safety increased each year, a network of sixteen local water safety committees was established in 1956 and a budget of £15,000 was made available (NZSLA, £5,000; NZASA, £3,000; RLSSNZ, £2,000; and National Water Safety Council, £5,000) for the prevention of drownings.<sup>247</sup>

Further investment in this form of water safety education continued with annual increases in both infrastructure (there were twenty local water safety committees by 1958)<sup>248</sup> and in funding assistance (£19,450 was allocated in 1962).<sup>249</sup> By 1962, the Ministry of Internal Affairs were claiming that whilst it was difficult to assess the actual effects of the ‘Water Safety’ campaigns conducted over the years, it was significant that the rate of drowning had recently declined (see Figure 8 below) and although other possible causes may have contributed, it was reasonable to assume that the campaigns had played a significant part.<sup>250</sup>

**Figure 8.** Deaths by drowning, 1952-1962



Source: Reports of the Ministry of Internal Affairs on Prevention of drowning, H-22, Appendices to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1957-1963

<sup>246</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1954, H-22, p.16

<sup>247</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1957, H-22, p.50

<sup>248</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1958, H-22, p.52

<sup>249</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1963, H-22, p.55

<sup>250</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1962, H-22, p.52

One area seized upon by advocates of swimming instruction from the statistics at this time was the increased incidence of drowning amongst children. In 1958-59, the greatest proportion of those who lost their lives were children under ten years of age.<sup>251</sup> Details of drowning incidence by age group between 1957 and 1960 (see Table 10 below) clearly indicate the extent of the problem and the need for intervention through education of both children and parents.

**Table 10.** Deaths by drowning in age groups, 1957-1961

| Age group     | 1957-58 | 1958-59 | 1959-60 | 1960-61 |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Under 5 years | 27      | 25      | 33      | 19      |
| 5-10 years    | 19      | 17      | 12      | 12      |
| 11-15 years   | 8       | 7       | 7       | 7       |
| 16-20 years   | 7       | 11      | 11      | 10      |
| 21-30 years   | 28      | 17      | 17      | 12      |
| 31-40 years   | 13      | 12      | 10      | 18      |
| 41-50 years   | 9       | 9       | 9       | 10      |
| 51-60 years   | 9       | 13      | 12      | 12      |
| 61-70 years   | 9       | 2       | 6       | 12      |
| Over 70 years | 4       | 1       | 1       | 4       |
| Totals        | 135     | 114     | 122     | 123     |

Source: Appendices to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1958-1961, H22, Reports of the Minister of Internal Affairs on physical welfare and recreation

It is interesting to speculate whether the relatively low incidence of drowning in the 11-15 years age group reflects the efficacy of the swimming instruction undertaken and also whether the reduction in drowning incidence in the under five years of age children in the 1960-61 year was coincidental or indicative of success in the general promotion of the

<sup>251</sup> Mr Hayman, Member for Waitaki, noted in a debate on Supply that despite the great work being done in teaching young people to swim, the 1958-59 drowning statistics reinforced the necessity for all children over five and under ten years of age to be taught to swim, as well as the need for parental supervision for the younger age group whilst near water. *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1959, Vol. 321, October 6, p.2235

water safety message and the specific calls for greater supervision by parents made in the 1959 report.<sup>252</sup>

The provision by central Government of a pound for pound subsidy up to a limit of £300 on the community building of learners' pools in primary schools started in 1941 continued although, for a brief time in 1950, payments were suspended because of the "very heavy commitments for essential classrooms to meet the needs of the rapidly increasing school population."<sup>253</sup> The shortage of materials held up construction of many pools during and immediately after the War.<sup>254</sup> However, in spite of the lack of cement and other building materials, this subsidy provided tremendous impetus for the provision of swimming pools in the relative affluence of the post-war years.

Considerable political pressure was put on the Minister of Education in the early 1950's amidst fears that the Government might reduce or remove the subsidy. In 1952, for example, the Wellington Swimming Centre reported in the *Evening Post* of the 3 June that the subsidy was to be removed.<sup>255</sup> In 1954 further concerns regarding the availability of the subsidy were raised on behalf of Dunedin<sup>256</sup> and, in 1955, concerns about the total amount available when building costs had increased by almost one hundred per cent since the limit of £300 had been set.<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> The Annual Report of the Minister of Internal Affairs on the Prevent Drowning Campaign noted that the drowning incidence amongst the under five age group showed the need for greater supervision by parents. Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1959, H-22, p.66

<sup>253</sup> Mr Cotterill, Member for Wanganui, asked the Minister of Education, the Hon. Mr Algie, if concerns about the removal of grants for learners' swimming pools expressed in a recent press report of the annual meeting of the Wellington Centre of the NZASA were founded. The Minister replied that recently Cabinet had confirmed the previous policy of paying a subsidy up to £300. New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1950, Vol. 291, September 20, p.2549

<sup>254</sup> Mr Cotterill, Member for Wanganui, pointed out that every school should have a pool and that fewest facilities existed in rural areas. He noted that the pool subsidy was good, but handicapped by material shortages. New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1951, Vol. 295, November 1, p.643

<sup>255</sup> Mr R.A. MacDonald, Member for Ponsonby, asked the Minister of Education, the Hon. Mr Algie, for a statement on the future of school swimming pool subsidies. New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1952, Vol. 297, July 16, p.332

<sup>256</sup> Dunedin City Council had planned to construct three learners' pools in Dunedin schools in conjunction with the Otago Education Board. Mrs MacMillan, Member for North Dunedin, asked the Minister of Education for favourable consideration of the granting of subsidies for their construction. New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1954, Vol. 304, August 11, p.1080

<sup>257</sup> Mr Hackett, Member for Grey Lynn, to the Minister of Education, the Hon. Mr Algie, who responded that a recommendation by the Department of Education to increase the subsidy to £400 was being considered. New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1955, Vol. 305, April 6, p.177

A valuable insight into how school communities developed their learners' pools was given by the same Auckland Member of Parliament, Mr Hackett (Grey Lynn), who had previously raised the problem of the increased building costs noted above. In requesting additional funding, Hackett related how, at Waterview School in his electorate, the school committee and parents had received a lowest tender of £1,300 to build a pool, and the contractor, whose own children went to the school, donated £300 thereby reducing the cost. Someone else had given 50 yards of shingle, which was the equivalent of £100, and a carnival had raised £1,200. The school could now spend £1,500 or £1,600 on a pool but the subsidy would remain £300. He concluded that "if a one for one or similar subsidy were given the people would know exactly what subsidy they would get if they raised say, £1,200, and that also would prove to be an added incentive."<sup>258</sup> It appears that such lobbying had the desired effect, the subsidy being increased to a maximum of £400 for building materials from January 31, 1955.<sup>259</sup> In a similar vein, Mr Murray, Member for Stratford, cited as evidence of cost efficiencies in pool construction that "more often than not a carpenter and a plasterer were the only two tradesmen engaged, the bulk of the work being done by the residents" and that the Board in his district "had its own set of boxing which travelled from one end of Taranaki to the other, and that was a great saving in the projects."<sup>260</sup>

The pools were specially designed to give confidence to beginners, they were shallow (2ft.9ins.-3ft.), held a relatively small amount of water which heated quickly, had hand rails all around, cost little to run and had a relatively low capital outlay of 1,000 pounds (Wills, 1965, p.15). In all, about 1,500 primary schools in New Zealand took advantage of the subsidy available between 1941 and 1960. The apparent generosity of the government subsidy scheme must be viewed against a background of heavy state investment in education in the post-war years with educational expenditure in general

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<sup>258</sup> Mr Hackett, Member for Grey Lynn, in discussion of questions. *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1955, Vol. 305, April 6, p.184

<sup>259</sup> *The New Zealand Gazette*, 1955, p.214

<sup>260</sup> Mr Murray, Member for Stratford, also reported that in his district the provision of pools was practically finished and, as a result, probably ninety-five per cent of the children who passed through those schools could swim. *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1955, Vol. 305, April 6, p.186

increasing nearly three-fold between 1950 and 1960 at a time when government spending had risen only slightly (Openshaw, 1995).



**Illustration 10.** Learners' pool at Waitakere School, c.1953

(Source: Education Department, Auckland, RMU, National archives)

The school-based pools became a unique part of many communities for, as Beard points out, these miniature baths served a very practical purpose not only for the efficient teaching of swimming but also because they were excellent centres for recreation in areas where no swimming facilities previously existed (Beard, 1947). However, by the late-1950's concerns were being expressed about the provision of swimming pools as community facilities available to a larger audience at times other than school-times. In 1958, in a Parliamentary debate on town planning and recreation, the Member for Napier, Mr Edwards, suggested that where schools shared localities in the centre of a community such as his at Napier, then it would make better sense to build one large facility available to all which would obviate the problem of school pools not being available outside of school hours.<sup>261</sup> Wills supported this viewpoint with regards to community access to school grounds and buildings by pointing out that for the most

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<sup>261</sup> Mr Edwards, Member for Napier, cited the recently-built pool complex at Onehunga, which was capable of housing several classes at once, as a good example of school/community co-operation. He suggested that combining the school grants from the Education Department and community fundraising efforts would result in much more appropriate public facilities. *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1958, Vol. 317, July 29, p.918

part, many of the 1,500 learner pool facilities were not made available at times when public access was most warranted on weekends and through the summer months when schools were closed for holidays (Wills, 1968). Notwithstanding this criticism, it was evident that at the time, provision of these learner pools placed aquatic activity high on the list of many school programmes and provided a distinct and unique flavour to New Zealand's Physical Education in the post-War period.

This flavour was further reflected in the provision of a new syllabus for primary schools in 1953 which endorsed the utilitarian value of swimming previously espoused but also commented on its ability to "extend the movement education of children in a further direction".<sup>262</sup> In an accompanying text on planning the programme, it was suggested that pupils were most receptive to acquiring swimming skill between the ages of nine and eleven and that confidence games and play activities were particularly beneficial precedents to the teaching of strokes.<sup>263</sup> This text also countered the recommendations of the previous 1933 Syllabus on the efficacy of land drills thus

Some teachers carry out a considerable amount of stroke practice on dry land, but it should be remembered that movement and balance are very considerably affected by immersion, and that therefore 'land drills' may not be as effective as some teachers suppose. These drills are probably most useful as a means of giving brief instruction on some particular point after an attempt has been made in the water.<sup>264</sup>

New regulations for secondary schools were introduced in 1954 which made physical education mandatory for all pupils in their first and second years of secondary school. The regulations stated that, at primary level, emphasis was to be placed on the

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<sup>262</sup> *Moving and Growing: Physical Education in the Primary School*, New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1952, p.92

<sup>263</sup> *Planning the Programme; Physical Education in the Primary School*, New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1953, p.23

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, p.24

achievement of style and ease of swimming rather than on *the attainment of distance certificates* (author's italics). As stated previously, the concern of Departmental staff about schools using external certification rather than teaching according to the syllabus was a concern that had been expressed since the 1940's and was to be frequently reiterated in future years. Countering this direction was the continued promotion of certification by swimming organisations as an indication of their productivity to bolster claims for additional government funding. For example, funding for the NZASA had remained at £560 per annum when first granted in 1937 but since then, in the 1950's, their output had risen dramatically in conjunction with the Learn to Swim campaigns.<sup>265</sup> In 1955, the grant to the NZASA was increased to £1,000 as a consequence of political pressure on Government, the benefits of this investment being reported thus,

When the grant was increased from £560 to £1,000 the Association was able to increase its activities with the result that the number of swimming certificates issued increased from 20,000 to 44,000 (in 1953), and last year the number rose to 70,000. The figure for this year will be even higher because even more people are being taught to swim. The more protection we have against drowning accidents the better it will be for the community generally.<sup>266</sup>

Reflecting public and political concerns for the teaching of swimming and life-saving, the 1954 Regulations governing post-primary education stated that emphasis should be first upon teaching any non-swimmers to swim well and then upon widening the swimming skills to include a variety of strokes, water safety skills and lifesaving. It also stated that "Competence in artificial respiration should be regarded as essential for all children."<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> In his maiden speech to the House, Mr Cotterill, Member for Wanganui, in recognising the work of the NZASA, pointed out that in 1917 the number of certificates issued had been 2,516; by 1924 it had grown to 12,000; by 1938 to 32,000; by 1941 to 33,000, and with the exception of 1948, the year of the poliomyelitis epidemic, the number of certificates had never fallen below 20,000. *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1951, Vol.295, November 1, p.642

<sup>266</sup> Mr Cotterill, Member for Wanganui, in an Address in Reply debate. *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1955, Vol.305, April 22, p.537

<sup>267</sup> *The Education (Post-primary) Regulations*, New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1954, p.24

It is worthy of note that the emergent practice of artificial respiration mentioned above is thus attached to the work of the physical educator (as opposed to other subject teachers) - an association which has persisted until the present day. Much of the work of lifesaving in the curriculum was being promoted by the RLSS and, again, their valuable role in this was reflected in the number of certificates given out especially in the area of artificial respiration.<sup>268</sup> Although the Regulations were revised in 1968, nothing of substance was changed with regard to swimming, the sentiments expressed above thus became policy from the central administration for the next three decades.<sup>269</sup>

A number of other institutional developments at the time influenced the ability of schools to implement the regulations outlined above. In 1948, Otago University founded the School of Physical Education, providing a source of specialist training for secondary school Physical Education teaching. Swimming and lifesaving were core components of the three year Diploma programme and by 1982, Cruickshank reported that all students undertook at least 36 hours of practical and theoretical study in their second year with options in aquatic recreation also available (Cruickshank, 1982).

