



THE MOST FAMOUS ICE RINK IN THE WORLD

Cover Illustration: Special thanks to artist Judy Joel for allowing the reproduction of her lovely picture.
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FOREWORD

We welcome the news that people's memories of skating at Richmond Ice Rink have been recorded in this book.

Richmond Rink, where we were sometimes coached by Betty Callaway, was definitely a very famous and popular ice rink, known around the world.

The rink was in a very beautiful setting next to the Thames and attracted skaters from miles around. Competitive skaters from around the world would come to Richmond for lessons from some of the top coaches in the world.

It was sad that the rink had to close despite a very strong campaign to keep it open but we are pleased that ice skating has returned to Twickenham with the temporary ice rink over Christmas and New Year, known as Richmond Rink.

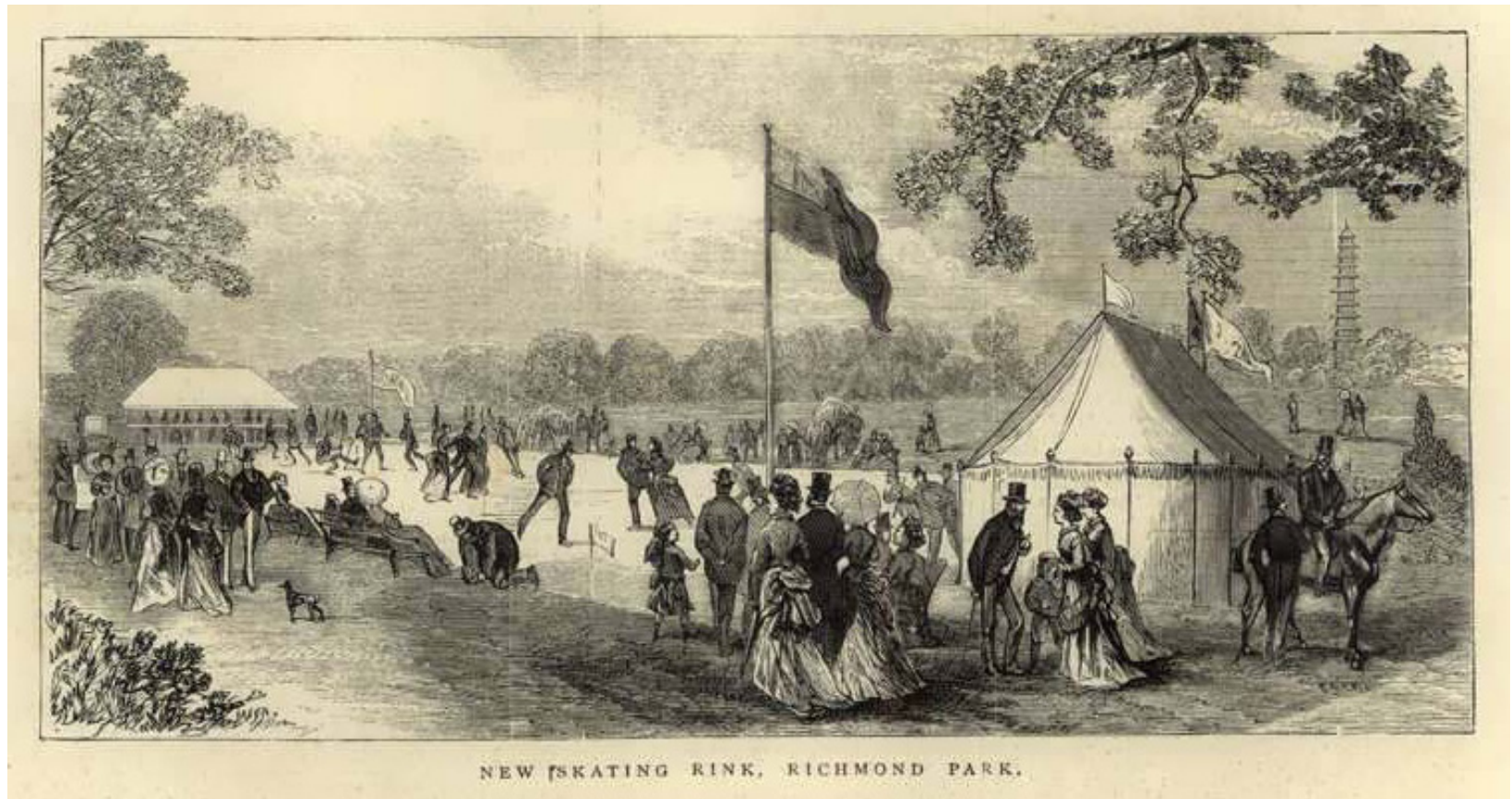
The memories of the 70s and 80s are many, and it was here Margaret Thatcher came to see us skate, great memories.

Jayne Torvill & Christopher Dean





FROZEN IN TIME



As these wonderful Victorian illustrations demonstrate, ice-skating has, for a very long time, been a popular recreational activity in our area – either on the frozen River Thames at Richmond (left), on Old Deer Park (above), or at the much-missed Richmond Ice Rink. The recent return of the temporary rinks at York House and Strawberry Hill House have continued

this tradition, however; residents of the Borough have often asked why the promised replacement ice rink for Richmond was never delivered.

David Lane

FORMATIVE YEARS: 1906-32

The building that subsequently housed the skating rink had an inauspicious start. It was originally intended for roller-skating, but the company involved went into liquidation in 1912 before the rink had opened. Investors' money was lost, but the shell of a brick building had been constructed, and stood empty.

Shortly after the start of World War I, the Belgian entrepreneur Charles Pelabon set up his munitions factory on the site. This remained in production until the end of the war in 1918. Other buildings were erected on the site during the war, all stipulated by the Council to be removed 'when peace arrives'. However, it is clear that this did not happen. In 1920 M Pelabon asked not to be held to the original agreements to sell the land back within five years of hostilities having ceased, and he was given permission to change his type of production.

Eventually the Council, having made several concessions to M Pelabon, started to press him to fulfil his obligations. Also, the East Twickenham Ratepayers Association became concerned over the continued use of this land for heavy industry. In February 1925 the Association formally complained to the Urban District Council (UDC) about the lack of action against M Pelabon.

In reply, the UDC stated that it had earlier been "helpless to prevent it", for two reasons; first, the various restrictive agreements that had been made with M Pelabon, second that he had returned

to the Continent and could not be contacted. Shortly afterwards, M Pelabon was asked to contribute £1,500 towards the construction of a pleasure ground (this had originally been suggested in 1919); he agreed to pay £1,250. According to Kelly's Directory for 1925, the Pelabon works had disappeared from the site, that was now occupied by other factories. At the end of 1925 the Council bought back their land for £4,000. A counter offer from a manufacturer wishing to make "confectionery" was turned down.

In May 1928 a proposal made to adapt the former Pelabon Works as an ice skating rink, under the management of the Richmond Ice Skating Rink Co., was agreed, and in December 1928 the ice rink was opened. This was a spectacular affair; according to Richmond & Twickenham Times Dec 22: the ribbon was cut by Lady Hoare, wife of the Air Minister, in the presence of many local dignitaries and international skaters.

Eight hundred skaters took to the ice "without the least suggestion of crowding". There was initial success: between 1 Jan and 15 May 1929 there were more than 20,000 visitors to the rink, and a profit of more than £9000 was reported. However, despite early enthusiasm, it is evident that this venture was not an unqualified success. The rink was operated as a club (involving membership), rather than a place of entertainment for the general public.

The rink closed in 31 May 1931, at the end of its normal "season" (October – May), following Fancy Dress on Ice and a New Year Carnival, but when it reopened on 2 October, with a Civic ceremony, it was under entirely new management, and alterations had been made. It was also in future to be called "Richmond and Twickenham Ice Rink" - later to become The Sportsdrome.

Professor Jeremy Hamilton-Miller



WHEN WE WERE THE YOUNG ONES

We were living in East Sheen when dad bought ice boots home for my sister and I. We were about 12 and 14 and life was mapped out for the next few years from then on. After the first session, my sister gave up, but I never stopped, with life revolving around the ice rink at Richmond for the next few years. A bus to Richmond, then a walk over the bridge, became a regular outing.

My parents were quite strict through the teenage years, and the only place I was allowed to go was the ice rink – I'd set off with a bag of boots, a duster to clean the blades afterwards and a change of clothes.

My white boots were made of buckskin and were lovingly cleaned with white cleaner, whilst the blades were polished with pink chrome cleaner and were fitted with leather guards over the blades that snapped into place.

I also had four short skirts – pleated, flared and straight – and we often wore tights that were thick flesh-coloured granny style stockings.

People queued to get in and paid for a ticket, and skate hire if necessary, at a kiosk with a glass window, which was rather like the booking office in an old cinema. From there you went into the ladies cloakroom, with its wooden slatted seats, where we changed into our outfits and skates and spent some time in front of the mirrors.

Bags were given to a lady in exchange for a ticket. Just before the end of a session some people would rush back to her to avoid the queue if they were in a hurry to change... Not that we were ever in a hurry to leave the rink though!