Throughout the 1940' and 1950's, the Department of Education continued to set up a national and district advisory service. This development was given initial impetus in 1939 when P.A. Smithells took up his appointment as Superintendent of Physical Education. Following Smithell's appointment to the fledgling School of Physical Education, Otago, in 1948, development continued under the direction of a National Adviser for Physical Education, Dudley Wills, operating through ten district Education Boards with a staff of 46 people (Wills, 1965). It employed teachers with proven expertise to deliver in-service and refresher courses especially to the generalist primary teachers. The Physical Education Branch produced a series of booklets and pamphlets

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<sup>268</sup>Between 1945 and 1950, the RLSS issued 4,525 intermediate certificates; 5,651 bronze medallions, and 2,501 certificates for proficiency in resuscitation. In addition, the Society had issued 245 instructors' certificates and 222 awards of merit in 1950, and for this contribution they had been allocated a Government grant of £100. Mr Cotterill, Member for Wanganui, in his maiden speech to the House. New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1951, Vol.295, November 1, p.643

<sup>269</sup> *The Education (Secondary) Regulations*, New Zealand Department of Education, 1968, p.12

as aids to Physical Education teachers and much of the swimming and water safety teaching at this time was based on these booklets.

The first guide book for teachers of aquatics education appeared in 1958 and was a revision of a previously produced swimming pamphlet. It was compiled by K.C. Reid and was reviewed by a notable world authority, Professor C.H. McCloy of the University of Iowa. It included sidestroke, a section on artificial respiration (the Holger Nielsen Method) and paid more attention to water safety. It recognised the problem of deep water practice of water safety skills in the typical shallow-water learner pools of the time but suggested several innovative modifications to simulate deep water situations. With regard to its pedagogy, it presented content in an analytical and progressive manner designed to lead the beginner easily and surely from one stage to the next, so confidence and ability increased together. It also suggested practices for developing an easy, relaxed swimming style so that “struggling through the water can be eliminated, and it leads to more advanced and versatile water skills for those who make more rapid progress.”<sup>270</sup>

Recurrent themes of confidence activities for beginners, relaxation in the water, teaching swimming to all rather than elitist competitive development, increasing recognition of the importance of water safety and emergency skills then typically reflected the nature of aquatics education in the 1950’s and 1960’s. The impact of this was noted by the Director of Education in his 1953 Report and is reported by Marshall thus,

One feature of the work which flourished in the 50’s, especially in girls’ schools, was the teaching of life-saving. In his Report of 1953, the Director noted that more than three-quarters of all awards made that year by the RLSS had gone to pupils in post-primary schools. (Marshall, 1989, p.263)

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<sup>270</sup> *Swimming. A guide book for teachers, coaches and swimmers*, New Zealand Department of Education, 1958, p.1

An interesting innovation which appeared about this time was the development of the L-shaped learners pool in primary schools. The design of L-shaped pools afforded a unique opportunity for confidence and remedial work in the beach-like contour at the offset end of the pool. However, not all facility development proceeded problem-free. With the spread of school-operated learners' pools came problems associated with pool hygiene especially with regard to water filtration and chlorination. Traditionally, swimming pools were kept reasonably clean by the frequent replacement of the water in what was referred to as the 'draw (drain) and fill' method of emptying and re-filling pools on a weekly basis previously referred to (see pages 128-129) which resulted in heavy water costs to the schools as well as variable water quality, particularly in times of heavy usage. In 1955, demands for additional funding to schools were made in Parliamentary debate on the basis that the Government and the community had a responsibility to guard against the spread of ear, eye, nose and throat troubles by the installation of proper filtration plants.<sup>271</sup>

Much pioneering work on water treatment, including filtration and chlorination, was done by K.C. Reid based on his investigation into cheap filtration plants produced in Australia which were half of the cost of the plants available in New Zealand at the time. As a consequence of his leadership, many schools were able to maximise the safe, hygienic use of their pools and some even included various forms of heating pool water. Sadly, consistent standards of care were the exception rather than the rule until the late 1950's. The unsanitary state of many of the learners' pools was the focus of debate in an Auckland Education Board meeting in 1954 where it was noted, and subsequently reported in the *New Zealand Herald*, that six per cent of New Zealand children bathed only once a month and that learners' pools were referred to as "insanitary, germ-

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<sup>271</sup> Mr Cotterill, Member for Wanganui, in an address in reply debate argued that "It is useless adding to the amenities of the community in one way if we are going to neglect the purity of the water and cause greater trouble in another way. There is a new secondary school being erected in Wanganui where a lot of money is being spent. For the sake of saving £3,000 or £4,000 the swimming pool will not contain sterile water and that is a very great mistake. New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1955, Vol.305, April 22, p.537

breeding duck-ponds.”<sup>272</sup> Eventually, in 1959, it became Government policy to subsidise the installation of filtration units and the efforts of the Superintendent of Physical Education, Dudley Wills, in establishing this policy was recognised in Parliament.<sup>273</sup>

However, in spite of such accolades, Wills reported critically of the situation in the same year, 1959, that in the previous four years, 17 had been drowned in public pools simply because they could not be seen in the turgid water (Wills, 1959). In a similar vein, Jean Stewart, New Zealand’s first female Olympic swimming medallist at Helsinki in 1952, wrote disparagingly about the condition of public pools referring to many in the provincial towns as classifiable as “dark holes in the ground” (Stewart, 1955). Notable exceptions to this classification were to be found in Christchurch, Lower Hutt, and Auckland with Napier and Rotorua having fine holiday resort pools. Stewart, however, did comment favourably on the proliferation of small school learners’ pools and on their appropriateness especially in the north of the South Island and the North Island (*ibid.*).

Concerns about school pool hygiene surfaced again in 1960 with a report in the *New Zealand Herald* which singled out poor pool management resulting in high levels of bacteria found in school pools and a suggestion that the high cost of chlorine led some schools to falsely economise on its use.<sup>274</sup> The *Herald* noted that there were 190 primary schools with pools in the Auckland Education Board district, with a further eight pools under construction and at least 67 had installed filtration plants at an average cost of £400 for which subsidies up to £200 were payable by the Government.<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> In an article headlined “School learner pools called dirty duckponds”, Mr E.A.J. Busing was commenting on the Papatoetoe West School’s appeal for a Government subsidy bigger than the £300 maximum toward the construction of a pool. *New Zealand Herald*, 2 September, 1954

<sup>273</sup> Mr Cotteril, Member of Wanganui in an address on Supply, noted his appreciation of recent Government approval of the payment of subsidies on filtration units to schools as well as signalling out the contribution of Wills thus, “The highest praise was due to the superintendent of the physical education branch, Mr Dudley Wills, for his enthusiasm, and for his endeavour to see that children were not only taught to swim but also to swim efficiently. Excellent work was being done by that branch.” *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1959, Vol.320, September 1, p.1584

<sup>274</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 1960, March 2, p.24

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, p.24

Departmental reports continued to highlight the unevenness of facility availability about this time. For example, a report on swimming in primary schools north of Wellsford stated that only thirty-four schools had their own pools out of 176 schools and that, of a school population of nearly 8,000, under 1,000 could swim fifty yards with good style but, conversely, over 1,000 did not take part in swimming lessons, an indication of some consumer resistance from pupils.<sup>276</sup> Differences in facility availability were also apparent between sectors of the education system. A report on the Water Safety Campaign conducted in the Northern region in 1957-1958 noted that only six of the seventeen intermediate schools and sixteen of the forty-nine state and private post-primary schools had facilities or access to facilities which meant that there was “a considerable gap in the continuity of swimming teaching after the contributing school level.”<sup>277</sup> Similarly, the Senior Organiser of Physical Education for South Auckland schools noted in 1961 that, whilst 237 primary schools (76%) within the region had swimming pools, a survey comparing the swimming standards of Standard 4 (year 6) and Form 2 (year 8) “confirmed our suspicion as to the relatively small difference existing between these children and those two years their senior”.<sup>278</sup>

One area in which again there was clearly no cause for celebratory comment was the delivery of aquatics education to Maori schools. Indeed, the lack of formal aquatic education evident in the early years of the twentieth century, and previously referred to (see pages 79-80), appears to have remained the norm during the continued existence of Maori schools. In 1957, concerns were raised by Dudley Wills, Superintendent of the Physical Education Branch, about the swimming ability of Maori pupils in Northland. These concerns prompted a flurry of research by the regional organisers of Physical

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<sup>276</sup> Source: Report entitled *Swimming in primary schools north of Wellsford*, April, 1958. Education Department, Auckland (RMU). National Archives, Mt Wellington, Auckland

<sup>277</sup> *Report on Water Safety Campaign: 1957-58*, Auckland, June 6, 1958, Education Department, Auckland (RMU). National Archives, Mt Wellington, Auckland

<sup>278</sup> Correspondence from Mr J.W.Marshall, Senior Organiser of Physical Education, Hamilton Education Board, to the Inspector of Schools, South Auckland, February, 1961. Education Department, Hamilton (RMU). National Archives, Mt. Wellington, Auckland

Education and confirmed Wills' fears of sub-standard delivery in Maori schools. For example, out of a total of 51 schools surveyed in 1957, only four had learners' pools, three had pools under construction, twenty schools had no facilities, fourteen had poor facilities; and fourteen schools had reasonable facilities other than pools.<sup>279</sup>

A year later in 1958, a report produced by the regional office of the Department of Education at Whangarei entitled *Swimming Facilities and Abilities in Northland's Maori Schools* raised serious concerns regarding conditions in Maori schools.

**Table 11.** Maori School List -Kaitaia Area, 1958

| School      | Facilities                         | Future prospect  | Non-swim %<br>below standard* | Comment                             |
|-------------|------------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Ahipara     | Nil                                | L.Pool, 1959     | 85%                           | Only need to be pushed              |
| L.Ohia      | 90-Mile Beach<br>water dirty creek | L.Pool, 1959     | 100%                          | Under way                           |
| Maungamuka  | Creek (dead loss)                  | Dim              | 60%                           | Too lazy to help work               |
| Manukau     | Creek (poor)                       | Dim              | 80%                           | No money-no energy                  |
| Matangarau  | Nil                                | Nigh impossible  | 90%                           | Push might help!!                   |
| Matauri Bay | Nil                                | ?                | 80%                           |                                     |
| Ngataki     | Nil                                | L.Pool?          | 100%                          | Willing to work                     |
| Otangaroa   | Creek                              | Continue         | 50%                           | Good work                           |
| Oturu       | Nil                                | May now build    | 95%                           | Willing to work                     |
| Pamapurua   | Nil                                | Likely if pushed | -                             | Good community                      |
| Paparore    | Lake                               | Continue         | 25%                           | Excellent work                      |
| Pikepoto    | Nil                                | L.Pool, 1959     | 85%                           | Ready to work                       |
| Papapara    | Nil                                | Dead loss        | 100%                          | All asleep                          |
| Pupuke      | Nil                                | Could go         | 80%                           | Could help if required              |
| Rotokakahi  | Creek                              | Continue         | 60%                           | Doubtful situation                  |
| Te Kao Pr.  | Nil                                | ??               | 80%                           | Could be done if they were inspired |

\* Standard was taken as being able to swim at least twenty-five yards

Source: Report on Swimming facilities and ability in Northland's Maori Schools, 1958, Education Department, Auckland

The Report concluded that: a small percentage of Maori schools had adequate swimming facilities; filtration plants were often essential because of the poor water supply; new

<sup>279</sup> Source: Report entitled *Maori Schools' Swimming Facilities in North, 1957*, File 28/9/3 Education Department, Auckland (RMU). National Archives, Mt. Wellington, Auckland

committees and therefore the 'locals' were becoming increasingly interested in their schools; the need to raise cash up to £450 (plus up to £200 for a filtration plant) was generally the limiting factor; and, not surprisingly, that the swimming ability of Maori children was below that of comparable Pakeha children.<sup>280</sup>

As can be seen in Table 11, Brian Jillings, the area organiser of Physical Education, was critical of the swimming standards observed and generally pessimistic in his commentary on future prospects. Jillings defined the swimming standard for this survey as being the ability to swim twenty-five yards. To find schools where all pupils were not able to meet this standard and the frequently high percentages in most schools of non-swimmers was an obvious cause of consternation and possible frustration which is reflected in the sometimes acerbic comment of the reporter.

The extent of the non-swimming problem and the apparent apathy of the local community in the Kaitaia area toward the problem was reported at a regional level but does not appear to have been transmitted to Head Office. Amongst the possible solutions to the problems identified above were to: allow Maori schools to have up to £450 in subsidy on the basis of cash equivalence for donated labour or materials; allow additional finance for essential filtration plant installation; and to encourage other agencies such as the Maori Affairs Department to promote dual purpose school/community pools.<sup>281</sup> Suggestions by Wills that school share building costs and facilities and that portable canvas pools be considered was dismissed by Reid because of the difficulties and costs of local transport.<sup>282</sup>

A survey of swimming abilities of primary pupils in the whole of the Auckland region in 1960 provides a useful basis of comparison and testifies to the amount of variation even

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<sup>280</sup> Source: Correspondence from Peter McPherson, Liaison Organiser Physical Education, Education Department, Whangarei, to K. Reid, Education Department, Auckland, November 6, 1958. Education Department, Auckland (RMU). National Archives, Mt Wellington, Auckland

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1

<sup>282</sup> Source: Correspondence from Ken Reid to Dudley Wills, November 7, 1957, *Re: Swimming Facilities for Maori Children*, Education Department, Auckland (RMU), National Archives, Mt Wellington, Auckland

within the same region. For example, in stark contrast to the high levels of pupils in Northland Maori schools classified as being unable to swim twenty-five yards (see Table 11), only fifteen percent of Auckland pupils were classified as non-swimmers with over thirty percent being able to swim fifty yards and ten percent being able to swim more than fifty yards (see Table 12).

**Table 12.** Swimming abilities of Auckland primary pupils, 1958

|               | Non-swimmer | Up to glide | Up to arms | Up to 50 yards | Greater than<br>50yards | Totals |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|------------|----------------|-------------------------|--------|
| No. of pupils | 4563        | 6772        | 6788       | 9865           | 3047                    | 31035  |
| Percent       | 15%         | 22%         | 22%        | 31%            | 10%                     | 100%   |

Source: Correspondence to Headteachers from Physical Education Department, Department of Education, Auckland, May 9, 1958. National Archives, Mt. Wellington, Auckland

At a time when fifty-one Maori schools in remote rural Northland could only boast of four school swimming pools, the Auckland Education Board<sup>283</sup> reported 185 learners' pools in its area which, even when allowing for the obvious disparity in population of the two areas, suggests that not all was equal in the facilitation of aquatics education.

<sup>283</sup> Swimming Bath Summary, July, 1959. Auckland Education Board (RMU). National Archives, Mt. Wellington, Auckland

## **2.12 Beaches, baches, barbeques and boats: Lifestyle aquatics education in the latter twentieth century**

Post-primary education in the 1960's was shaped by the Currie Commission which reiterated the philosophy of educational equality espoused previously by Fraser in 1939 and encapsulated in the implementations of the Thomas Report. It was essentially a conservative report that was generally against any major overhaul of the education system (Openshaw, 1995). It reinforced the central role of the state in education and, consequently, reified the role of the Department of Education in the provision of that education. Provider-driven curriculum policy and practice in Physical Education, which had emerged with the growth of the Physical Education Branch in Wellington under the direction of a Superintendent and was effected at a regional level through advisory and inspectorate bodies in the post-War years, was to be the site of significant tension from the 1960's onwards as a number of external providers endeavoured to meet the ever-increasing demands for aquatics education within the education system.

Developments in aquatics education from the 1960's took place against a background of rapidly changing demographics. Between 1945-1970, the number of pupils attending primary schools had increased by 112 percent whilst the number of pupils attending secondary school had increased by 24 percent and together they constituted one-quarter of New Zealand's population<sup>284</sup> - a consequence of the post-war 'baby boom' birth rate, new developments in education, and a marked tendency for pupils to stay longer in school. Such growth did tend to compromise the development of aquatics education especially in new schools where facility expansion did not match demographic dynamics. However, a survey of physical education facilities in 1963 revealed that whilst only 48% (n=69) of secondary schools possessed gymnasias, 53% (n=77) reported that they possessed swimming pools (Bassett, 1965).

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<sup>284</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1971, E-1, p.5

An analysis of swimming pools in New Zealand schools was completed in the same year and sent to all senior and area organisers of Physical Education by Dudley Wills.

**Table 13.** Swimming pools in New Zealand schools, 1963

| Area        | Primary | Intermediate | Secondary | District H.S. | Private |
|-------------|---------|--------------|-----------|---------------|---------|
| Auckland    | 206     | 8            | 13        | 13            | 7       |
| S. Auckland | 223     | 4            | 12        | 3             | 2       |
| Taranaki    | 93      | 1            | 4         | 3             | 1       |
| Wanganui    | 93      | 2            | 8         | -             | -       |
| Napier      | 85      | 3            | 7         | -             | 5       |
| Wellington  | 134     | -            | 3         | -             | -       |
| Nelson      | 45      | 2            | 4         | 5             | -       |
| Canterbury  | 175     | 4            | 20        | 9             | 7       |
| Otago       | 47      | -            | 4         | -             | -       |
| Southland   | 35      | 1            | 1         | -             | -       |
| Total       | 1136    | 25           | 76        | 33            | 22      |

Source: Education Department, Auckland, Correspondence from Dudley Wills, Head Office, Education Department, Wellington, March 20, 1963. National Archives, Mt Wellington, Auckland

This data suggested the relatively healthy state of pool provision in the primary sector after a decade of continuous growth, but not quite the same vigour in the growth of intermediate and secondary pool facilities. The development of primary school pools was certainly a significant first for New Zealand in international terms, a point reiterated by the Senior Organiser of Physical Education, Auckland, Mr. Colin Spanhake, in 1962 thus

In recent years, learners' pools have been built in New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia. Western Australia, South Africa and recently Canada, have made inquiries regarding design, construction and filtration of these pools.

We can safely claim that we have led the world in the provision of facilities in the school for Learning to Swim.<sup>285</sup>

One area of concern to emerge at this time with regard to swimming pool provision was the lack of deep water in which to develop survival skills and confidence in open water situations. In its annual meeting in 1963, the President of the RLSSNZ, Mr G.D. Griffiths, suggested that many modern pools were too shallow to develop lifesaving skills and that “more and more pools were being built with a maximum depth of 4ft 6in and in them vast numbers of children became proficient swimmers but with their toes always in reach of the bottom”.<sup>286</sup> The Society made recommendations to Government that consideration be given to the construction of deeper pools or the addition of diving pools to existing facilities in which to safely practice entries and increase deep water “competence and watermanship”.<sup>287</sup>

With the proliferation of school, home, and municipal pools as well as the increased use of the outdoor aquatic environments of beach, ocean, river, and lake in an increasingly affluent age, aquatics became inextricably linked with an emergent lifestyle of long weekends, beach baches, barbeques, and boats. In an article extolling the virtues of teaching swimming in 1963, Elmsley contextualised the place of contemporary aquatics education thus

With summer fast approaching, our thoughts are once again turning towards the sea, rivers, lakes and our swimming pools, where we will be able to continue with recreational pursuits in the sports of surfing, fishing, sailing, canoeing, or water skiing. And once again we will have the tragic loss of lives through drowning. Not all the drownings are preventable, but many could have been

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<sup>285</sup> *School Pools: A Guide for School Committees*, by C.E. Spanhake, Senior Organiser of Physical Education, Ak. 6022/250/9/62 Auckland Education Board (RMU), National Archives, Mt. Wellington, Auckland

<sup>286</sup> *The Christchurch Press*, 1963, October 7

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*

prevented if there had been better observation of water safety precautions, use of safe bathing places and the teaching of all children to swim. (Elmsley, 1963, p.45)

Statistics of drowning incidence between 1945-1970 reflect the trends of increased aquatic activity and its consequent risks. An average of 113 people drowned per annum during this time, a rate which, when compared with other developed nations such as Australia, England and Wales, United States and Canada, was the highest drowning rate per 100,000 population in the developed world.<sup>288</sup> Expressed in terms per head of population, Rendle (1962) reported that although drownings had dropped from 54.1 per million in 1959-60 to 46.4 per million in 1960-61, they were still unacceptably high, whilst in their annual report of that year, the RLSSNZ claimed that 80% of the deaths were avoidable.<sup>289</sup> In a statement that reflected on the aquatic competencies of the nation, Stewart reasoned that since 80% of the population at the time were considered to be non-swimmers, "that new swimming pool design should reflect the need for shallow water" (Stewart, 1955, p.3). With regards to the school population, Jillings also reported a general inability to cope in the water, with only 15-20 percent of his third form pupils considered to be safe in deep water for more than two minutes and that that ability group belonged to swimming clubs and frequented municipal pools (Jillings, 1962).

Such statistics undoubtedly influenced the very rapid growth in water safety organisations and associated voluntary community services. Surf lifesaving, for example, witnessed rapid growth in the number clubs and club membership so that by 1951, there were 54 clubs across New Zealand with an active membership of 1,440 lifeguards who performed 225 rescues in that year (Ingram, 1953). By 1957, a New Zealand Professional Coaches Association had been formed and consisted of 18 members. There was, however, considerable antagonism between this body and the New Zealand

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<sup>288</sup> Source: New Zealand Water Safety Council Inc. Annual Report, 1985, p.33

<sup>289</sup> Source: RLSSNZ Annual Report, 1961

Amateur Swimming Association because of the commonly-held belief associated with amateurism that swimming teaching was 'a labour of love' and not an appropriate forum for paid work.<sup>290</sup>

The tension evident between amateur and professional was not confined to the ranks of competitive swimming fraternity alone. In 1962, the Auckland Education Board felt compelled to prohibit the professional coaching of swimming during school hours as had been the practice at Kaikohe primary school. Parents and the School Parent-Teacher Association sent a letter of strong protest to the Board who sought a ruling from the Education Department over the coaching activity of Murray Doidge, a prominent professional coach from Auckland.<sup>291</sup> The response from the Education Department was support for the stance on the grounds that teachers were employed to teach the children and swimming was a part of the normal curriculum activity.