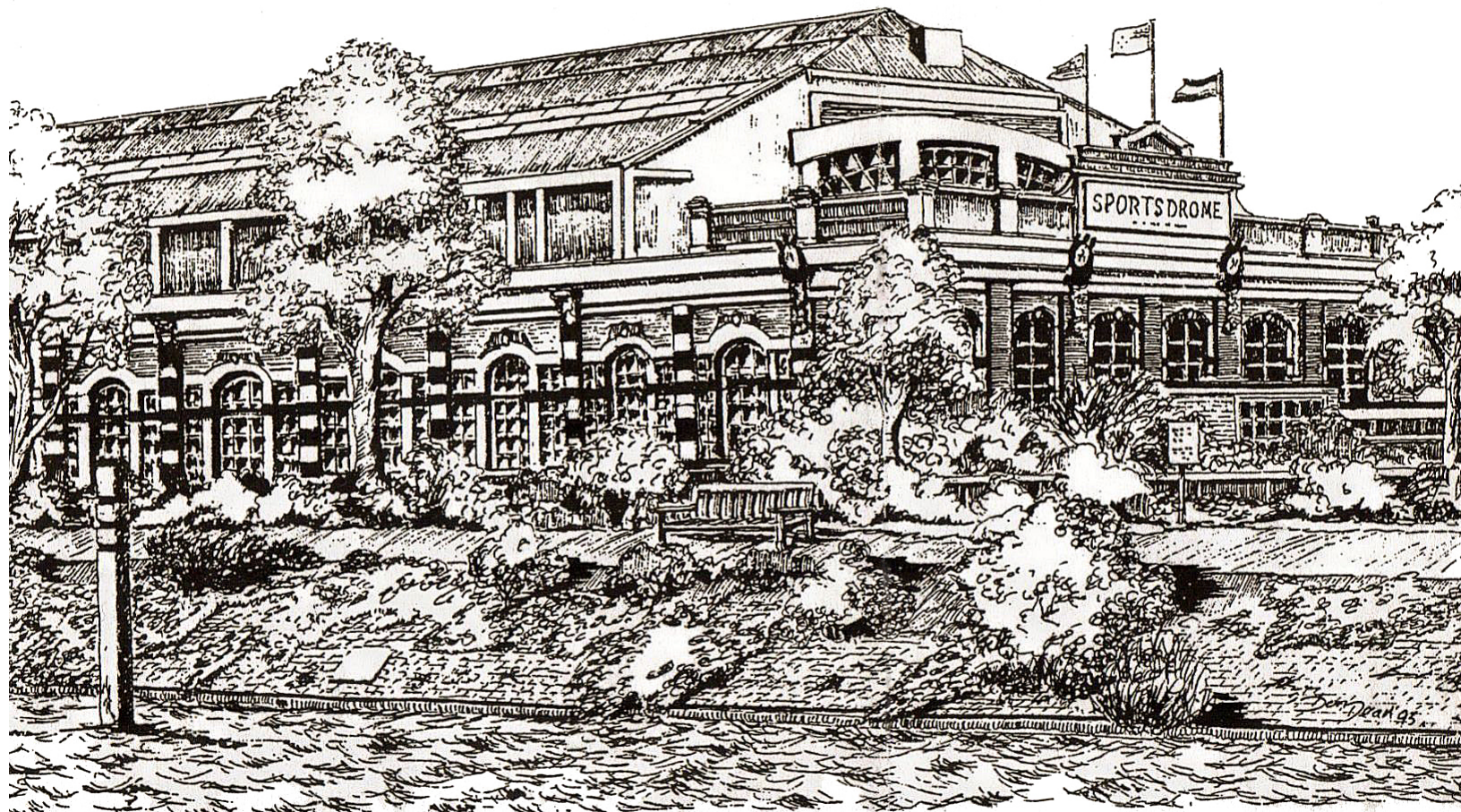
There was a smaller rink at the far end, called the Arosa, which could be hired for private parties and was used for individual lessons, but we hardly ever skated on that.

Instead of dashing off, we would hang about by the side of the rink to watch the men clearing the ice, driving a huge machine that took the top layer of ice off that had been cut up during the previous session, while other guys with enormous long brooms swept up the snow, all of which was tipped into a huge open tank at one side of the rink.

There was also a restaurant/café, and we became expert at walking about on skates off the ice as well, to spend time in the café or, if you were very daring, in the bar upstairs, from where you could watch the experts dancing on ice, or those privileged people who could afford private lessons.

There was also a balcony all round upstairs, with about four rows of seats, where you could watch all the activities on the ice below, but it was quite an art to walk up the stairs in skates, I can tell you!

A line drawing of the Sportsdrome by Dixie Dean



Sometimes we stayed on for the evening session as well, and on Tuesday evenings, we could watch the Curling before the later speed skating session, in which heroes, wearing black boots with very long blades, flew round the ice bent over, head down, arms swinging, and with their hands nearly touching the ice.

There were also boys in hockey skates – who were another attraction – who would speed round then stop quickly sideways, sending a shower of snow over any admiring female.

Saturdays were always a bit too crowded with children, as were Sundays, but there was a session for pairs skaters in the afternoon and the music was always good – and I can never listen to “The Young Ones” without reliving the feeling of speed and wind in my hair experienced whilst skating in time to the beat.

In the early days our fathers took it in turns to pick us up from the rink, but as we got older, we were allowed to make our own way home, or if you were lucky, be given a lift by one of the guys we were madly in love with at the time.

There was a unique smell and atmosphere at the rink – a combination of the constant wet floors and the crisp dampness of the wiry rough matting; coupled with the grace and skill of dancers and excitement of speed, weaving amongst the slower skaters.

There was also a one way round system, which would change at half time sometimes, whilst the centre of the rink was reserved for those doing complicated figures. There were breaks during some sessions when only dancers skated for about a quarter of an hour.

There was also a shop in the foyer, where you could buy skates, boots and outfits, or leave your skates to be sharpened to achieve the essential edges. Swing-doors took you into the cold atmosphere of the huge ice rink.

At the beginning of a session, the ice would be smooth and glistening, just like glass, but much more slippery – and you could see the edges and lines made by the sharp blades, like the figure eight. If you got there early you could also watch the professionals practising or teaching and many famous international champions came from this rink, who we were thrilled to meet. At the end of a session a voice over the microphone saying; “Clear the ice now please”... But we would keep going as long as we could because as the ice emptied of people, there was more space and we could go round faster. It felt good to be the last one on the ice.

And although it was not really allowed, sometimes we would hold hands in a long line and go round – the person on the inside not going very fast, but the one on the end of the line would really fly round trying not to crash into the barrier. In the winter we would also skate on the frozen ponds at Barnes or on Wimbledon Common.

After getting married and having a family, the ice rink was the only place I could go faster than my son, and going back as a ‘mature’ skater, the children were suitably impressed !

When the rink eventually closed, I tried the Silver Blades rink at Streatham and Queens at Bayswater but they had a different atmosphere and there was nothing like the rink by the river at Richmond.

Sandra Whiting

HOW CAN SOMETHING DEAD REMAIN SO ALIVE?

In the 1980's Richmond Ice Rink was the place for my friends and I to meet, we've all got so many amazing memories of the Rink. Just like it was for the generations that had come before us, Richmond Ice Rink wasn't just about the skating, or ice hockey – it was the centre of our social lives – a real Rite of Passage for so many people.

When I first started the Memories of Richmond Ice Rink Facebook group a couple of years ago, we had no idea how many people would come out of the woodwork, but the comments and memories have been overwhelming, which proves that, despite being dead for over 20 years, the Rink still remains alive in the hearts and minds of thousands of people.

The reunions we have had to date have been wonderful – with some people flying in from as far away as New York to reminisce and see some 'old faces' – so, the return of an ice rink to Twickenham this winter will be a very special moment for us all.



In our heart of hearts, we are all hoping the groundswell that will come from these successful temporary rinks will grow and, over the next few years, some real momentum will build, which could lead to a permanent return for Richmond Ice Rink. A place where future generations can have as much fun, and share as much love, as we did.

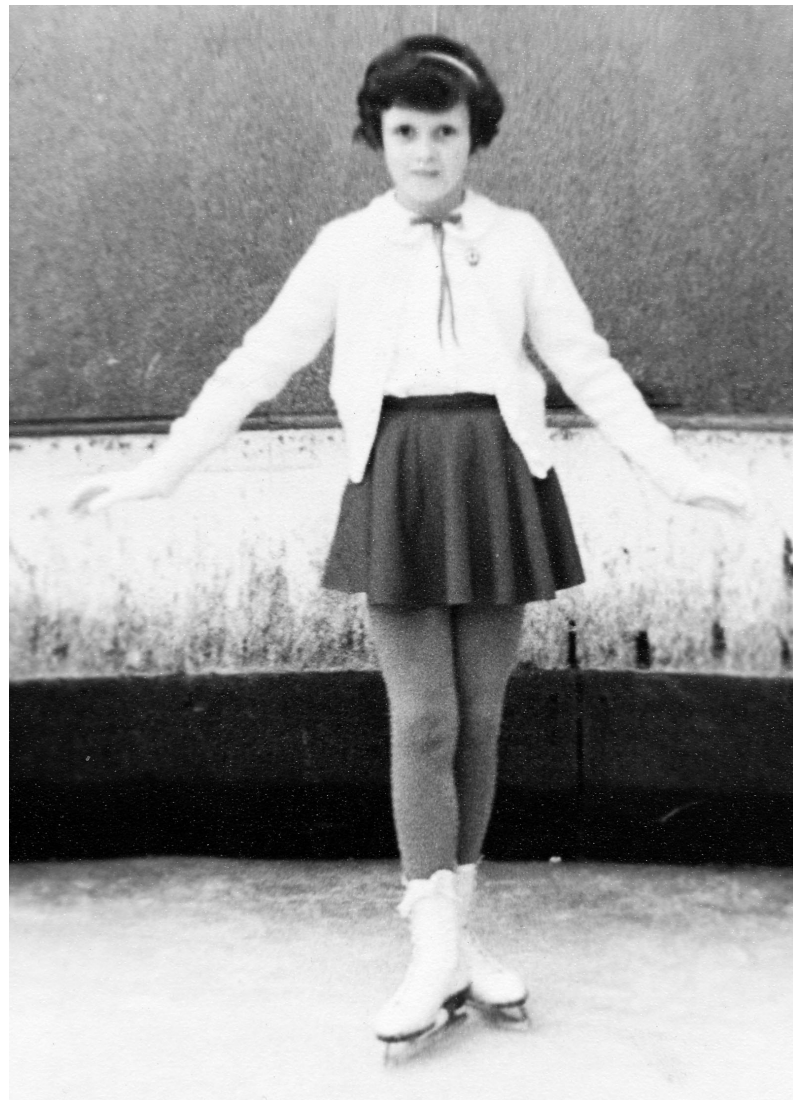
Gary Gibbs *[pictured above, far right]*

KNOCKING OFF MY ROUGH EDGES

My parents met at Richmond Ice Rink in 1940, shortly before my dad was called up into the Navy. Probably for romantic reasons, they took me to start lessons when I was six, in 1954 or 1955, and my first instructress was a lovely young woman called Joan Tomlinson. She really got me started and, as I progressed, I moved on to have lessons with Betty Callaway. Lessons were 7s and 6d or 8s and 6d for twenty minutes. Betty was keen for me to learn to dance and do pair skating, and although I had a few boy partners, I kept outgrowing them.

My real interest was free skating and my heroine was Sjoukje Dijkstra, who was a pupil of Arnold Gerschwiler, who picked out a few young hopefuls to attend a Saturday morning class held in the Arosa Rink – I was lucky enough to be chosen for this.

We could not afford private lessons with Mr. Gerschwiler, so it was suggested I should take tuition from Joyce Boswell (10s and 6d for 20 mins). She was a tiny, dainty lady with piled up blonde hair whose mission was to knock off my rough edges. I was told that I must not land from jumps with my fists clenched and I must not thunder around the rink like a baby





Linda during lessons at Richmond Ice Rink (pictured left & above) and in competition (next page)

elephant, and many hours of 'dry land' lessons in a small ball-room off the balcony of the Arosa Rink ensued.

She certainly refined my style and helped increase my marks for Manner Of Performance. Although Content of Programme was never really a problem as I loved hurling myself into Double Axels, Leutzes, and Triple Salcos etc.

As a ten-to-twelve year old, whilst at junior school, I would take the early morning 'workman's' bus from Hounslow Garage and do a couple of hours in the rink before catching the bus back and walking to school. During school holidays I spent all day there, as did many others, many of whom had tutors and did not go to school.