Resentment at the restrictive attitude of the Education Department with regards to the professional provision of swimming instruction during school hours was to simmer for a number of years. In 1964, strong criticism was levelled at the "pitiful" attempts at teaching swimming in some schools at the annual meeting of the New Zealand Professional Swimming Coaches in Rotorua. The president of the Association, Mr. J. Breward noted that during school hours 90 percent of coaches were inactive and valuable talent was being wasted.<sup>292</sup> Mr Cliff Williams, an Auckland swimming coach, told the meeting that most school teachers had the ability to take children through the confidence stages but that on an average only one teacher in ten was capable of training children in modern stroke techniques. He concluded that the Association seemed to be "just bashing its head against a wall" in its efforts to teach primary school children to swim.<sup>293</sup> Such hostility was to typify in subsequent years the relationships between

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<sup>290</sup> For further information on the rift between professional coaches and amateur club instructors, refer to Norma Williams' *Between the Lanes*, 1996, pp.94-100

<sup>291</sup> *Northern Advocate*, 1962, October 31

<sup>292</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 1964, August 5

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*

the Education Department, attempting to maintain state control over curriculum practice, and external providers attempting to provide alternative delivery.

In 1960, the Royal Life Saving Society was granted a Supplemental Charter giving a greater measure of independence to national branches outside Britain. The first handbook of instruction was produced in 1965 with the avowed aims of promoting technical education in lifesaving and resuscitation, stimulating public opinion in favour of swimming and lifesaving in schools, colleges, and clubs, encouraging “floating, diving, plunging, and such other swimming acts” to save life and promoting public education (RLSSNZ, 1965, p.4). The Society continued to rely heavily on schoolteachers to encourage pupils to become proficient lifesavers through a systematised programme of certification. Early awards were characterised by rigid forms of instruction and assessment, drills and formal examination by Society members who needed to be qualified before being allowed to examine pupils above the lowest levels. The Society also promoted breast stroke thus,

This is the most useful and seaworthy of all strokes. Its powerful kick can be readily adapted for propulsion or support, its position with the legs and arms apart for much of the time and the underwater recovery of arms give stability, and its high head position unobstructed vision and easy breathing. Breast stroke is unsurpassed in swimming in rough or choppy water, more especially if fully clothed, for making an approach to a drowning person, or when unrestricted vision is all important. (RLSSNZ, 1965, p.19)

No mention is made of the high level of technical skill required of the synchronous arm and leg activity, of the relatively poor body streamlining, of the unusual foot eversion, or of the poor propulsive capacity of the stroke. At the same time, the guide books developed by the Department of Education were promoting prone (face down) floating skills for confidence, prone propulsion skills via crawl leg kick and dog-paddle, and arm and breathing actions in a prone position - all of which made for natural progression

towards the front crawl action. This point was reinforced by Wills in the preface of the revised edition of the guide book in 1966 thus,

As with other editions, the crawl stroke is presented immediately after the early confidence steps. This was decided upon after consultation with a large number of teachers and coaches. Though we think it best to follow this pattern, those who wish to follow another one are, of course, at liberty to do so. Furthermore, with timid children, the use of leg action on the back leading to a backstroke might be the quickest and surest method (NZ Department of Education, 1966, p.1).

This revised text was endorsed by the New Zealand Amateur Swimming Association. The promotion of front crawl as the first stroke to teach was also common practice amongst the fledgling fraternity of professional swimming instructors at the time. In spite of this, the practice of teaching breast stroke before front crawl persisted in some of the more traditional single-sex schools until relatively recent times - the legacy of a policy first espoused over half a century before.

Within the realm of curriculum development in Physical Education, the 1960's saw a proliferation of written material to assist the teacher of aquatics education. In a move which possibly signalled an advancing social liberalism with regards to gender inequities in education provision, a draft guide book of Physical Education specifically designed for girls was introduced in 1961. The guide book reinforced the major aims of swimming to be: teaching non-swimmers to swim; teaching lifesaving, water safety and artificial respiration; improving swimming technique to those already able to swim. It advocated teaching difficult cases via sculling and floating on the back, moving then to backstroke and, finally, crawl when confidence had been established. It suggested classes should be divided into equal-ability groups in order to concentrate mostly on beginners with self-directed study for the more able swimmers - a practice which is still commonplace today. The guide book recommended the value of swimming clubs, extra-curricular

competition, and inter-form and inter-house carnivals held “after school as ways of stimulating interest” (NZ Department of Education, 1961, p.194).

It also urged teachers to make every effort to see that pupils leaving post-primary school were competent swimmers and , if possible, lifesavers, although no performance criteria to measure these ‘exit standards’ were proffered. The need for a comprehensive hand book of physical education for girls was finally met, after revision of the draft with a new publication in 1969. As well as acknowledging the aims previously outlined, it also suggested a recreational role in aquatics to include participation in “underwater swimming, synchronised swimming, water polo etc”(NZ Department of Education, 1969, p.60).

Another feature to emerge at this time was the promotion of a concept referred to as ‘drownproofing’. This practice was based on the work of Lanoue (1963) and consisted mainly of a series of deep water survival practices. Drownproofing techniques were detailed in the swimming and water safety guide books for teachers from 1966 (NZ Department of Education, 1966) and included advice on staying afloat with minimum energy expenditure through such activities as face-down submerged floating with regular breathing. However, serious doubts about the efficacy of drownproofing as a survival technique were later raised and the practice was subsequently dropped in departmental publications. It is interesting to note, however, that more appropriate survival techniques featured throughout all levels from confidence to stroke development in the 1981 guidebook and swimming and water safety were presented as best taught concurrently rather than with safety taught ‘end-on’ as in previous texts (NZ Department of Education, 1981).

Concerns for the standards of swimming proficiency were again a topic of political debate in 1967 when questions were raised in Parliament regarding the competencies of children leaving school and whether they were more able than those in the generation of

their parents.<sup>294</sup> A national survey of all primary and secondary schools including state and private schools was conducted in March, 1970 and, in addition to evaluating swimming facility availability, schools were asked to report on pupils' swimming abilities. The survey was based on the returns from 2,331 primary and 320 secondary schools, and it reported on over 604,000 pupils which represented about 86 percent of the school age population.<sup>295</sup>

The figures show that eight out of ten sixth-formers could swim more than fifty yards, compared with seventy one percent of third formers and fifty-seven per cent of Form 1 and 2 pupils. In addition, two out of every three Standard 2 to Standard 4 pupils could swim at least fifteen yards.

**Table 14.** National swimming survey, 1970.

| Class                 | No.<br>Tested | % of swimmers |          |          |
|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|----------|----------|
|                       |               | 15 yards      | 25 yards | 50 yards |
| Primer 2-Standard 1   | 168,786       | 12            | 4        | 1        |
| Standard 2-Standard 4 | 171,092       | 66            | 45       | 27       |
| Form 1-Form 2         | 107,174       | 86            | 76       | 57       |
| Form 3                | 46,093        |               |          | 71       |
| Form 4                | 44,809        | Not           | recorded | 77       |
| Form 5                | 41,563        |               |          | 80       |
| Form 6                | 25,142        |               |          | 81       |

Source: New Zealand Department of Education, 1970. - Reported in the Education Gazette, November 16, p.631

The Minister of Education, the Hon. Mr Talboys, stated in a press release that the survey showed community and parent awareness of the importance of learning to swim and that "no less than 70 percent of primary and 60 percent of secondary schools had

<sup>294</sup> Mr Gair, Member for North Shore, to the Minister of Education, the Hon. Mr A.E. Kinsella, who replied that no national record of swimming ability was kept but that one indication of the improvement in abilities was the increase in seals and certificates issued by the New Zealand Amateur Swimming Association which had increased from 122,800 in 1962 to 241,000 in 1967. New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1967, Vol.353, September 26, p.3258

<sup>295</sup> *The New Zealand Education Gazette*, November 16, p.631

pools specially designed for teaching.”<sup>296</sup> Municipal pools were used by 11 percent of primary and 33 percent of secondary schools whilst only six percent of the primary and one percent of secondary schools had to use private pools, rivers, lakes or beaches.<sup>297</sup>

The Minister concluded that “although the analysis shows reasonably satisfactory results there is still room for improvement in the numbers of school children who can swim” and that “particularly at the beginning of another swimming season we should all remember the importance of swimming teaching.”<sup>298</sup> The information was intended to provide guidance to principals, head-teachers and teachers as guidelines for use when assessing the swimming attainment of their pupils. The survey also noted that some schools will have levels that are higher, others lower, than those figures reported but that, whatever the average levels of attainment of a class or a school, there is “always room for improvement in the swimming attainment of individual pupils.”<sup>299</sup>

In a follow-up to the 1970 Survey, the department conducted a further survey in 1973 which focused on the intermediate schools and reported that the standard of swimming had improved so that by 1973, 64 percent of form 2 pupils and 74 percent of form 4 pupils could swim 50 yards or more.<sup>300</sup> What is probably more significant than the reported improvement in swimming abilities of the intermediate school age-group pupils is the status awarded this information in that it formed the entire contents of the Physical Education component in the Ministerial report on Education for that year.

The 1970’s witnessed a number of significant developments which helped shape the nature of aquatics education. In addition to the continued direction given to the teaching of swimming and water safety by the Department of Education, a number of organisations began reinforcing the aquatics education safety messages in light of

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<sup>296</sup> *Bay of Plenty Times*, 1970, December 5, p.2

<sup>297</sup> Ministerial press release, 1970, November 10. Education Department, Auckland (RMU), National Archives, Mt. Wellington, Auckland

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>299</sup> *The New Zealand Education Gazette*, November 16, p.631

<sup>300</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1974, E-1, p.23

increasing aquatic recreation and the continuing high incidence of death by drowning.<sup>301</sup> Public funding through the Ministry of Internal Affairs continued to increase in response to mounting public and political concerns.<sup>302</sup> The Minister of Internal Affairs, the Hon. Mr Seath, reported in 1970 that water safety information was available through twenty-four regional water safety committees to “schools, youth groups, womens’ organisations, service organisations, motels, holiday camping grounds, watersports clubs, boating shows, agricultural and pastoral shows and any other interested group, organisation or person who might request copies.”<sup>303</sup>

Another Departmental organisation to become involved with public water safety promotion about this time was the Marine Department, an involvement which indicates the nature of aquatic recreational activity that was flourishing at the time. For example, the Marine Department was charged with educating the increasing number of small boat/craft users with a view to reducing the number of drowning mishaps occurring in coastal waters. In 1968, a sum of \$8,000 had been voted for a small boat safety campaign directed largely towards television advertising and the production of a safety booklet.<sup>304</sup> Another example of the Marine Department’s role in the changing nature of aquatic recreational activity was evidenced by the growth of surfing, a recreational activity that grew rapidly as part of the youth culture of the 1960’s and 1970’s. Questions were raised about control of surfboards on busy beaches and a departmental

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<sup>301</sup> For example, between November 14, 1969 and March 4, 1970, thirty-three copies of a two-minute film on rescue breathing were shown at the cinemas of the Kerridge-Odeon chain, the New Zealand Broadcasting Commission screened a television film entitled *Watch Out in the Water* in the summer holiday period and nearly 40,000 copies of a safety booklet were distributed. Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1970, H-22, p.55

<sup>302</sup> For example, in 1968, in response to a question from Sir Basil Arthur, Member for Timaru, on possible reduction of funding, the Minister of Internal Affairs reported that the water safety campaign and (by comparison) the mountain safety campaign were to receive \$40,000 and \$15,000 respectively. New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1968, Vol.357, October 8, p.2151

<sup>303</sup> The Hon. Mr D.C. Seath in reply to a question on Water Safety booklet availability from Mr W.L. Young, Member for Miramar. New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1970, Vol.369, October 6, p.3767

<sup>304</sup> Concerns were expressed by Mr Faulkner, Member for Roskill, concerning the reduction in small boat safety funding to which the Minister of Marine, the Hon. Mr W.J. Scott, replied that he was satisfied that funding was adequate. New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1968, Vol.357, October 17, p.2438-2439

report of 1967 suggested that experiments with movable lanes and markers by local authorities would alleviate difficulties but may need to be strengthened.<sup>305</sup>

The New Zealand Water Safety Council was established in 1971 as an umbrella organisation representing the water safety interests of aquatically-oriented rescue, recreational, community groups. It also included representatives from the Department of Education. In 1971, the Council received a grant of \$55,000 from lottery profits for its educational and publicity campaign, approximately half of which was allocated to the New Zealand Amateur Swimming Association, the New Zealand Surf Life Saving Association and the Royal Life Saving Society.<sup>306</sup> The allocation of such funding was, however, contentious with proponents of the various organisations agitating at local and national forums for greater funding.<sup>307</sup> The New Zealand Amateur Swimming Association founded the Volunteer Swimming Service in 1972 in an attempt to provide formal training for its volunteers that had been teaching beginners to swim through clubs and community activities. In addition, the nationally appointed NZASA Technical Director conducted numerous coaching clinics for teaching beginning swimming in spite of a brief which directed his work to be at the advanced level.<sup>308</sup> Efforts to achieve some uniformity of swimming teaching methods through the various education channels however, proved to be problematic (Williams, 1996). Schools had at their disposal a number of certificated programmes which, whilst being acknowledged and endorsed in the official guide books were not seen as being appropriate replacements to the 'official' syllabus content but rather as extra-curricular adjuncts to the teaching programme. This

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<sup>305</sup> Dr. M. Finlay, Member for Waitakere, cited Piha on Auckland's west coast as a potential site for trouble, but felt that draconian regimentation should be avoided and responsibility for the control of surfers should be in the hands of the life saving clubs. *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1967, Vol.352, September 7, p.2917-2918

<sup>306</sup> Appendix to the *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1971, H-22, p.65

<sup>307</sup> For example, in 1968 in a debate on the Appropriation Bill estimates, Mr W.L. Young, Member for Miramar, expressed disappointment that surf and lifesaving clubs had not received as generous a grant as they had deserved with \$40,000 being expended on water safety whilst surf and lifesaving clubs received only about \$8,000. Costs of equipment such as surf boats at \$1,400 and rescue reels at \$100 were cited as typical expenses of rescue organisations not adequately covered by the grant when dispersed throughout the clubs nation-wide. *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1968, Vol.357, October 8 p.2154

<sup>308</sup> Interview in Auckland on May 1, 1998 with Cliff Williams, the first person appointed to the position of National Technical Officer, NZASA

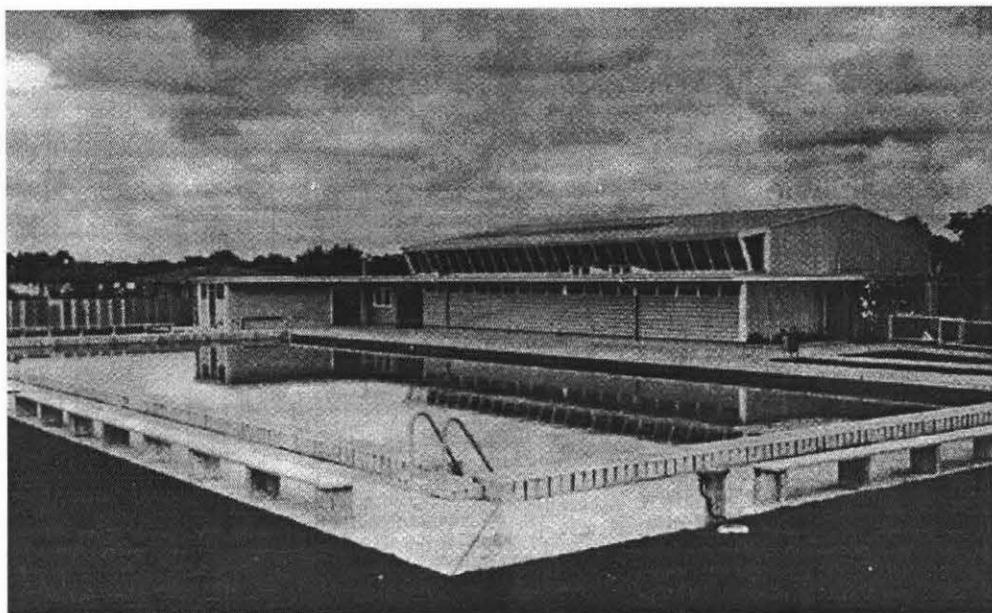
tension between the central education authority and volunteer providers was to remain an issue until the demise of the Department of Education and the era of 'Tomorrow's Schools' in the 1990's.

The provision of facilities for physical education teaching in general and in aquatics education in particular, in both the primary and secondary sectors still tended to be dependent on the goodwill of the school community. Subsidies were available for approved projects such as pools and gymnasias, especially at the secondary level.<sup>309</sup> A survey in 1970, by the Department of Education reported that 70% of primary schools and 65% of secondary schools were equipped with swimming pools designed specifically for the teaching of swimming.<sup>310</sup> By 1975, state secondary schools were reported to be considerably better off than previously reported, with 78% of schools having access to pools (although only 42% claimed ownership of a pool greater than twenty metres in length). In contrast, the number of gymnasias built had risen from 48% (Bassett, 1965) to 70% in 1975 (New Zealand Department of Education Baseline Survey, 1975).

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<sup>309</sup> In 1973, the Auckland Education Board sent a memorandum to all school principals indicating that the following capital subsidies were available: Secondary schools - \$3750 pool construction, \$1250 filtration; Primary learners' pools - \$1150 pool construction, \$500 filtration. Auckland Education Board (RMU), National Archives, Mt Wellington, Auckland

<sup>310</sup> New Zealand Department of Education, 1970 - reported in the *Education Gazette*, November 16, p.631



**Illustration 11.** Secondary school pool, c.1966

Pools constructed in the 1970's were often attached to gymnasias and made available to public groups. They were typically 33 metres (33 1/3 yards ) long and 6-8 lanes wide with pool depths varying from 1-2 metres. (Source: *Physical Education for Boys: A guide book for teachers in secondary schools.* Education Department, Wellington, 1966)

Attempts to provide facilities which met the needs of the school and the community began to emerge in response to public demand in the late 1960's and early 1970's although joint ventures were rarely harmonious and often became a site of contestation between local authorities and central government agencies. For example, as early as 1964, the Member of Parliament for Tamaki, Mr R.G. Muldoon, canvassed vigorously for funds from 1963 to 1966 to build a joint school/community facility in his electorate at Glen Innes.<sup>311</sup> Proposals for a similar project for Papakura led to a drawn-out, often bitter public battle between the Education Department, which was accused of dragging its feet in funding provision and the local council who, in turn, were accused of not making adequate provision for schools' use.<sup>312</sup> Some projects, for example, the

<sup>311</sup> In a letter of December 10, 1964 to the Minister of Education, the Member for Tamaki, Mr R.D. Muldoon, in requesting a subsidy of £2,000, argued that the pool would be used by up to a dozen schools including three post-primary schools none of which had its own pool and was situated in an the centre of a large State housing area which was lacking in community amenities. Department of Education (RMU), National Archives, Mt. Wellington, Auckland

<sup>312</sup> A series of letters between December, 1966 and May, 1967 reflect the acrimony between local authority and the Department of Education on the availability of the pool for Papakura Intermediate and High Schools. Eventually, the Papakura Borough Council withdrew its request for subsidy from the

provision of a pool for the community and three schools in Kelston, West Auckland were initiated in 1970 and never realised, to the detriment of a large school population and its larger community.<sup>313</sup>

A number of initiatives at this time aimed at improving the water temperature of the pools used by schools became evident. The use of solar heating by twelve schools in the Canterbury Education Board region sparked interest in other regions.<sup>314</sup> Solar heating plants, often developed by enthusiastic parents and principals using low cost technology such as black polythene hosing on nearby roofing, extended the teaching in cooler climates of the South Island but did not make a significant impact on aquatics practice elsewhere.<sup>315</sup> Another innovation to surface at this time was the use of swimming pool covers, although satisfactory and safe materials were not available and the practice did not become widespread.<sup>316</sup>

In a survey of activities undertaken in the Physical Education syllabus in 1975, Jones reported that swimming was ranked third behind team games and athletics with 69% of schools in the sample including swimming and lifesaving in their programme, the writer reflecting that limitations of facility availability was the reason for this relatively low ranking (Jones, 1977). However, the growth in the number of municipal pools around this time did provide some schools with the opportunity for swimming teaching,

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Education Department and access to the pools during public hours of use was denied to the schools. Department of Education (RMU), National Archives, Mt. Wellington, Auckland

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>314</sup> Among the schools who reported having fitted some form of solar heating were: Lyttleton West School; Springston School, Christchurch; Lake Tekapo School; Aranui High School, Christchurch; and Redcliffs School, Christchurch. Source: Correspondence from the General Manager, Canterbury Education Board, August 31, 1977. Auckland Education Board (RMU), National Archives, Mt Wellington, Auckland

<sup>315</sup> In 1977, only two schools in the Auckland region, Lynmore School and Lake Kerewhakaaitu School, reported using solar heating devices. Source: Correspondence from the General Manager, Canterbury Education Board, August 31, 1977. Auckland Education Board (RMU), National Archives, Mt Wellington, Auckland

<sup>316</sup> Concerns were expressed in 1975 about the safety of plastic pool covers which, according to one correspondent, a Mrs Ramsay, had been banned in California because of the risk of children becoming trapped underneath them. A Senior Adviser of Physical Education, Mr Colin Spanhake, reported that

for example, 19% of secondary schools in the 1975 Survey without pools reported that they had limited access to a nearby public facility. Continued development of public pools has been a characteristic of recent times with local authorities taking a leading role in providing recreation and sports facilities. Currently over 150 pools are administered by local authorities ranging in size from small 15 metre open air pools to international standard indoor facilities (McBean, in process).

A distinct shift in focus occurred in the 1980's with the promotion of fitness in the Physical Education syllabus via the publication of the 'Fitness for Living' series. Emphasis was placed on the development of functional efficiency in all aspects of daily living with reference to physical, social, and emotional well-being at work, rest and play. It promoted the notion of an active lifestyle through participation in a range of activities including aquatics (the first time that the term was used in official documents). The Fitness for Living through Aquatics Handbook (1980) provided a comprehensive overview of contemporary ideas on content and pedagogy, placing an equal emphasis on the development of "aquatic survival skills, sport and recreation" (NZ Department of Education, 1980, p.2). It recognised and reflected the increasing diversity and popularity of aquatic recreation by including suggestions for teaching such activities as surfing, snorkelling, scuba diving, synchronised swimming and water polo, as well as suggesting alternative forms of competition to the traditional school swimming championships which did not hold the same appeal or promote the idea of, or opportunity for, mass participation.

One area of aquatics education to receive high public profile in the 1980's, both locally and overseas, was the pre-school domain. This attention was a consequence of an alarming increase in infant and child mortality through drowning in private home swimming pools (Fergusson *et al.*, 1983; Geddis, 1984; Pearn *et al.*, 1976, 1986; Nixon *et al.*, 1976; O'Carroll *et al.*; Pitt, 1986). Persistent public and political lobbying

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black polythene covers had been in use in the Auckland area since 1967 with no apparent danger. Department of Education (RMU), National Archives, Mt. Wellington, Auckland

resulted in the passing of the Fencing of Swimming Pools Act in 1987, making it mandatory for all home swimming pools to be fenced. Pre-school drownings were reduced dramatically from an average of ten children drowned per annum prior to the introduction of the legislation to an average of three per annum over the past decade (McBean, in process).