In 1960 I gained a Middlesex Scholarship to The Lady Eleanor Holles School in Hampton, who unfortunately disapproved of my extra-curricular obsession, but I kept skating regardless. I would take my homework on the trolley bus to the rink and did my best in the upstairs café while the ice was being scraped and sprayed, ready for our figures practice.

My parents would materialise to watch me sometimes and I remember mum was always knitting woollen skating tights on four needles, so I could only ever see the top of her head above the barrier, but Dad watched intently. Later we took the bus home together

By the time I was 14 or so the academic pressure from school became overpowering, and I had to give it up and concentrate on being an athlete to represent the school instead, which was a real shame... but as my dad said at the time, "That's show-biz!"



*Ice Hockey
players after
a game at
Richmond
Rink in the
early Fifties*

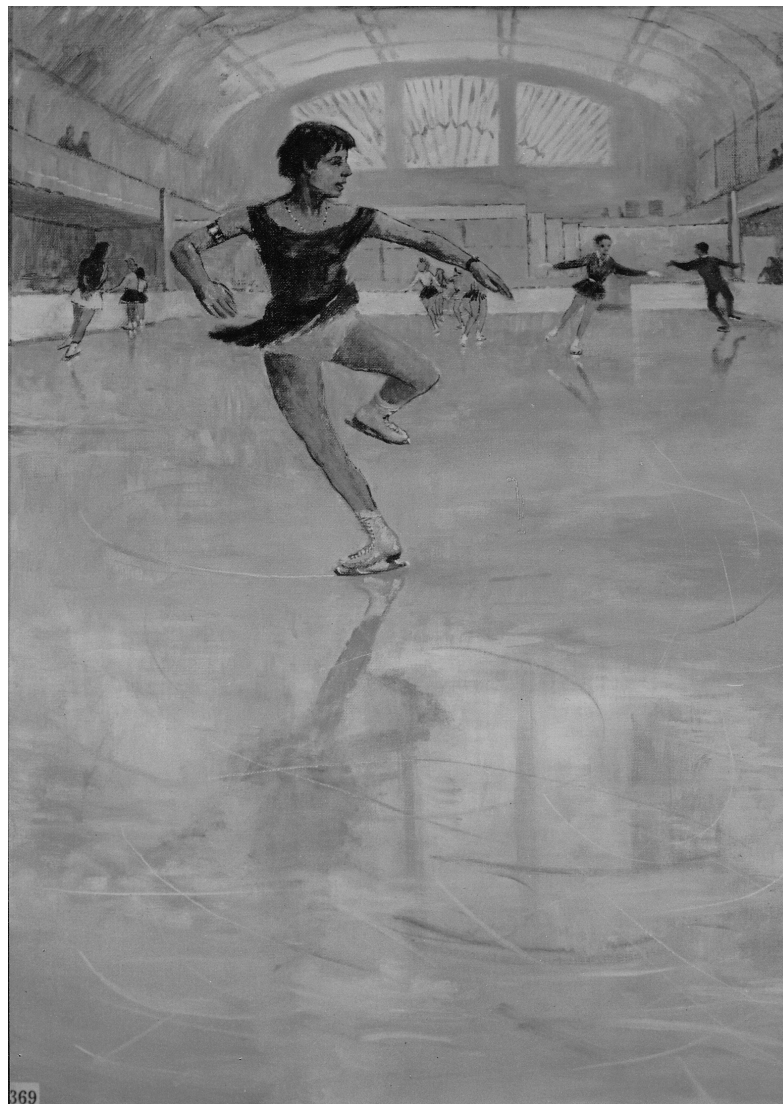


KINGS, QUEENS AND MAHARAJAS

When my mother ceased to be a professional teacher of ice skating in March 1948, just one month before I was born, she still went to the Rink at Richmond virtually every day. I don't think that she ever had to pay to dance with the professional male instructors, because she was considered to be one of the finest ice dancers and teachers in England – they were pleased to dance with her and improve their own technique. One of those gentlemen was Roy Callaway, the husband of Betty, who taught Torvill and Dean.

For several years my mother had been the professional skater at the Villars Palace Hotel in St Moritz with Melitta Bruner, who had fled to England when the Nazis took over Austria and after her husband, Paul Krackoff, was killed at the Dachau concentration camp.

She gave her job to my mother because she, Melitta, was at that time the mistress of Hubert Martinau, who was a multi millionaire. He had once been one of the owners of Richmond Rink, and like the Maharaja and Maharani of Baroda, had a whole suite in the Palace Hotel in 1946 where he lived with





Melitta. My mother actually taught the present Maharaja of Baroda to skate when he was a four-year-old.

Because of his role as the manager of the NSA speed team my father was given a month's leave of unpaid absence by the Ministry of Education, which was responsible for running the Science Museum. My mother's best English friend, Pat Wood Salmon, once commented that Gwen King's list of clients read like Debretts.

Before my mother returned to full-time employment she and her friends held court with Pat at the Cadena Coffee House in Richmond. She was also the treasurer of the Twickenham Conservative Party Ladies' committee, which convened at 16 Richmond Bridge Mansions.

I also remember a rather snobbish neighbour of ours at Richmond Bridge Mansions once commentating to Pat Mullins, née Wood Salmon, whose son, like the woman in question and myself, went to the Mall School: "Mrs Mullins, what drawer does that Mrs King come from?" She replied: "Very high". "And what does she do?"... "She is a retired figure skater". Mrs X.: "Oh really". Pat replied "Yes, and what is more, two of her young pupils in the 1930's were a certain Elizabeth and Margaret Rose Windsor". This was when she was at the Grosvenor House Hotel ice rink in Park Lane.

After that she always invited us to have coffee at Töbler's coffee shop in Twickenham on the way back home after the Carol service at the Mall.

David King

Gwen Evans-King pictured, drawing by Dennis Gilbert

LOST WITHOUT THE RINK

I skated on a regular weekly basis at Richmond from 1969 until the closure in 1992. For me, my heyday at the rink was the mid-Seventies, between 1973 and 1978. I would, along with lots of regulars, and the fondly remembered little group I was part of, skated Tuesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings – plus some weekend afternoons. I also used to ice-steward at weekends during the day, which allowed me free entry for the evening session.

I remember Mr Ron Linton playing the organ on the stage, which slowly gave way to disco nights around 1977, but initially was just a brief session on Tuesday nights between 8:30-10:00, after the Curling. It was a bit of a mayhem session, mainly because it was short, and also (although there were some hired/figure skates) full of hockey-skate-clad hoodlums, like me!

Richmond closed for a while in 1975 to re-furbish the blocked pipes under the ice, meaning the normal little group of us (Neil Davis, Mark 'Taffy' Jones, Alan Jarvis, Richard Johnson, Tony Critchet, Sue and Ann Carlsen, Ian Algate, Joe Nash and myself) met outside the rink to figure out what to do. We'd started going to Streatham, but wondered about doing something different. We chatted a while and someone mentioned a rink in Guildford. I said I hadn't heard of it, but somebody insisted it was there.

So we set off, squeezed into three cars, and after a 30 minute drive, we had arrived and parked at the top of the High Street, before asking the first person to walk by where the ice rink was. They obviously didn't know us from Adam, or where we'd come from, just that we were asking about an ice rink – they calmly replied; "There isn't one in Guildford, the nearest one is in Richmond." Another bit of proof of how famous 'The Rink' was we thought!

The long, dry summer of 1976 caused other problems at the Rink, because the ice pad ended up with a thin layer of water over most of it – but on the right hand side, the water could be up to two inches deep – and my friends and I found this great fun.

As Ron Linton started to up the tempo of the music towards the end of the public speed session, which was normally at 9pm, when the public all got off, it prompted my friends and I to form a chain and follow one another around the rink.

Then, as the music finished, we'd all come round behind each other, and when we got to the halfway point, where the deep water started, we all sat down, legs open, and slid to the corner through all the water, ending up in a big heap of very, very wet bodies... but as it was the heatwave of 1976, within 20 minutes we were all dry again.

The picture here is of me on the floor, outside skate hire, opposite the bar, which was taken after another great night's skating... and before a little refreshment!

Dennis Clifton (right) pictured after a Richmond session





MARRIED AT THE RINK

My husband Paul and I met at the Rink in 1964. He was a friend of my younger brother, Maurice, who also skated at the rink. We then started ice dancing together and joined the Richmond Ice Dance Club, which we attended four times a week.

At that time I was also a member of the Civil Service Skating Club and had the pleasure each week of a one-hour session at Richmond on a Wednesday evening from 6pm to 7pm. This was before the general public were allowed into the Rink.

I had lessons with two teachers, Colin Kearney and later with Michael Birtwistle – Paul had lessons with Alison Smith and the late, great Betty Callaway. Then, on 7th May 1966, at the May Dance held in the Arosa Rooms, we got engaged – our wedding taking place on 30th March 1968 – with the reception celebrations in the Churchill Suite at the Rink. Really, where else could it have been?

Our best man, Ted Mills and his wife Jackie, were also members of the Dance Club. They had married on 27th March 1968 and delayed their honeymoon to be at our wedding. I remember that all of our Dance Club friends came upstairs, off the ice, to give their congratulations. They tried to persuade us to put on our skates and join them on the ice, but with a long train and veil on my dress, I wasn't going to take a chance.

We continued to skate until our first child, Andrew, was born in 1971, followed by Victoria in 1973 and David in 1974. This year we are celebrating our 45th Wedding Anniversary. The Rink was such a big part of our life, and we hold many very happy memories of it – we were so sad when it closed and it remains greatly missed.

Helen Strutton *pictured left and above with Paul*



CONDENSATION AND TOBACCO SMOKE

I am the eldest of three boys and I can remember from quite a young age being taken by my mother to Richmond Ice Rink – I guess I was aged about ten at the time with my brothers David seven and Simon five respectively – and we travelled from our family home in Englefield Green.

I cannot recall much about where we parked, or even walking there, but once inside, it was always a real buzz and a very busy and crowded place. After my mother had paid, I remember the first vital thing was to get our hired boots; none of us ever had our own skates.

The "boot room" was manned by a couple of old men, both of whom were dour and aggressive. They would demand your shoe size (half sizes were ignored), then, after handing over our shoes, we would retreat to attempt the difficult task of putting our skates on and tying all the laces up. Our Dad later told us he went skating to meet girls by offering to tie the laces up, but we were too young to get involved in any of that!

But I remember we had to take care that another kid or adult did not stagger by on the rutted, scarred old lino and accidentally walk or step onto your feet!

I will always recall taking those first, tentative steps onto the ice and invariably falling over; I would then go back to the edge, hug-

ging the perimeter with my hands, before attempting another go. It was like so many sporting activities – trial and error – but it was good fun when you could get going and we all managed to skate a few laps in the end. To begin with, 'stopping' involved heading for the edge then grabbing the wooden rail of the perimeter edge and hoping like mad not to fall over again.