The last major Department of Education initiative to impact on schools' aquatics education was a new syllabus introduced in 1987. The purpose of physical education and its sub-disciplines including aquatics were expressed in terms of three components - physical growth and development, motor skill development, and personal and social development. Performance criteria were identified at six developmental levels and in aquatics, these criteria reflected a range of swimming and survival skills. For example, level four pupils, generally of third and fourth form age, were expected to demonstrate a range of competencies such as: swim comfortably and competently for a maximum of fifty metres on the front and back; swim for a minimum of five minutes using any stroke; know how to use rescue breathing; tread water for ninety seconds *etc.* (NZ Department of Education, 1987)

In addition to the changes in syllabus direction indicated above, a number of external aquatic organisations provided further impetus for change in practice, especially in the area of water safety. The Royal Life Saving Society launched a new certification programme entitled 'Aquapass' in 1985 which recognised that several important conceptual changes needed to be made to their traditional awards. These included recognition of: safe water practice as a part of lifestyle; the importance of water safety education in changing the value system of individuals in order to reduce drowning; the need to integrate learning to swim and learning to survive; and, finally, that skill and fitness alone are insufficient and that cognitive knowledge is also essential in effective decision-making about safety.

The Swim and Survive sequence of Aquapass consisted of seven incremental levels of development from water confidence to swim survival with the content being taught and assessed by the teacher and the content consonant with the syllabus requirements. The RLSSNZ recognised the potential dangers inherent in awards as teaching tools thus,

While awards can be a useful form of motivation and encouragement for beginner swimmers, it is most important for teaching to be directed at the needs of the learner rather than the requirements of the awards. Awards should be integrated into the programme rather than direct the programme. In the case of the Swim and Survive sequence, the RLSSNZ favours a checklist approach in which the successful completion of each requirement of an award is registered by the teacher when it is mastered. (RLSSNZ, 1985, p.23)

Whilst this form of continuous assessment obviated the need for formal test situations, the large number of performance criteria included nevertheless necessitated prolonged periods of testing within class teaching time.

The introduction of the United Surf Survival Scheme in 1985 also influenced the direction and nature of aquatic education. Established initially in the Auckland region, the programme was a response to the increasing level of surf rescues of young people on the local west coast surf beaches. In particular the programme sought to present real life skills of surf survival and beach safety to the secondary school population of New Zealand when it appeared that current water safety programmes did not identify or promote specific beach safety and the dangers of the surf environment (Moran, 1985a).

The contextualised nature of the practical and theoretical content, with its simulated surf-related activity, was quickly adopted by schools throughout the country so that by 1990, the programme was promoted via the national surf lifesaving body in association with the New Zealand Water Safety Council who provided funding support. Regional resource bases were established to assist teachers with delivery of the programme and

these included the availability of specialist equipment, resuscitation models, videos, slide sets and other educational aids. Schools were encouraged to promote surf survival via their outdoor education programmes and camps. Recreational equipment, safety equipment and personnel were made available in some areas with the aid of commercial sponsorship. In 1991, further programmes entitled Surf Sense and Surf Safety were introduced for primary- and intermediate-age pupils, with an emphasis on cognitive knowledge and appropriate decision-making skills rather than on practical survival skills which were considered inappropriate to the very young beach-goer in need of constant supervision in a relatively hostile physical environment (Surf Safety Teachers Manual, 1991).

The developments outlined above took place against a background of radical change in educational administration in the late-1980's following the publication of the Picot Report and the implementation of 'Tomorrow's Schools'. Driven by the emergent New Right ideology, successive Labour and National governments introduced a monetarist approach to the provision of social services across the spectrum based on such now familiar concepts as market forces, user pays, corporatisation, and privatisation. A cornerstone of the new policy in education was the devolution of centralised bureaucracy which saw the demise of the 'hands-on' Department of Education in 1989 and the establishment of a much slimmer Ministry of Education charged with the responsibility of policy provision and ministerial advice rather than service provision to pupils, teachers and schools. In addition, the downturn in the economy precipitated by previous political mismanagement and characterised by the 1987 stockmarket collapse, provided an ideal opportunity to allow economic imperatives to drive education policy rather than educational philosophy.

With the dissolution of the regional offices of the Education Department and the dismantling of the Education Boards, much of the infrastructure which had assisted, controlled and regulated the provision of swimming pool facilities was removed. An indication of how much involvement these regional bodies had is revealed in a 1989

report of the Auckland Education Board which reported that 362 out of a possible 450 schools were paid over \$133,000 in swimming pool filtration grants and funds totalling over \$171,000 were administered in conjunction with the provision of swimming facilities.<sup>317</sup> Under the mantle of self-governance, schools' Boards of Trustees became responsible via capitation payments for the running costs and maintenance of capital structures such as swimming pools. The emergence of 'rich schools, poor schools'<sup>318</sup> and greater reliance on the community to subsidise the costs of curriculum activities such as aquatics education may have exacerbated already existing tendencies for inequities in the past to be reinforced in present practice and repeated in the future.

In spite of the above-mentioned political and economic volatility, New Zealand society has continued to embrace aquatic recreation as a key characteristic of its modern culture.

**Table 15.** Aquatic activity, Life in New Zealand Survey, 1991

| Sport Involvement                      | Percentage | Extrapolated population |
|--|------------|-------------------------|
| Swimming/diving/waterpolo              | 27%        | 945,000                 |
| Motorboating                           | 7%         | 245,000                 |
| Surfing/sailboarding/windsurfing       | 5%         | 175,000                 |
| Sailing                                | 4%         | 140,000                 |
| Snorkelling/scuba                      | 4%         | 140,000                 |
| Water-skiing                           | 3%         | 105,000                 |
| Canoeing                               | 2%         | 70,000                  |
| Rowing                                 | 2%         | 70,000                  |
| <b>Total Aquatic Sport Involvement</b> | <b>54%</b> | <b>1,890,000</b>        |

(Source: Life in New Zealand Survey, 1991-Russell, D. & Wilson, N.)

<sup>317</sup>Swimming pool summary, as at February 1, 1989, Auckland Education Board (RMU), National Archives, Mt. Wellington, Auckland

<sup>318</sup>In 1994, Liz Gordon, University of Canterbury, reported on a study of Boards of Trustees in Canterbury schools which suggested that schools in poor areas were getting poorer, while schools in wealthy areas were able to maintain their funding position.

In 1981, the most frequented recreational settings for outdoor recreation were identified as beaches and oceans (79 percent), lakes and rivers (50 percent) (Devlin, Corbett & Peebles, 1995).

A decade later, the 1991 Life in New Zealand Survey (See Table 15 above) identified the importance of aquatic recreation by indicating that the use of recreational facilities ranked beaches, rivers and lakes second (50 percent) after shopping malls, with swimming pools ranked eighth (19 percent) (Russell & Wilson, 1991). Furthermore, the 1991 Survey also recognised that aquatic activities in, on, or under water involved one in every two New Zealanders with swimming alone accounting for over one quarter of sport involvement.

The introduction of the Physical Education as a Bursary subject for senior school pupils in the 1990's has seen some opportunity for development within the education system. Aquatics has been included as an optional module of study and has as its focus of study the extension of the knowledge, skills, and experience of students in the aquatic environment. Specific objectives include: the application of biomechanical and motor learning principles in a selected aquatic activity and the performance of a variety of aquatic skills including safety and survival of self and others (NZ Ministry of Education, 1995).

The most recent initiatives in the field of aquatics education in some respects reflect the new political climate and the changing face of 'service providers' of education. In 1989, the New Zealand Water Safety Council rationalised its membership and, in the event of the demise of the Department of Education, no representative of the education establishment was included in the new membership. In 1992, the Council began operating without the direct financial assistance of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (NZWSC Annual Report, 1993). Closer association with the NZ Lotteries Grants Board and other indirect funding sources precipitated a change in direction from being a service provider through its own field officers in the regions to promoting member organisation programmes and acting as a funding distributor. As a consequence of this

change in management strategy, the regional offices were dis-established in 1993 in spite of vigorous regional opposition from practitioners in the field, many of whom expressed concerns about the ability of some member organisations to provide appropriate programmes. Regional initiatives set up as a consequence of the dis-establishment of NZWSC regional offices include such organisations as Watersafe Auckland Incorporated (WAI) which aim to address the generic water safety needs of the community and rely on local rather than central funding.

In 1995, further rationalisation of aquatic programmes took place in the face of tight budgetary constraints and problems with programme delivery. The 'Kiwiswim' programme, promoted by Swimming Education New Zealand and the 'Aquapass' programme, promoted by the Royal Life Saving Society NZ, were revised and presented in a combined swim and basic survival programme, entitled 'Lotto Swimsafe' in 1996. Aimed at primary school age pupils, the programme was designed: to promote swimming and personal survival skills through a national aquatic programme; to encourage New Zealanders to recognise swimming and personal survival skills as a basis for all aquatic recreation; to educate and provide teachers, coaches and school parent-helpers with logical progressions and methods; and to improve the standard of instructing swimming and personal survival skills in New Zealand. (NZWSC Swimsafe Manual, 1996)

In 1995, a nation-wide learn to swim campaign called 'Take the Plunge' was established amidst a fanfare of media coverage and promotion. The campaign was taught by volunteers during an intensive two weeks of practice in January on a part user-pays basis. Other recent initiatives by aquatic organisations include: a Beach Education programme for primary schools and a revision of the Surf Survival programme for secondary schools run by SLSNZ; an introductory programme of snorkelling entitled 'Mini-Dippers' run by the NZ Underwater Association; and 'Safe Boating' courses run by the Royal Coastguard Federation.

Whilst many of the education programmes compete for funding from the same or similar sources, tensions exist between providers which may be counter-productive in educational terms. Quantitative indicators such as certification numbers, course attendances and high media profiles may be indicative of the efficacy of current aquatic education delivery and thus enhance funding prospects. However, the qualitative impact on our nation's youth and their aquatic knowledge, skills and understanding is still very much a matter of conjecture.

In 1996, a survey of secondary schools in the north of the North Island revealed a decline of eleven per cent in the number of schools offering aquatics education programmes when compared with the same schools a decade earlier (Moran, 1998).

**Table 16.** Secondary schools with/without aquatics education, 1987-1996.

| Year | Schools with aquatics | Schools without aquatics |
|------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1987 | 81%<br>(n=113)        | 19%<br>(n=25)            |
| 1996 | 70%<br>(n=91)         | 30%<br>(n=39)            |

Whilst there was a slight increase in the number of schools that reported satisfaction with regard to the provision of aquatics education during the time of this study, a majority of schools (52 percent, n=68) in 1996 still considered that over half of their pupils had not received adequate aquatics education. These most recent findings prompted the author to conclude that, "in light of the increased use of the aquatic environment and the continued over-representation of the secondary school-age population in rescue statistics, it is critical that recent moves towards curriculum change address the longstanding concerns of teachers reported in this study" (*Ibid.*, p.5).

## Chapter three - Conclusion

### 3.1 Summary - New Zealand's aquatics education heritage

Aquatic activity featured prominently in indigenous society prior to the arrival of Europeans in the early nineteenth century. Young Maori males and females were encouraged from an early age to develop swimming and water survival skills since much of their time in childhood and subsequent adulthood would be spent in close proximity to water at both work and at play. The relatively hostile physical environment and difficulty of travel through dense bush and hilly terrains meant that settlement near the coast or close to rivers and lakes precipitated frequent contact with water whether it be for transport, sustenance or recreational purposes.