Luckily I don't recall any of us causing any injury to ourselves, or anyone else, but that was a miracle!

There always seemed to be a dirge of music being played, which was on a tape I suspect that just repeated, and now and again, there would be intervals when glamorous young ladies and athletic slim guys would have sole use of the rink to practice and show us all how to do ice dancing. None of that held much interest for me, except to admire the girls' figures, especially their lovely legs, which were encased in fabulous bright colours and short skirts!

After the excitement of the skating we would have a hot drink in the rink's café, which was always steamy from condensation and full of tobacco smoke. But it felt good to get the skates off and rest my ankles, which seemed to lean inwards due, in part, to the lack of support from the old hired skates.

Richard Buxton



ICE STEPPING . . . a difficult stunt by eleven-year-old Hanna Niernberger (right) and Melitta Brunner, practising at Twickenham. Both skaters come from Vienna.

NEW SPORTSDROME

Although the Mayor of Twickenham will perform the opening ceremony for the new sportsdrome at Richmond on Saturday night, the arena, which has been constructed at a cost of £75,000, will be open for public skating from 10 a.m. on that day.

The ice surface, which measures 215ft. by 85ft., holds 2,000 skaters.

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TAXI HOOTERS AND ALL THAT JAZZ

In 1958 we would skate at Richmond three times a week: Tuesdays, Fridays and Sundays. A crowd of us would cycle from Whitton and Hounslow singing the latest pop songs on the way (Volare by Domenico Modugno or Dean Martin still springs to mind). Tuesday nights were disco nights and, on other nights, there was Victor Sylvester type ballroom music.

At around 9pm on Friday nights half the skaters would clear from the ice and could be found up in the bar watching Hancock's Half Hour. On a few occasions I smuggled in an old taxi hooter, and we would skate up behind unsuspecting girls and give a loud blast to 'help them on their way' around.

In later years we went on our motorbikes and would stop off at the San Souci coffee bar in Richmond Road, Twickenham. I was foolish enough one night to leave my hockey boots tied on the back of my Triumph Tiger Cub and, of course, they had gone when I came out.



My friend's father sold me his old pair, which I kept until 2006 when I discovered them in the loft looking very sorry for themselves. Even then it was hard to throw them away with all the memories they conjured up. In the 1960s there were some good Modern Jazz Nights at the Arosa Rink. Happy days.

Malc Lane

(Pictured above) Dave Vinall, Derek Dunn, Geoff Adderly, Stuart Jones, Cynthia Goodyer, Bill 'Toby' Taylor and two girls from the Rink whose names are long forgotten.

THE HEART OF A PROUD, OLD TREASURE

When I first saw the promotional postcards requesting memories and contributions celebrating 'the Sportsdrome', to give Richmond Ice Rink its other name, the following words jumped out and resonated with me immediately... "and buried in the foundations of the apartments that stand in the Rink's place, beats the heart of a proud, old local treasure..." They struck a chord, and this poignant tale sprang to my mind.

Sadly, back in 1994, one of my fellow Aldwych Speed Club skaters, Mark Woodman, died whilst watching his son compete at Bradford Ice Rink, he was aged just 63.

Mark loved skating and had always said to his wife, and others that, when he died, he would like his ashes to be spread at Richmond Ice Rink because of his long association with, and his love for, the building and its Rink.

But there was a problem when Mark suddenly passed away – the Rink had been closed at the end of 1992 and work was already under way in preparation for building the apartments.



1956: Mark Woodman (bottom right) at Richmond Ice Rink





However, with the help of another old Aldwych member, Ralph Lythgoe, Mark's widow was still able to arrange for Mark's ashes to be taken to the building site where they managed to obtain permission to scatter the ashes on the area that was previously the footprint of the Ice Rink – thus Mark Woodman's wishes were carried out.

It was easy to see why Mark's connection for the Richmond Rink was so strong, because so many of us still feel the same way over 20 years after the place closed – myself included – and my 'home' Rink was Streatham.

There was a shared, tangible sense of belonging within 'The Best Loved Ice Rink in the World'... So much so that even after two decades' residence at Guildford Ice Rink, the older ASC members that are still around don't feel anywhere near the same affinity with the buildings as we did with the Sportsdrome.

Chris Nelson

*(Above) June 1961: A Sunday morning training session at Richmond
(Left) an Aldwych Speed Club badge (from Gerry Swan)*

WE HAD TO EARN OUR WINGS

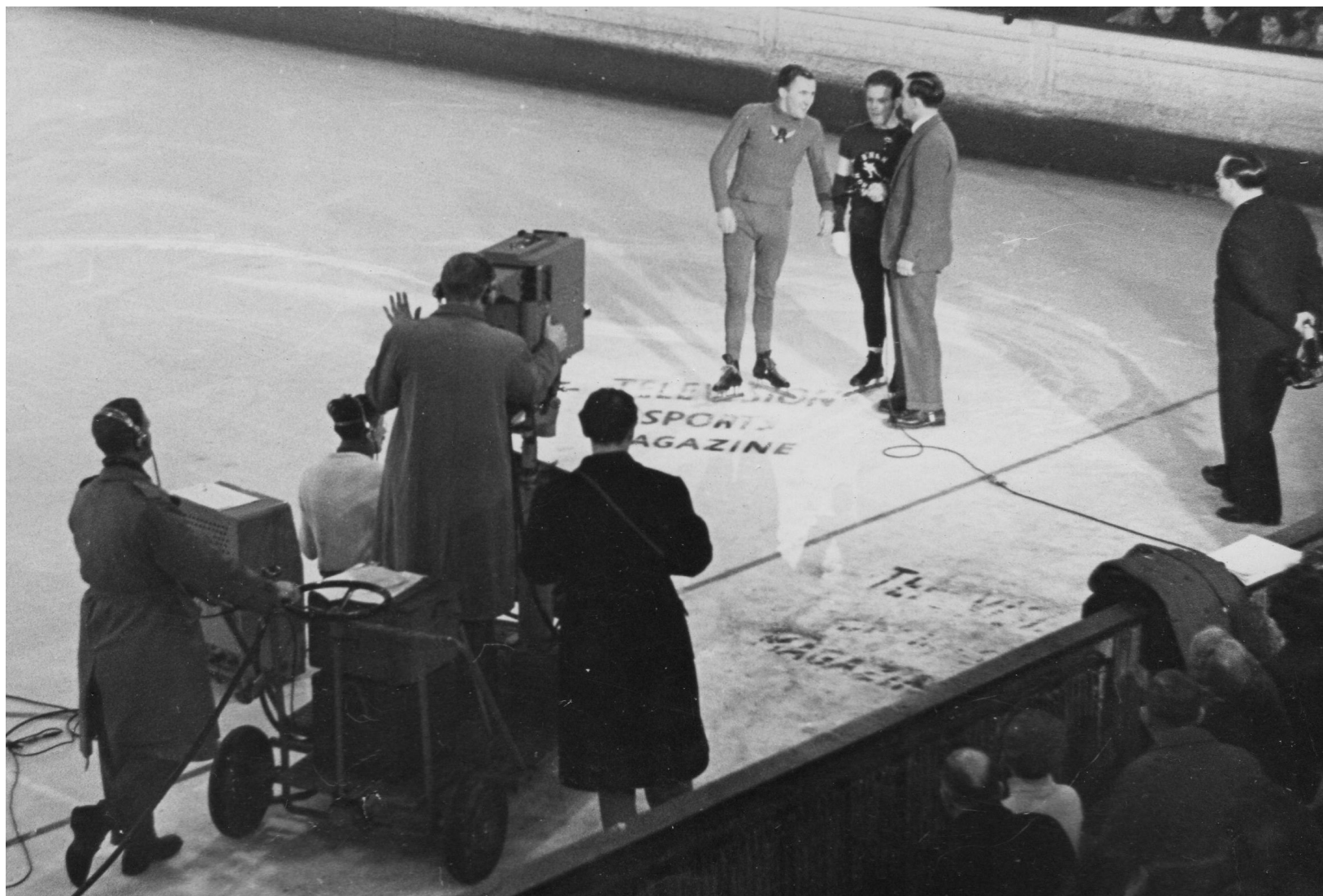
I joined the Aldwych speed club in 1941 after being spotted by John McCartney on a Saturday night general session at Richmond. I went along to the Sunday 6 am training session with Bruce Peppin, Harry Brettel and Bill Copeland and have remained a member ever since.

The rink manager was Mr Hopkins (Hoppy) – a life long friend ever since, also Ron Alpe, and the floor manager, Les Saltry, who had many strong words with the Aldwych members when he spotted us speeding on the general sessions!

I met Betty at Richmond Ice Rink and we married in 1947, while I was doing my National service. I hitchhiked down from Catterick on the Friday night, and following the wedding reception in the afternoon, it was off to Richmond to race. Unfortunately I only came 4th that weekend, but I later went on to win five British Championships.

During the wedding evening Betty and I had to get on the ice to skate around for the supporters and fans. It was certainly a day to remember and we still see many of our old friends to this day.









(Previous pages left) L-R: Henry Howes, Roy Welham, Gordon Blackman and Teddy Fox

(Previous pages right) Roy Welham being interviewed the BBC in 1950

(Above) L-R: J Hearn, C Johnson, R Welham, J Dymock, T Hunt, T Tweddle (Trainer), J Cosstick

(Left) The Aldwych Speed Club in action

The Sportsdrome at Richmond was our second home, and skating with an air raid going on was something of an experience I can tell you – with shrapnel coming through the roof at times!

Several big bands played at the Sportsdrome on a Saturday night, including the National Fire Service and the American Forces Band with all the top musicians. Over the years the rink put on many Galas with many top figure skaters taking part.

The Aldwych also hosted many championships, with speed skaters from all over the country and from further afield (such as Belgium & Canada) competing. In the three mile relay events for example – the Aldwych Cup and Sportsdrome Trophy – up to 24 teams took part. The funds for these trophies were collected by going round the crowds for donations.

After the Second World War some of our skaters, including myself, went to Norway to train for the Winter Olympics.

The Aldwych Wings, which we proudly wore on our jerseys, had to be earned at one time by racing a mile in 3 minutes 8 seconds or less – the supporters club also had 'wings' to wear.

It was a sad day when the Sportsdrome closed down with all its wonderful memories and its uniqueness of having a second rink (the Arosa) behind the main rink. I miss it to this day

Roy Welham

A FINE AROSA RINK ROMANCE

In the 1950s I lived in Osterley and, on Saturdays, I used to go with a group of girl friends to Richmond Rink – I was not good at skating, but we had a good time, even considering the blisters I got from wearing the hired boots.

Then, in 1960, I started work at Permutit, a water treatment firm situated under the Chiswick flyover – I was an office junior in the Buying Department, but the girls also worked for the 50 or so men in the Drawing Office. There was one good looking draughtman that caught my attention, he had lovely blue eyes, but each time I entered the office, I went bright red.

One evening the company decided to hire the Arosa rink at Richmond for a social event and this particular fellow was also going. I remember it was February, and because the weather was bad, he wasn't sure if he could get back home to Carshalton Beeches afterwards, so I also asked another man if he was going (safety in numbers)...



Anyway the original one was able to go, so I pretended that I couldn't skate in order for him to hold me up all evening... But there was no passion in those days, just a quick peck, then back on the train home.

But he did eventually ask me out, and although we never went skating again, we spent most of our courting days in Richmond before getting married in 1966 – and we are still together 48 years later!

Brenda Kelly

*Wendy Clay (née Mills) at
Richmond circa 1960*



SKATING TO THE VERY TOP

I have many happy memories of Richmond Ice Rink during my career. I first went down to Richmond in 1946 for the first British Junior Championships after the war and I was pleasantly surprised to finish in 4th place. As I did not have a trainer at my home rink in Liverpool, my father allowed me to train in Richmond with Arnold Gerschwiler.

When I came to train with Arnold, I was a Silver standard Figure and Dance medallist, so he coached me for my Gold standard and, when he thought I was ready, told me to put my papers in. But, to our surprise, that coincided with the NSA adding an Inter Gold test between Silver and Gold. After all my hard work I had to start again and learn the new figures, which had not been seen in tests before – this obviously meant that my Gold test was delayed for another season, but due to Arnold's expert tuition, I passed both.

Arnold also thought it would be a good idea for me to try pairs skating and partnered me with his nephew, Hans, who was also training at Richmond at the time, for both pairs and dance. This pleased me very much as I had been pairs skating in Liverpool too – we were first entered for the Simlan Cup, which we won. Afterwards, Hans went on to become Swiss,

European and World Champion, whilst I won the British Junior Ladies Championships in 1947 and competed at international level.

Another happy experience at Richmond was to be filmed for the Pathé Pictorial in the Arosa Rink, and to then go upstairs in the Arosa Room to be filmed learning golf techniques from a trainer there at the time.

A few years later an injury ended my competitive skating career, but I was offered a teaching position at my home rink in Liverpool, which I enjoyed for some years until my marriage.

Years later, when my family were older, the Liverpool club asked me if I could get back my amateur status so I could help them. During my time assisting the club I was invited to join the NSA Figure committee, and later, the Dance committee, before applying to the ISU for permission to be added to the judging panel. This was duly agreed and, once again, I found myself back at Richmond, this time as a judge and regularly met up with many of my old friends there.

Later, the ISU allowed me to take the International judging tests and I became the first re-instated skater in the UK to do so, a fact I am very proud of.

My first International competition as a judge was at the St Ivel International at Richmond – it was certainly a competition to remember – as I judged the dance that was won by Jayne Torvill and Christopher Dean. I had so many wonderful times at Richmond both as a skater and a judge.

Joan Noble (Lister)

*(Right) Joan, whilst competing in
the 1949 European Championships
in Milan.*



DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE MISSING

On or about 5th July 1951, a tall skinny bloke asked me to skate with him, so I did. Next Thursday, 17th April 2014, we will be celebrating our Diamond wedding anniversary. How time flies!

Most of our courting was done at 'The Rink' - Dick and his best mate Mike Chater were very good skaters and both played hockey for the Richmond Raiders. They would stay on after the sessions to help clean the ice - this way they got in free next time.

Part-way through the session we had to stop for the dancers, then the speed skaters to have their few minutes - then we had to skate in the opposite direction.

We moved from Surrey to Lancashire 18 months ago, and lo and behold found Dick's old ProLite hockey skates - I think that's what they were called.

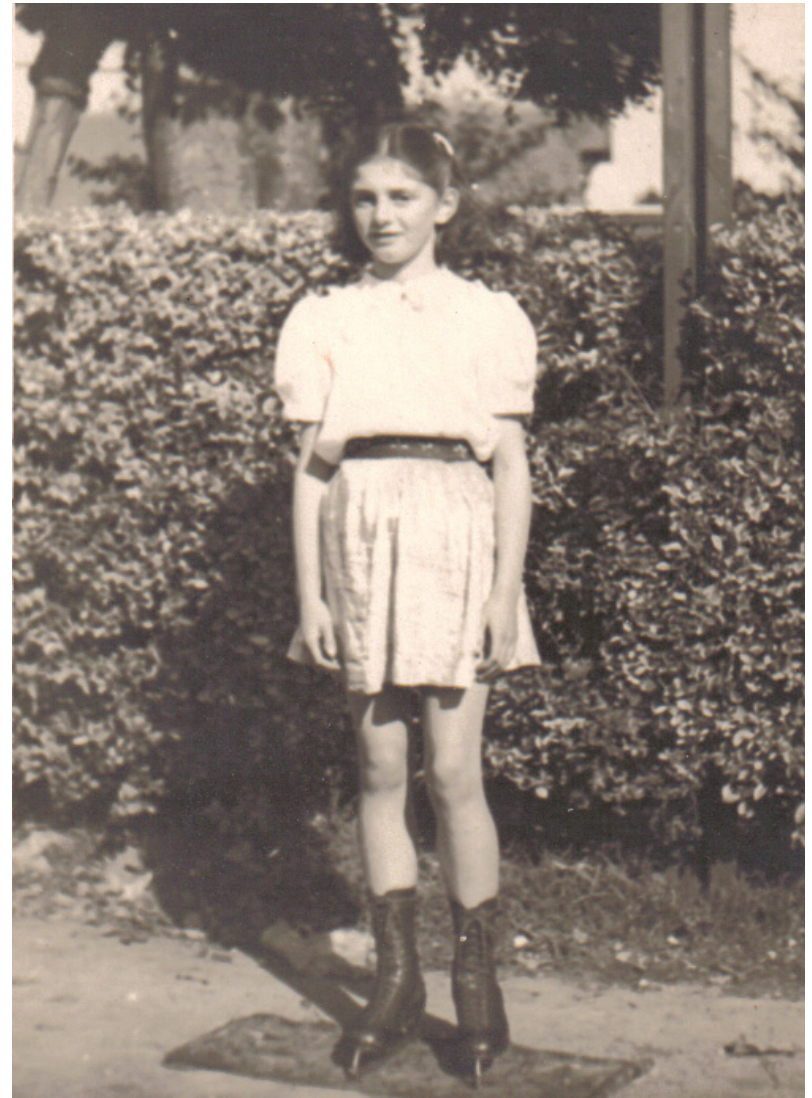


(Left) Dick Thompson, about 17 years old, in his hockey kit at Richmond. (Right) Gladys, proudly showing off her new skates. Photos supplied by Keith Thompson.

In 1978 Dick's job took us, with our two sons, to Colorado Springs, so we skated at Memorial Park Ice Centre. Our younger son (now 53) remains in America and still plays hockey in an over-50s league - no checking allowed!

The young people today don't know what they are missing if they can't get to a rink. I know we had a great time and have fond memories.

Gladys Thompson



CAPTURING MOMENTS IN TIME

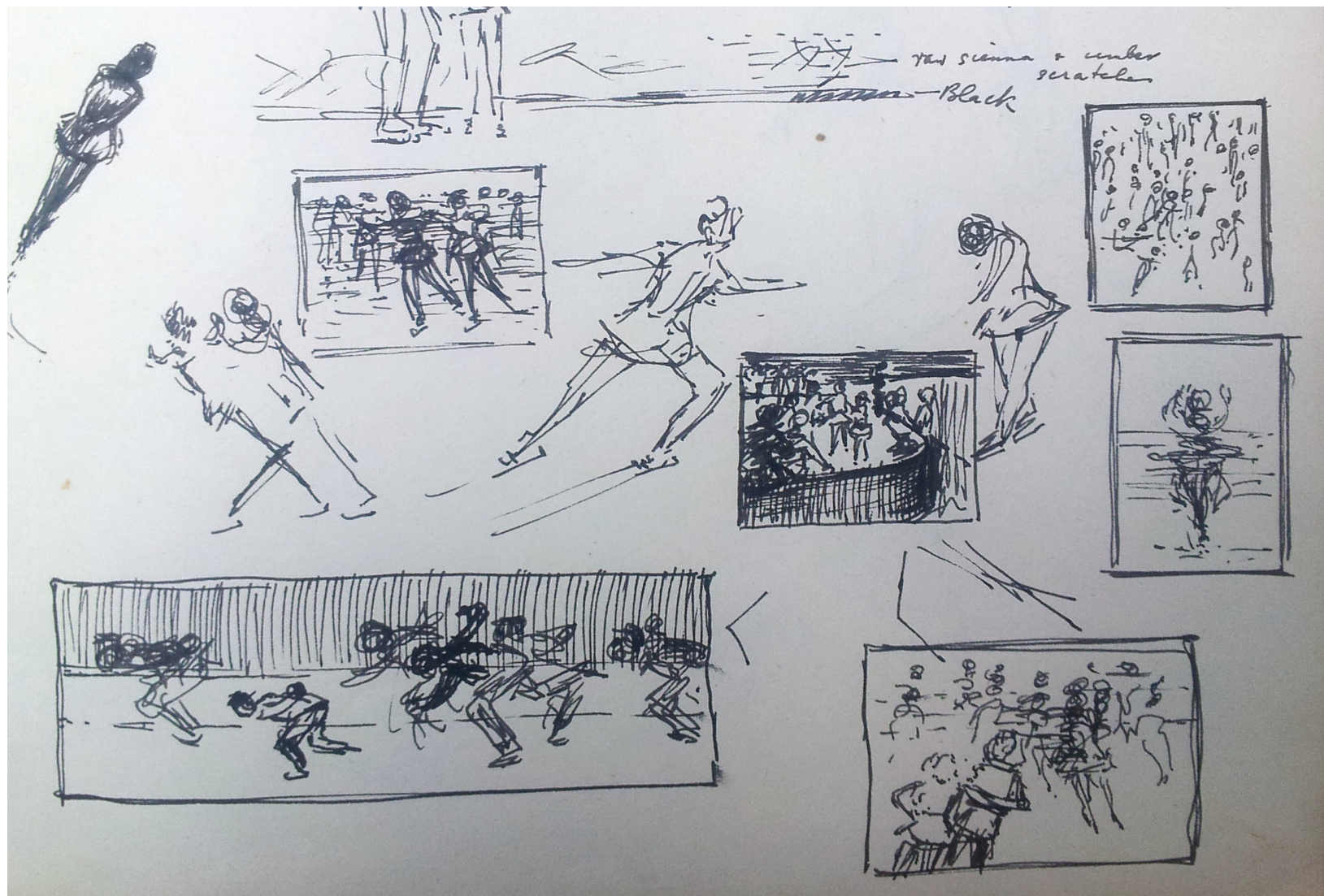
As a young portrait and landscape artist I used to do a lot of painting along the Thames and, as I sauntered along the Thames, I remember coming across the ice rink – I became fascinated by all these beautiful girls swirling around. I asked permission to draw them and, for around 18 months, I went to the rink twice a week and spent two or three hours drawing before shivering all the way home in my overcoat – it took at least two hours to thaw out.