With regards to water transport, Maori developed several modes of transport for both ocean and river navigation including outrigger canoes and sailing craft for open water and canoes and rafts for inland conditions. In addition to the mastery of open water navigation skills associated with epic canoe voyages, Maori also developed skills associated with the safe navigation of rivers and creeks, an asset that was to be fully utilised by early European explorers. In terms of obtaining sustenance from the sea, *kaimoana*, Maori men and women were adept at fishing and diving, activities which had obvious pre-requisites of swimming proficiency and knowledge of survival skills.

One of the pre-disposing factors that promoted the propensity for aquatically-based recreation was the lack of inhibition with regards to nudity, segregation of the sexes in bathing activities and the necessity to wear constricting European-style clothing. Whilst recreational activities such as surfing were not as institutionalised as in other parts of Polynesia, there is clear evidence that Maori did engage in organised sporting ritual involving swimming, surfboard riding, and canoe racing. In addition, Maori had developed recreational activities requiring the construction of specially designed communal equipment such as swings and dive platforms. Perhaps the most significant measure of the importance of aquatic activity in pre-European society is the reification

of swimming feats in Maori folk lore and mythology and the spiritual reverence afforded aquatic divinities such as *taniwha* which were to be found in every port, river, creek, lake and sea.

Sadly, this propensity for aquatic activity in Maori society was one of the early casualties of European contact, suffering under the twin restrictive forces of missionary religious zeal and oppressive Victorian social attitudes towards nudity. The evolution of state controlled education and use of education as a tool for assimilation of the indigenous peoples meant that many of the water skills that young Maori had traditionally learned from each other in play and from their grandparents in particular on the marae were not encouraged or included in the curriculum of Native schools - a legacy that was sadly to persist for another century of 'Europeanisation' through institutionalised learning until the demise of native schools.

With the influx of new immigrants from Britain in the latter part of the nineteenth century, their ability to swim and survive in an environment where contact with water was frequent became such a concern that drowning was referred to as the 'New Zealand death'. Early drowning rates were extremely high by modern standards, a reflection of the new arrivals' inability to swim, and the restrictive, heavy clothing worn. In addition, the lack of a transport infrastructure which included safe bridges, roads, railways and harbours and the dependence on small craft with inadequate safety equipment meant that cross-country or coastal navigation was dangerous and consequently exacted a high toll on the population of the fledgling colony. Such was the concern of politicians in the 1870's that annual returns to Parliament included reports on the number of river drownings and the recording of fatalities at sea in reports of the Marine Department.

Death by drowning continued to exact a high toll on the Dominion into the twentieth century, a consequence of many factors including continued immigration, continuing low levels of swimming ability, inappropriate dress on or around water and a continued high level of accidental immersions, all of this in spite of improvements in transport safety

brought about by improved coastal shipping safety, better road infrastructure and developments in rail transport. Up until this time, aquatic activity as a form of recreation had been limited in the work-oriented life of the early British settlers. Occupations were essentially pastoral and characterised by hard labour, few holidays and little leisure time.

Gradually society changed, became increasingly mechanised and urbanised which, in turn, changed the nature of leisure time from being a time of relaxation and recuperation to an opportunity for activity-oriented recreation. Organised recreation in the form of sports and games were imported from 'Mother England' and, in their transfer across the world, they had lost some of their elitist connotations and were embraced in a more egalitarian light. However, in spite of New Zealand's progressiveness in granting voting rights to women in 1893, such egalitarianism did not extend to women's participation in vigorous recreational activity. At a time when the prophylactic and therapeutic benefits of swimming and bathing were being extolled world-wide by medical authorities, educationalists and politicians alike, swimming baths became a site of contestation where women challenged the contemporary male hegemony that precluded female opportunity to enjoy aquatic activity in the increasing number of private and municipal facilities.

The explosion in interest in recreational activity gave impetus to swimming but this meant swimming in public pools but not at the beach. Victorian morality did not permit mixed bathing in the open sea and repressive local legislation characterised society's attitude to the 'bathing nuisance' around the turn of the century. Traditionally, the beach was a recreational venue for picnics and promenading in the British tradition, and was an opportunity for dressing up in best clothes rather than dressing down for water-based recreation. The beach then also became a site of contestation for the liberalisation of swimming as a socially acceptable activity.

One of the ways in which the activity could be legitimatised was to identify it as a wholesome and healthy pastime. Sport has long been recognised as a socialising agent and its development has often been viewed as a reflection of the cultural shape of society at any given time. The hedonism of an educational ideology that promoted sport as a value system was firmly entrenched at a time when many of New Zealand's first schools were being established in the 1870-1880 era. The emergence of swimming as a sport in the 1890's provided the activity with some social acceptance whilst glowing media commentary on heroic rescues and the emergence of a self-regulating volunteer body of 'lifesavers' added further credibility in the early years of the twentieth century.

Societal attitudes and values towards Physical Education in general and aquatics education in particular were to be reflected in the public education system that evolved in the second half of the nineteenth century. Following closely behind developments in providing state-controlled public education in Britain, the 1877 New Zealand Education Act made provision for military drill and physical training but, in keeping with contemporary Victorian work ethic, school was not to be considered a frivolous affair. Consequently a national curriculum focussing on a traditional knowledge base of the three 'r's was taught using rigid forms of instruction and controlled through a rigorous system of external inspection in its first thirty years of existence.

The physical education of the child was not considered other than participation in extra-curricular instruction by enthusiastic, though not always skilled and trained, teachers. Swimming was taught where facilities existed in or near schools many of which operated from a privileged socio-economic base. Inequitable provision of recreational facilities in schools for boys and girls reflected and reinforced the dominant male hegemony and whilst swimming was later to be encouraged as an acceptable form of activity for girls, the availability of pool space continued to disadvantage female participation.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the emphasis on military drill in schools became more pronounced reflecting concerns arising from the Boer war and the perceived threat of Russian invasion. Such sentiments were fuelled by the imperialism of Premier Seddon and other political leaders and resulted in the establishment of cadet forces in schools which effectively drew the focus of a child's physical education towards militarism and jingoistic displays of marching and rifle drills. Such activity culminated in a mass demonstration in front of Lord Kitchener in 1910 of the nation's readiness to defend the Empire but declined thereafter.

Up until this time then attempts to firstly include and then broaden the base of a child's physical education through formal schooling had been arbitrary and spasmodic. Government efforts to cater for increasing demands for swimming and lifesaving instruction to be taught in public schools had included capitation grants under the banner of the Manual and Technical Instruction Act, 1900, as well as the payments of grants to the NZASA, the first official recognition and remuneration of an external provider in the provision of aquatics education. It was also a time when politicians began agitating for government contribution towards the cost of building school pools, a sentiment that was to be fully realised a half-century later. In addition, advocacy in favour of the inclusion of swimming and lifesaving into the curriculum came from the emerging teacher training institutions and particularly from the Principal of Auckland Teachers College, Mr H.A.E. Milne, who succeeded in convincing the Department of Education that the new College needed its own bath in which to train future teachers and thus lead curriculum change. Prime amongst Milne's arguments for the inclusion of vigorous physical activity such as swimming in the curriculum was the added value of a disciplined body to a disciplined mind embodied in the dictum '*mens sana in corpore sana*'.

In spite of such advocacy, lack of specialist instruction, inadequate facilities and the lack of a written syllabus continued to hamper developments. On a more positive note, the appointment of Royd Garlick as Director of Physical Education and the adoption of the British 1909 Syllabus of Physical Exercises in 1912, signalled firm intentions to shift

the emphasis away from military drill and towards physical exercise. In-service teacher training on the new syllabus, which included swimming, lifesaving and resuscitation as one of its five key areas, commenced in 1913 along with the appointment of a team of inspectors/advisers. The advent of the First World War tended to stifle many of the well-intentioned initiatives of enlightened enthusiasts such as Milne and Garlick. The War did however have a somewhat dubious distinction of triggering greater government awareness of the physical education of the people in defence of the realm, a response that was to be re-litigated some thirty years later during the Second World War.

Another benefit to be recognised was the value of aquatic activity not only as a prophylactic to the nation's health and well-being but also its therapeutic value as a corrective to many of the postural deformities and defects exposed during screening for military recruitment. This emphasis on corrective therapy was to become a dominant theme in the post-World War One years under the direction of Renfrew White. The 1920's was a time of relative austerity and recovery from the hardships of the War, but claims were made that the concentration on the physical condition of children had resulted in considerable improvement in the nation's health. However, in spite of the inclusion of swimming and lifesaving in the mainstream syllabus document of 1919, lack of pool facilities and the timetable restraints imposed by a system still rigidly bound by public examination meant that aquatics education was variably instituted throughout the country at both primary and secondary levels. The active involvement of external organisations in the teaching of swimming and lifesaving countered these restrictions to some extent and provided an important political platform for the public promotion of aquatics education. Concerns about the continued high rates of drowning, especially for the lower age groups, saw pressure on government to provide subsidies on the construction of school pools in spite of slow economic growth and the repayment of war loans.

Expansion in any part of the school curriculum was substantially curtailed against a backdrop of the political unrest and economic crises associated with the Depression

years of the early 1930's. Whereas previously the fortunes of Physical Education seemed to prosper during times of military threat, in this time of economic threat it suffered severe contraction in the school curriculum, and nowhere was this contraction more keenly felt than in the domain of swimming with its attendant high costs of facility provision.

As the economy recovered in the mid-1930's, educational facilities that had been temporarily withdrawn were gradually replaced. The introduction of a new syllabus in 1933, reinforced in 1937 with the passing of the Physical Welfare Act, provided impetus for curriculum innovation set against a backdrop of political and social change with the inception of the first Labour Government in 1936 and the establishment of a virulent form of social welfarism to promote its banner cry of 'an equal chance for all' which would include such features as the five-day, forty-hour working week. An increased interest in the beach as a site of leisure and of swimming as a major recreational activity combined with an increasingly mobile and affluent population added pressure on schools to teach children to swim.

The freeing up of the school timetable from the constraints of proficiency tests for primary pupils in 1938 provided schools with greater flexibility. This allowed for concentrated blocks of teaching time for swimming and lifesaving in the summer months and facilitated the introduction of a nationwide 'Learn to Swim' campaign which was to become the backbone of future community-oriented water safety campaigns and be replicated even in recent times. Sadly, the opportunity to capitalise on these initiatives was interrupted with the onset of the Second World War.

As with the South African War and the First World War before it, the Second World War precipitated growth in the area of Physical Education albeit for the need for a fit military force in defence of the nation but without the attendant jingoism. In spite of the upheaval associated with wartime, the war years spawned what is arguably the most productive period in aquatics education development in New Zealand, led in no

uncertain terms by the pioneering work of one individual, Ken Reid. The establishment by Reid of a prototype learners' pool for primary schools received the enthusiastic endorsement of the Director of Education, Clarence Beeby and was to become the forerunner of over 1,500 learners' pools to be built in the next two decades. Another significant development during the war years was the wholesale revision of secondary education initiated by the Thomas Committee. Physical Education was well served by the sentiments expressed in the final report, in particular, the recognition of Physical Education as a core subject. In spite of these optimistic developments, aquatics education still tended to be dependent on facility availability and the enthusiasm of school communities and individual teachers for its effective inclusion in the school curriculum. Furthermore, the effects of the post-war 'baby boom' and urban drift placed pressure on school facilities and gave priority to 'essential' classroom construction which did not include swimming pools or gymnasias.

The post-War years witnessed a gradual return to normality and a period of prosperity as New Zealand agriculture helped supply a war-ravaged Europe. The continued high incidence of drowning stimulated government action in the establishment of the Prevent Drowning Committee which was the forerunner of the umbrella organisation currently called Water Safety New Zealand (formerly the New Zealand Water Safety Council). Increases in prosperity, discretionary spending power, leisure time and mobility meant that aquatically-based recreation at beaches, lakes and rivers became part of the New Zealand lifestyle typically embraced in such icons as long weekends, baches, barbeques and boat ownership. As a consequence of this surge in popularity, rescue organisations grew rapidly and also became part of the aquatics education infrastructure.