I never went on the ice myself, but was mesmerised and fascinated, watching skaters going round at speed – I was a young man at the time (I am now in my 90s) and was teaching part time at Chelsea School of Art, but I had two or three days per week when I would saunter out to painting out of doors or wherever I chose.

I recall that quite often the skating mums, who were a terrible lot actually, would ask me to paint their 'little treasures' and the girls would skate round several times while I would try to sketch them in Degas fashion as quickly as I could – although they were usually quite delighted by the result.



Some of the mothers were very pushy and I recall one little girl, who had been flopping around the ice for some time and was obviously not enjoying it, being shouted at to "get on the ice and work!" It was clearly a serious business for her mother as the poor little girl was in tears, but she got back on the ice and did as she was told. But there were also some very fine skaters there too as well as a very good German instructor.







The manager was Mr Hopkins, who I found was very helpful – in fact, I have an idea that he was the one who originally bought my big picture – but how it got to American, goodness knows.

I was recently contacted via email about one large picture of the rink I drew that included two hundred people on the ice – the sender had bought the picture in a gallery in the States and had it hanging above their mantelpiece. I would love to get it back, however I do have some photographs.

Dennis Gilbert

OUR PIVOTAL YEARS AT THE RINK

I spent every weekend of my early teenage years at Richmond Ice rink and have many fond memories of my time there. We used to fantasise about the 'naughty boys' – the Rockers with long hair who rode motorbikes and wore leathers. There were also some Mods in their parkers and who rode mopeds... but we weren't attracted to them.

I went there with my two best friends from school, Sarah and Deborah, every Saturday afternoon and spent many a happy hour whizzing round in circles chatting and looking at boys. We used to take it in turns to go back to each-other's houses for tea, watch The Monkeys on television and often stayed the night.

I remember I worshiped my beloved white ice skates and used to clean them diligently and get the blades sharpened. Gosh, they bring back many memories - I remember how much I loved even the orange plastic covers that went over my blades to protect them. Carrying them outside was like a badge of honour as we were the 'real' skaters.

I kept them for some years and were caked in shoe whitener, but they were eventually thrown out when I realised I wouldn't be wearing them anymore. I think I gave them to the skate shop that we used to use to get the blades sharpened.

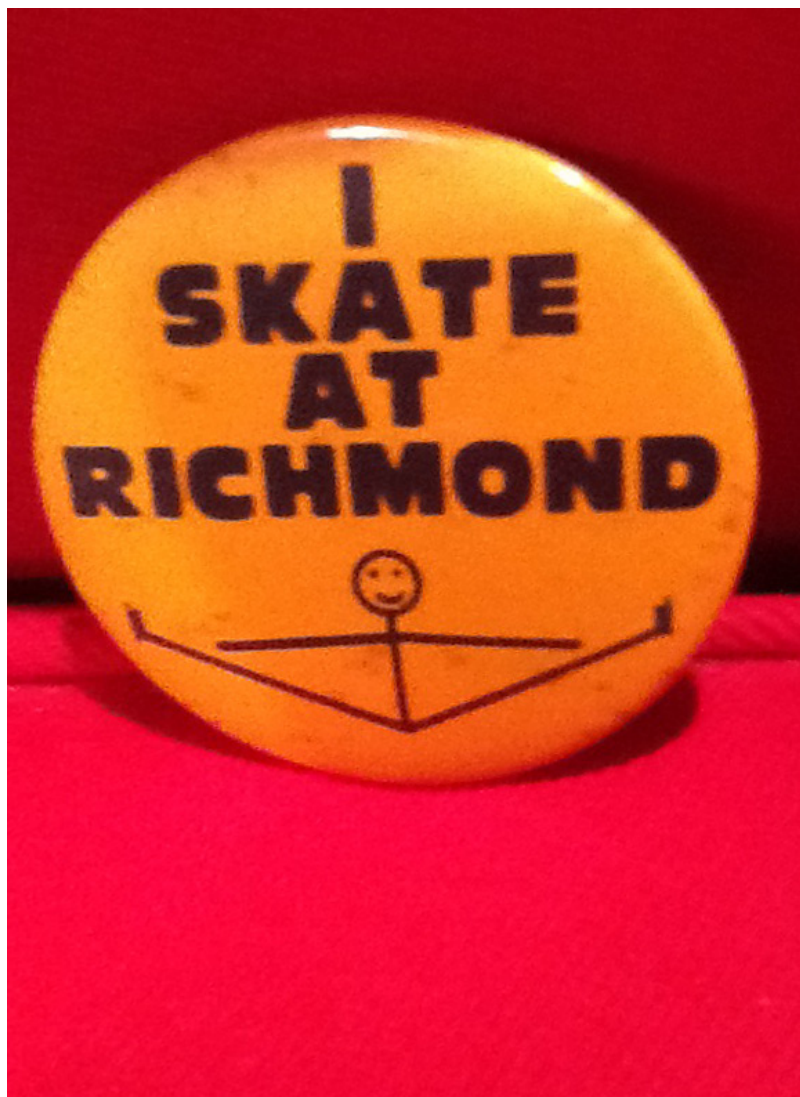
We used to look down on those who had to hire those awful brown skates and, even worse, those who wore stabilisers. As in many situations, there was a hierarchy, and we felt superior because we could all skate proficiently because we'd had lessons in the past.

We used to laugh at the "newbies" who clung to the edges and fell over a lot. We used to watch them whizzing uncontrollably towards the edge, banging loudly into the barrier and falling over.

There was a small rink at the back of the main one that was reserved for private lessons, and I remember watching some of the more serious skaters practising their moves in there and being so impressed at their proficiency. Most of the girls also wore lovely little frilly dresses.

Has anyone else mentioned the shabby cafe that was there - it was a real dive, very run down and not much on offer – although we always had a hot chocolate and, if the boys came in, we'd sit and look at them, and giggle.

We were very young private school teenagers, so we would have been terrified if any of those boys had ever approached us... which they didn't! Funnily enough, I have a memory of returning a few years later and the Rocker I'd always had my eye on noticed me, but by then I wasn't at all interested!



I look back at those halcyon days with enormous affection. We spent every afternoon at the weekends, and many days in school holidays, at the rink – it was a huge focal point for us, as well as keeping us really fit, even if we did eat sweets there. We were occupied. It also bonded us together as we all shared such a passion for the place.

In time, I used to take my children there when they were small, so I felt it was a huge tragedy when the Rink was demolished and the Council reneged on their promise to rebuild it. I do feel it would have kept many young people off the streets and out of trouble.

Also, as a small child living in St Margerets, I lived over the wall from Mr Gershweiler, and his family – he was the senior instructor at Richmond and I was terrified of him. Arnold Gershweiler, ruled with a rod of iron and I think his children were quite frightened of him too.

Their daughter had a wonderful Wendy house in her garden so I used to climb the brick wall at the bottom of our garden in St Margarets and we'd spend hours playing together, but I don't remember spending much time in the house.

I cannot emphasize enough how pivotal those years were for us as a trio of girls who spent so much time there and loved our time back at home lying on a bed talking about who we'd seen that day. Happy days!

Roz Kadir

MY FAMOUS MOTHER

My mother, Gillian Duncan, was born in Birmingham, but her parents moved to Richmond and lived in Paradise Road and she attended the Froebal School at Roehampton.

With the rink on her doorstep, her love of skating blossomed and she became a very accomplished dancer both on and off the ice – joining the Sadler's Wells ballet school, later, the theatre ballet, then becoming a member of the Royal Ballet Senior Company.

As a figure skater my mother won the international gold, and silver for her ice dancing as well as touring the country performing in many shows and on television. One of many highlights was being chosen as a supporting lead in a West End production.

My mother maintained a great love for the sport throughout her life, until she passed away in 1985 aged 60, but you can see from her wonderful photographs, she was a wonderful performer... Although I could never skate to a similar standard, her granddaughter, Stephanie, attended Elmhurst Ballet School in Camberley and trained in Dance too – so my mother did manage to pass on some of her talent.

Jacqui Kamio *three photos of Gillian Duncan*





POST ROUNDS AND TAXI TALES

In 1959, we moved from Burry Port in Carmarthenshire to Olympia in Kensington when my father was promoted at work, which made it a lot easier for my sister and I to visit our relations at Hill View Road in St Margarets.

It was during our visits that we went skating at the rink on Sunday afternoons, then back for afternoon tea, before returning home by train. I was so pleased with myself when I was able to go round the rink without holding on to the barrier.

Years later, I remember my sister helped save up to visit an aunt in Florida by getting a second job in the café at the ice rink, meaning that I always got a free cup of coffee and a slice of Dundee cake whenever I went skating. We then moved even closer to the Rink when my father was made redundant – Brook Road, St Margarets – which of course gave us a chance to skate more regularly.

I joined the Post Office as a postman/driver in 1962 and the main parcel delivery was in East Twickenham, which included the ice rink – I was also able to afford to buy my own boots and blades from the shop in Richmond Road called Sports Requirements. Of course, the shop is not there any longer, but it was on my post round.

Johnny Stewart

I moved to The Avenue in St Margarets with my father and brother from Los Angeles in 1964, after the death of my mother. Richmond Ice Rink was at the other end of Duck's Walk and my brother and I enjoyed many hours on the ice there.

Our father, a Wimbledon Station taxi driver for many years, once recounted to me a conversation he had had with one of his colleagues prior to WW2. The man was telling a group of drivers how he and his wife had been ice skating in Richmond the previous night.

My father pointed out to the man that was certainly not the case. The story-teller, sure of his facts, immediately challenged the old man and bet a bottle of fine whisky that it was true and that he could and would provide witnesses to prove it. Accepting the bet, dad asked his colleague which side of the river the rink was built on.

**Bob Hollingshead –
Geraldton Western Australia**

(Right) Former Olympic champion, Robin Cousins, helps out the youngsters at Richmond Rink



FIRST AID AND FUN AND GAMES

My mother Eileen Forrest (née Breach) (right) was born in 1928, but unfortunately died last August aged 86. She volunteered in the St John's Ambulance Brigade for over 50 years, and was awarded the Queens Order of St John for her work.

My mother met my father (Gilbert Forrest) at the ice rink in the 40s when she was on First Aid Duty and he rather fancied her in her uniform. He taught her to skate and these pictures of her must be from the late 40s or early 50s – they were married in 1948 when she was 20.

She was frequently on duty as a First Aider at the ice rink from the 1940s all the way through to the 1990s when the rink closed and, in the latter years of the 80s to 90s. She worked most Saturday afternoons at the rink as a member of the First Aid staff, then in the evening, as a St John's First Aider.





The late 1970s early 1980s photo here (left) show my mother in the Rink First Aid room, that was based in the Arosa Rink en route to the Plant Room, in her uniform with one of her colleagues from the Teddington Division and my best friend friend Maria Haynes (nee Cunningham), who is posing in her Charlie top, a perfume of the time, pretending to be a casualty!

The First Aid room was often quite busy and not without its occasional drama, especially in the evenings when people had been drinking and it got a bit out of hand - especially when the Streatham skaters came to Richmond.

Often one step ahead of the lads and their pranks mum wised up to their tricks of false injury, getting her own back one day with one particular hairy man who was wasting her time, so she treated him with sticky elastic bandage up his entire forearm and smiled at the stress that would cause taking it off!

I also recall a pre match training session on the Arosa Rink where they hadn't put the safety nets up and an iced puck was hit and narrowly missed my mother - I still have the puck to this day as millimetres lower it would likely have killed her.

My friends and I spent a lot of time lurking in the changing rooms between sessions - unless we got caught of course! One regular pastime was using the full length mirror and the soap as our graffiti wall - until caught and threatened with having to clean it.

As you can see, during the 80s, I also worked in the cash office, mainly at weekends and during the school holidays with my school friends (the two Marias, Fiona and Beverley), which was a riot and we got away with all sorts, including giving people we didn't like change in half penny pieces!





(Far Left) Eileen Forrest practising at Richmond Rink

(Middle) Diane lurking in the changing rooms

(Left) Diane working in the cash office

In the cash office we also manned the switch board, managed the "patch" bookings and general enquiries. We were all quick and efficient - so much so on several occasions we let too many into the rink for health and safety purposes as the General Manager wasn't used to such efficiency and, during one session, too much was put in the till too quickly. The entire thing jammed and had to be sent to the manufacturer for the day's takings to be released.

It could get a bit dangerous at times too – you will see the speaking grill on the cash window in the photo is missing, which was punched out by one person and the entire safety glass later cracked when somebody tried to reach through and grab!

Diane Forrest

NOT EVEN TORVILL AND DEAN COULD SAVE US

I learnt to skate at Richmond in 1966, and quickly realised that I wanted to be able to do more than just skate round and around. At that time there were a number of 'Dance Intervals' spread out through the skating week, and I decided that, instead of being ushered off the ice for these, I would try to become good enough to join in.

I started having lessons. I am most definitely not a 'natural' skater, so it was not a rapid rise in ability, but my aspiration was to become good enough to join the dance club, the Richmond Amateur Ice Skating Club. After some months of lessons and practice I was offered dance lessons with the great Betty Callaway, who later went on to coach Torvil and Dean.

I was an active member of the RAISC, I was in due time elected to the Committee and became involved with playing the music for the Club sessions and for other events.

The Club was involved in a number of pantomimes on the ice, and I took part in these events. All seemed well, and continued for some years with no clouds on the horizon, that is until it became clear that a developer had bought the rink with a view of demolition for the building of flats on the site.

The campaigning that went on to try to prevent this are a matter of record, but it was all to no avail, even a petition presented to Downing Street by Torvill and Dean was unsuccessful. The developers made great play of their stated plans to build a replacement rink in Richmond, and in fact the planning consent granted by the Council required the new rink to be open before the old one was closed.

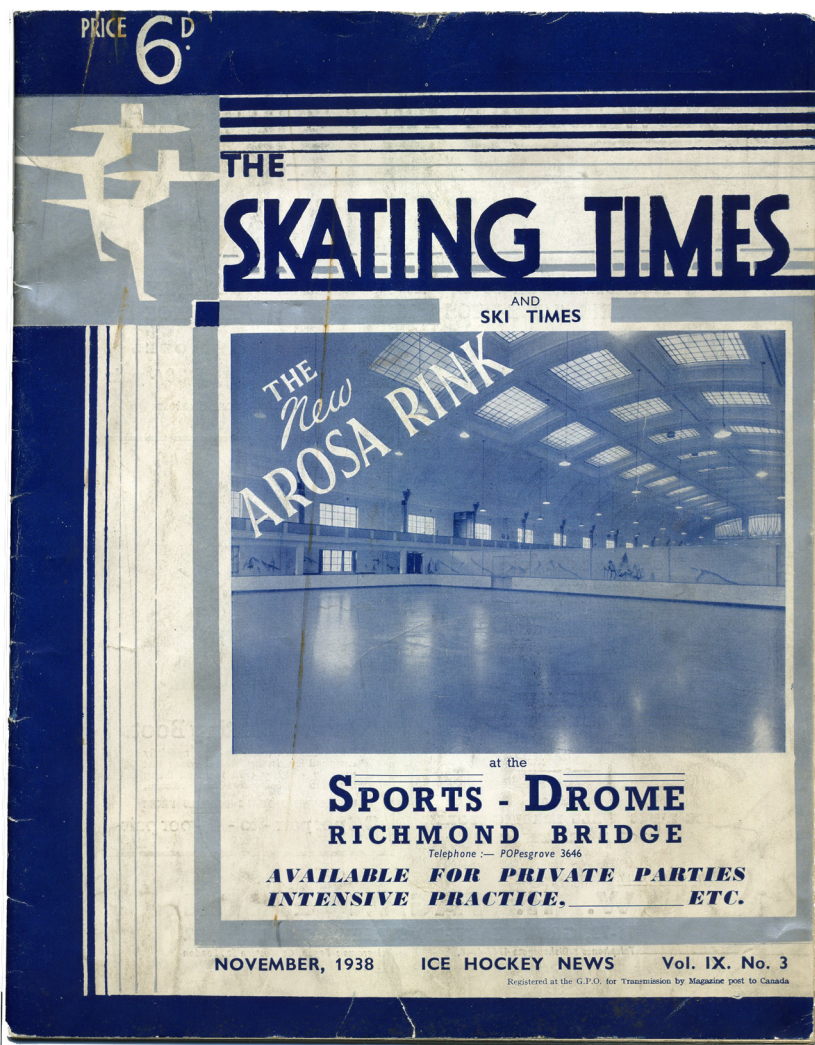
Surprise, surprise the developers claimed to be unable to do this and returned to the Council who, for a payment of £2.5m, wrote this condition out of the consent granted. This matter is in the public domain and cannot be contested. The rink, my second home, was closed and demolished in 1992.

How such a wonderful and distinctive building could not have been listed and preserved no-one can say, but it cannot be denied that the developers made a great deal of money out of the site where the rink once stood.

When the demolition had started I realised that few people would have the opportunity of recording the sad event. Despite my own deep emotions, I made the pilgrimage for the last time to Clevedon Road and took a number of pictures of the silent, benign dinosaur beside the Thames being disembowelled. I have not returned to Richmond since.

David Daines





A STITCH IN TIME

My memories of the Rink date up to the beginning of the Second World War – although I had first visited the rink with my elder sister Nita when roller skating was on offer. She roller-skated but I only watched. We lived in the mansion flats nearby so it was all very convenient for us.

I remember when the little rink at the back, which was later called the Arosa, was still a swimming pool, before it became the little ice rink. People would also sunbathe on the private outdoor terrace on warm days.

Back in those days the trainers included a Norweigan lady called Peggy Lunde, who married an ice hockey player, David Gerschwiler, and his brother, Helmut Rolle, who was German and I believe was later torpedoed on board a ship going back to Europe after the War started.

However, Les Saltry was the strictest of all, he would stand in the middle of the rink to make sure that we wouldn't cheat by cutting corners during speed skating. My friend would sometimes whisper to me; "Quick Betty, cut the corner..." when he was not looking. And I did!

I used to do figure skating too, dancing the quick step and the waltz as well as speed skating. I did not play ice hockey,

but I loved to watch the matches, especially with international players taking part – but I always supported the Richmond Hawks' team and always used to join in with the chanting to the Policeman's song from *The Pirates of Penzance*. "Hail, hail the Hawks are here... What the hell do we care..."

My friends and I also used to stand outside the entrance waiting for the coach carrying Canadian ice hockey players to arrive in mock adulation, because they would give us free tickets to matches, if we promised to cheer for them. But of course we didn't.

Once I had an accident during the 'crocodile', which was when a long line of skaters held on to the waist of the person in front of them, skated around the rink. This particular day, the two skaters in front of me slipped, which pulled me down with them and I sustained a bad cut to my knee. I was taken to the hockey trainer's room where he examined it, before telling me that I did not need stitches, then applied some strange black paste. It repaired itself but I still have a small scar.

There was usually a live band playing, although this was later abandoned in favour of recorded music after the War. There was also a small bandstand outside by the river where people would dance to the music, often including my sister.

My parents used to come and watch me skating sometimes; it really was my life in those early years, but one that ended sadly with out outbreak of the War. Unfortunately I never managed to go back, even though I often wished to. But I have remembered those days with great affection all my life and was very sad to see the old Rink go.

Betty Coldman

"Oh to be in England, now that spring is here," and especially near Richmond, and more particularly at the Sports Drome, where skating and swimming may be enjoyed in surroundings to be found nowhere except here.

Daylight skating, or rather skating without the necessity for artificial light, is more pleasurable at any time and may always be indulged in Summer or Winter until sunset at Richmond, but with the advent of Spring and sunshine it becomes a greater pleasure with the sun streaming in, whilst the lawns adjoining provide accommodation for lunch and tea overlooking the river traffic.

The event of April was naturally St. John's Carnival, patronised by a larger public than New Year's Eve. Cecilia, always a favourite at the Sports Drome, gave a wonderful exhibition, or to be more correct, a series, for the audience, among whom were to be recognised devotees of other rinks.

Arnold Gerschwiler is now to be seen at the Sports Drome; also many who usually skate elsewhere are now 'drifting down the River,' and appear to find the change ideal just now. Other rinks must envy the Sports Drome's situation in summer. Table Tennis is now becoming quite popular, with five match size tables available. Truly a Sports centre – Ice Skating, Swimming and Table Tennis, whilst 'Club' patrons also throw 'pretty' darts. We have heard of 'Mug's Alley' for beginners, but what of a separate rink for budding stars?

The Skating Times, November 1938

SINGING AULD LANG SYNE ON ICE

As a child, a visit to Richmond Ice Rink was always a special treat, especially as I lived in East Twickenham. The Rink was a place of sport, fun and somewhere everybody could enjoy and participate. However, it was the music and ice dancing that attracted me to the Rink – a famous iconic building on the edge of the Thames.