The 1950's and 1960's witnessed substantial growth in state-controlled, provider-driven curriculum development. Led initially by Philip Smithells, until his appointment to the School of Physical Education at Otago University in 1948, and then Dudley Wills, the Department of Education provided teachers with strong direction via a Head Office determining policy, and regional offices implementing that policy through advisory

services and the Inspectorate. In addition, copious written resources were produced by the Physical Education Branch of the Department of Education to assist teachers with the teaching of aquatic activities. Such was the control of the state bureaucracy that relationships between external bodies traditionally associated with the promotion of swimming and lifesaving and the Department became strained as competition for inclusion in the curriculum intensified. The value of many of these certificated programmes of instruction were acknowledged by Departmental officers, however, they were only to be included as extra-curricular activities, a far cry from the situation that was to pertain two decades later with the demise of the Department of Education.

Whilst recognising that this post-war period provided fertile ground for the development of aquatics education, it must also be noted that there was considerable variability in its provision. For example, Maori schools in remote parts of the North were shown to be woefully inadequate in terms of swimming pool availability, a reflection of the low socio-economic status of many predominantly-Maori, rural settlements. Intermediate schools also suffered in terms of being able to enlist community support to build pools as did some of the new urban-based secondary schools. In the 1960's and 1970's, moves towards partnerships between municipal authorities and schools in the provision of communally owned facilities met with varying degrees of success as local councils and the Department of Education battled for control of the facilities.

With a growing emphasis from the 1970's onwards on the need for the curriculum to cater for the future recreational needs of pupils, there was a perceptible shift away from the traditional fare of swimming and lifesaving towards a broader-based interpretation of what constituted an aquatics programme and included such activities as scuba diving, snorkelling, and surfing. There was a diminished enthusiasm in many schools for the elitist style of annual championships and attempts were made by some to provide alternative participatory events which catered for all. An emphasis on fitness through participation in a range of physical activities including aquatic activities typified the

1980's which reflected trends in the mass participation in the community via the jogging boom, fun runs, triathlons, aerobics and its water equivalent, aquarobics.

The late 1980's witnessed dramatic changes in political ideology and educational policy which saw the demise of the 'hands-on' Department of Education in 1989 and the establishment of a much slimmer Ministry of Education charged with the responsibility of policy provision and ministerial advice rather than service provision to pupils, teachers and schools. In addition, the downturn in the economy precipitated by previous political mismanagement and characterised by the 1987 stock market collapse, provided an ideal opportunity to allow economic imperatives to drive educational policy rather than educational philosophy. Under the mantle of self-governance, schools' Boards of Trustees became responsible via capitation payments for the running costs and maintenance of capital structures such as swimming pools and greater reliance was placed on the consumer to subsidise the costs of curriculum activities such as aquatics education, a move that may have exacerbated already existing tendencies for inequities in the past to be reinforced in present practice and repeated in the future. The increased involvement of external providers of aquatics education reflects both the open market mentality of prevailing political ideology and the 'hands off' approach of the central authority as market forces increasingly determine educational delivery. Recent evidence from the secondary arena would suggest that aquatics education has suffered a decline in the intervening decade of change since 'Tomorrow's Schools' were first heralded.

### 3.2 Conclusion –

Cohen and Manion (1994) suggest that the act of historical research involves the identification and limitation of an area of study with its attendant set of research questions, and followed by subsequent collection, organisation, verification, validation analysis, selection and reporting of data. In pursuing this process, historical research may lead to a better understanding of the past and its relevance to the present and the future. In this study, the author identified aquatics education as an area of significance in current curriculum practice in New Zealand schools and set out to examine the socio-cultural forces that have interacted in a historical context to shape current practice. Hill and Kerber (1967) have suggested that, of the many values inherent in historical research, its capacity to enable solutions to contemporary problems to be sought in the past, as well as its ability to throw light on present and future trends, are especially valuable. Indeed, it is often claimed that the ability of history to employ the past to predict the future is one of its unique qualities. However, as Cohen and Manion (1994) point out

Historians themselves usually reject such a direct application and rarely indulge in it on the grounds that no two events or contextual circumstances, separated geographically and temporally, can possibly be equated. As the popular sayings go, ‘history never repeats itself’ and so, ‘the only thing we can learn from history is that we can learn nothing from history’ (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p.65).

However, it is the author’s belief that, to be of practical benefit, historical study should precipitate some effect on the future by facilitating and enabling change. Southgate points out that this is not in any way to suggest that “our future is predetermined by our past, but that our perception of the past can be used to validate and reinforce the future that we want” (Southgate, 1996, p.132). In examining the evolution of aquatics education in New Zealand schools, and in particular the socio-cultural forces at work in

curriculum design throughout our educational history, the author has attempted to present a history that is neither complimentary nor celebratory, but rather reflects past curriculum change as a site of frequent contestation, a site that is discursive and problematic. In presenting evidence from a variety of sources, the author has adopted a position that is tolerant of many truths and answers. Above all, by identifying with and gaining a better understanding of the past, it will be possible to see beyond the myopia imposed by the constraints of contemporaneity in order to fully appreciate potential for curriculum change in the future.

In examining the history of aquatics education, the author has attempted to go 'behind the scenes' of official curriculum record to expose what Massey has referred to as the 'actual curriculum', that is, the teachers and students' reality that lies beyond the public statements of officialdom where "the intentions of the curriculum planners figuratively pass through a set of filters along a chain of curriculum diffusion until finally the individual teacher acts" (Massey, 1980, p.3).

Throughout New Zealand's brief educational history, aquatics education has been publicly reported in largely celebratory fashion via participant historians, government officials and politicians alike. The peaks of performance have been loudly and sometimes inaccurately proclaimed, whilst the troughs of under-achievement have been largely ignored or even suppressed. Included in the former category would be the early inclusion of swimming and lifesaving activities in the curriculum and the initiatives of individuals in the provision of cost-efficient and effective primary school learners' pools. Included in the latter category would be such factors as high non-swimmer populations, high rates of drowning, inadequate teaching facility provision, and the inequities of opportunity for aquatics education for non-privileged sectors of society such as girls and Maori.

In addition, the involvement of external institutions in the provision of extra- and co-curricular aquatics education has often tended to obfuscate the actuality of delivery and

cloud the issue of educational efficacy, especially where funding from government or quasi-government sources was contingent upon quantitative indicators of success such as the number of certificates awarded. Exacerbating this condition has been the high political profile that swimming and water safety have been accorded throughout New Zealand's recent history which has meant that aquatics education has often been ascribed a purely utilitarian value to the detriment of its not inconsiderable esoteric, prophylactic and therapeutic values.

Throughout its evolution, aquatics education has demonstrated considerable malleability in terms of its definition and aims. Its initial identification in education documents as 'swimming and lifesaving' clearly indicates that the value of the subject was related to the acquisition of swimming and lifesaving skills. Advocates promoting its inclusion in the curriculum cited its capacity to reduce drowning as a primary aim. Set against a backdrop of emerging interest amongst educationalists in the physical education of the child as well as an emerging interest in the military strength of the nation amongst politicians, swimming and lifesaving appeared to have much to offer in terms of the physical health of the nation and the defence of the realm.

At the turn of the century, its value as a corrective to poor posture, body alignment and stature were cited as reasons for its inclusion against a background of concern for the fighting qualities and physiques of recruits into the armed services of the British Empire in the South African War and the First World War. An emphasis on the therapeutic rather than the prophylactic values of swimming were again strongly promoted by Renfrew White in the 1930's and, whilst generally not a happy time in terms of the development of Physical Education in the curriculum, swimming was regarded as a valuable activity in terms of inculcating good posture and breathing habits in the nation's youth.

In a similar vein, as an organised school activity, the ability of physical activity such as swimming and lifesaving to inculcate "self-reliance, decision and a power to obey as well

as command” and teach “habits of obedience and manliness, of unselfishness and cooperation, of fortitude and endurance”<sup>319</sup> were further reasons for curriculum inclusion albeit as a co-curricular rather than a mainstream-curriculum activity. Early twentieth century advocates of physical education such as Bert Milne and Royd Garlick promoted swimming as part of an emergent healthism based on traditional notions of ‘*mens sana in corpore sano*’, with Milne in particular adopting a particularly Spartan view of the value of cold water bathing to cleanse the soul and mind.

The process of legitimisation of aquatics education as a curriculum activity mirrored the acceptance of swimming as a legitimate form of activity by the community at large, a process which, in turn, necessitated changed social attitudes to the morality of public and mixed bathing as well as changing attitudes towards female emancipation. The process of legitimisation was helped greatly by the emergence of swimming as a sport around the turn of the century, and the development of volunteer lifeguard clubs and associations added to the ethos of sea-bathing in particular as a socially acceptable activity. The inclusion of swimming in the 1919 Syllabus recognised the value of swimming as “an invigorating and healthful form of exercise”, noting that it was also “attractive in its sporting possibilities for younger people” and was “capable of being indulged in with benefit until well on in life” (Department of Education, 1919, p.225).

The development of school swimming clubs, especially in high schools, led to some conflict of interest within the curriculum as some schools put greater emphasis on swimming as a sport, on the winning of inter-school trophies and cups, than on the teaching of all pupils to swim. Such elitism mirrored the traditional practice of British public and grammar schools and is reflected in the current practice of annual school championships still evident today, although its elitist connotations have been somewhat dampened.

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<sup>319</sup> Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1913, E-2, App.C, p.ii

The post-War period of the 1950's saw swimming and lifesaving expanding rapidly, particularly in the primary school curriculum. Advocates of aquatics education began to promote the recreational value of a range of aquatic activities at a time when post-war prosperity gave New Zealanders greater discretionary spending power, increased leisure time and greater mobility. Increased use of the nation's beaches, lakes and rivers as sites of aquatic recreation meant greater demands for water safety education and swimming proficiency so the utilitarian aim of preventing drowning was still a compelling argument for the primacy of aquatics education in the physical education of the child. The growth of a number of aquatic activities such as surfing, water skiing, boating and sailing in the 1960's and 1970's meant that the role of swimming as a form of sporting activity became secondary to the need for generic aquatic survival skills and knowledge. As a consequence of this, the title of 'swimming and lifesaving' no longer encompassed the range of activities taught in a schools' aquatics programme.

The use of the term 'aquatic activity' as opposed to 'swimming and lifesaving' first appeared in Education Department documents in the *Fitness for Living* series in 1980 in which aquatic activity was promoted within the context of health and fitness. Such promotion signalled a shift in emphasis at a time when the health-promoting values of exercise rather than the hedonistic values inherent in many physical activities were being advocated. This wave of healthism expressed itself in society in such forms as the jogging boom, the growth of fitness centres, aerobics classes and fun runs. Municipal and private pools catered for the explosion in interest in swimming as a form of exercise by instituting lane swimming, aquarobics and other forms of water-based activity. In terms of aquatic activity in schools, demands for inclusive rather than elitist activity placed pressure on the traditional delivery of swimming and lifesaving which expressed itself in a decline in interest in school championships, swimming and lifesaving clubs, and certification.

Finally, the nature of aquatics education, like many other parts of the curriculum, has recently been subject to a period of volatility associated with the demise of the

Education Department, new right ideology, the emergence of self-governing schools and the notion of a consumer-rather than a provider-driven curriculum. In the absence of any government body to control policy and practice in aquatics education, it may be incumbent on the teaching profession, in conjunction with external aquatics organisations to initiate curriculum change and respond to future community demands. Only then will schools be able to provide all students with the competencies they need to safely enjoy the aquatic environment and justify the high profile that it has traditionally held as a community good in New Zealand society.

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