In the 1960s I joined the adult classes to learn some of the basic skills, progressing to the dance classes and, eventually, joining the Richmond Ice Dance Club. The dancers swept round the Rink to the music of Waltzes, Foxtrots, 14 Steps, Tangos, Blues and Sambas. It was a wonderful experience for younger and older dancers.

It was a very sad day that the Rink closed and I vividly remember that we all stood in a circle, hand-in-hand, and sang *Auld Lang Syne* at the final club session. The Rink was a place for everyone – recreational skaters, speed skaters, ice hockey players and children attending their classes supported by the wonderful team of instructors. My own children very much enjoyed the Saturday morning classes.



The Rink was a place where lifelong friendships were made, and I still meet former Richmond skaters at Queens Ice Dance Club, while others skate at Guildford and Slough – but my favourite rink will always be Richmond.

Councillor David Marlow *pictured above*



BLESS THE OLD RINK

I have so many happy, teenage memories of visits to the Ice Rink in the early Fifties. Myself and a couple of pals got in for free on Saturday mornings for clearing the ice shavings at the end of the session – after the driver of the ice cutter had driven around the rink in ever increasing circles, shaving the surface, then sprinkled water to create a fresh surface of ice.

We used long wooden handles, with a flat horizontal piece of wood attached at the end, and would skate around and push all the ice shavings into a large hole at the side of the rink, which was discharged into the river. If we were careless you could end up in the hole along with the ice shavings and its deep freezing water... health and safety was not an issue then! I believe the outlet pipe into the river can still be seen if you look closely.

There was an alternate session rota a lot of the time – half an hour for the figure skaters, then us speedsters who used hockey skates, we called them 'hockey's' and they had smaller, thinner blades with more streamlined boots. 'Hockey's' cut up the ice far more than the figure skaters, especially with the broadside instant stops that some of the lads used to do... which also caused a shower of ice to covering other skaters!

I can recall seeing some very good figure skaters of the day who had the rink to themselves for some of the sessions – it was marvellous to see skating performed so skilfully.

There was a small bandstand situated at one end of the large rink, and some evenings, a band played for the skater's enjoyment and the Christmas and New Year periods were especially good fun.

A regular pastime for some of the youngsters was to start circulating with a line of others with linked hands across the rink – as the circle gained momentum, those that joined onto the outside would be moving at ever-increasing speed, with those at the very end on suicide mission! As I have stated, health and safety wasn't such an issue in those times, but we lived to tell the tale.

In the Sixties, after I got married and had a young daughter, we started taking her to the ice rink once a week for figure skating lessons on the Arosa rink, the smaller of the two rinks.

I recall that a BBC camera crew turned up one day and filmed the children having their lesson for Blue Peter, and we were thrilled to catch a glimpse of our six-year-old skating with such confidence around the ice when the programme was broadcast.

It was sad to see the ice rink eventually close, the boys and girls of my generation enjoyed such fun, entertainment and exercise whilst skating at Richmond – not to mention all the friendships made. Bless the Old Rink, it will never to be forgotten.

Cliff Bradey



CHIPS AND FLIRTING!

I remember being taken to the Rink a few times on a Saturday morning with my brother and sister and hanging on for dear life as we tried to do a circuit without falling over!

Mum would sit by the side and watch. In the mid 70s when I was older – about sixteen - I would go with my cousin on a Sunday night to skate around to the Top 40 that used to be played for 2 hours until 10 pm.

We hobbled from the changing rooms to the ice. Half time we got a coke from the café and chat to friends from school who were also there.

The boys who had lessons before the session began would whizz round showing off whilst us girls used to desperately try to catch their eye!

Then the number 37 bus home, having got some chips in newspaper whilst we waited for the bus to appear. Lots of laughter, fun, falling over and flirting. A fabulous meeting place for teenagers. Such lovely memories and so sad when the Rink closed!

Sue Scott

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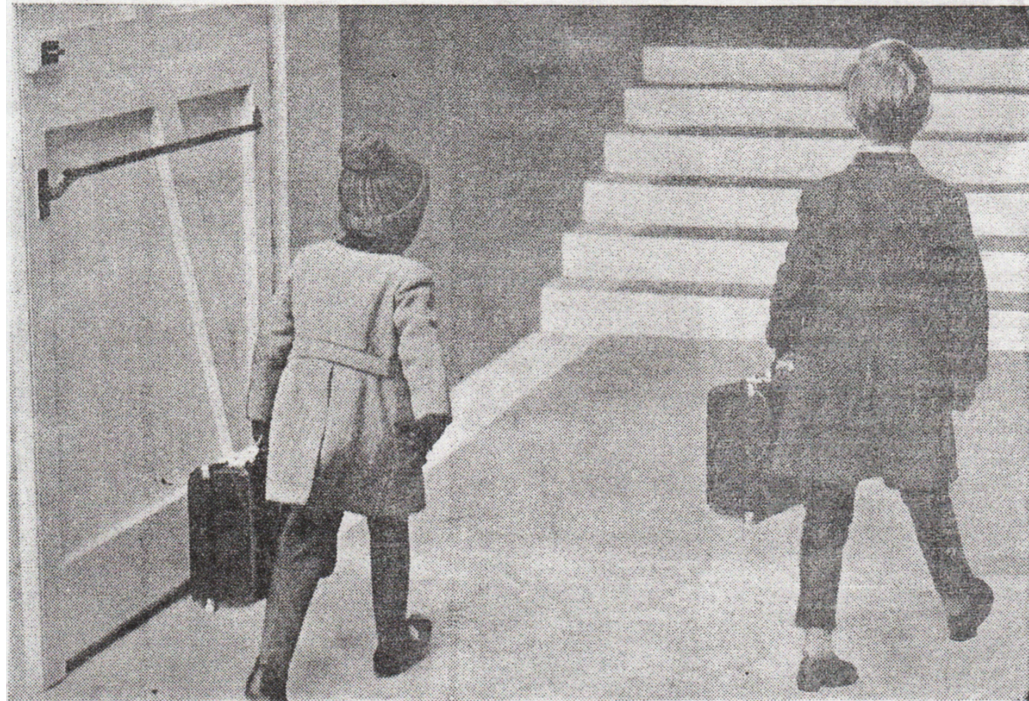
PRINCE ANDREW PUTS ON HIS SKATES

PRINCE Andrew and Viscount Linley are now having once-a-week skating lessons at the Richmond ice rink.

Andrew, who celebrates his eighth birthday on February 19th, and his cousin, son of Princess Margaret and Lord Snowden, with three young companions, had their first skating lesson this year when they visited Richmond a few days ago.

The Prince, who shows enthusiasm for every sport he takes up—he is a keen soccer player—sped across the private Arosa rink, which is reserved for Olympic and international skaters when training at Richmond, whooping with delight.

DAILY MAIL, Wednesday, February 15, 1967



Lord Linley goes skating

LORD LINLEY, five-year-old son of Princess Margaret and the Earl of Snowden, is taking up ice-skating. That's him on the left, in a natty knitted red hat. He's his first session at Richmond ice rink.

EXOTIC TASTE OF RIVELLA

As a small child my dad used to lift me up to the curved railings to peep through the windows and watch the skaters glide by. We were on our way to visit my Nanny King who lived in York Road, Twickenham.

Some years later, in 1957, a friend at Darell Road School mentioned that she went skating on Saturday mornings. I asked if I could join her. Next Saturday we jumped on the 90 bus from Kew Gardens to East Twickenham and I got my first taste of ice skating. Not very successful! In spite of being able to roller skate, the terrible, floppy, brown hire boots meant I spent the whole morning clinging on to the barrier, or sitting in wet patches of ice.

After this disappointment, surprisingly, I still wanted to ice skate, so my dad took me on Sunday morning. This was much better, less crowded, and I discovered that better hire boots were also available. With regular Sunday visits, I gradually improved. Also, a friendly skater, who took pity on my non skating dad, very helpfully, took me round the rink.

Dad noticed an advertisement for Saturday morning classes and I duly enrolled. After the first few lessons, with Joan Tomlinson, my parents managed to buy me my first pair of skates. I was very excited when we went into the shop at the rink and



I tried on those smart white boots. My skating skirt was hand sewn in Needlework Class and my teacher insisted on a hem line just above the knee! Mini skirts hadn't arrived yet.

Mum now took over accompanying me to lessons, as Dad was a Co-op Grocer and worked on Saturday. Although she hated the cold, Mum took me to every lesson for the next two years and always sat rinkside to support me. We had great coaches, including Betty Callaway, who later, of course, became famous when coaching Torvill and Dean to Olympic Gold.

I was never going to be a star skater, but my friends and I continued to skate regularly until our teens. Mostly on Monday evening, because it was dance night and hockey skates weren't allowed. Coaches could be booked for a dance in one of the special sessions. Everyone was asked to leave the ice and the



Miss SJOUKJE DIJKSTRA

TRAINED AT RICHMOND BY Mr. ARNOLD GERSCHWILER

OLYMPIC, WORLD, EUROPEAN CHAMPION 1964

OLYMPICS 2nd 1960, 1st 1964

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP 1st 1962, 1st 1963, 1st 1964

EUROPEAN 1st 1960, 1st 1961, 1st 1962, 1st 1963, 1st 1964

DUTCH SENR. 1st 1959, 1st 1960, 1st 1961, 1st 1962, 1st 1963, 1st 1964

DUTCH JUNR. 1st 1952

RICHMOND TROPHY 1st 1956, 1st 1957, 1st 1958

COPPE de MARTINO 1st 1959

TESTS. I.S.U. GOLD TEST, ENGLISH GOLD TEST
'GOLD STAR' FREE SKATING TEST (ENGLISH)

SPORTSWOMAN OF THE YEAR (HOLLAND)
1959, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1963

band played strict tempo popular tunes for the dancers.

I was taught Foxtrot, Quickstep and Waltz, but wasn't brave enough or rich enough to book a dance. Skaters could join in, if they had a suitable partner. During the dance interval we went to the cafe and thought we were very exotic drinking Rivella, a soft drink from Switzerland!

Usually general skaters did circuits of the rink in an anticlockwise direction, while the centre of the ice was used for coaching and practicing figures. I saw Arnold Gerschwiler coaching Sjoukje Dijkstra, the Dutch skater who won Gold at the 1964 Winter Olympics. We also used to watch Roy Lee and Ann Palmer practising their dance routine.

I remember one morning, when skating with a friend, a crowd of press photographers rushed past. They had heard that Princess Anne was having a lesson in the small Arosa rink and were climbing on the balcony trying to take photos, hotly pursued by members of staff.

It was a great time to be living in Richmond. Young people travelled from all around to meet friends, have fun and take healthy exercise at the Richmond Ice Rink. Sadly my daughters Claire and Paula were only able to skate at Richmond a couple of times before its untimely closer in 1992.

I have never understood how the Council could have allowed it to close without insisting on a replacement elsewhere in the town. Thus preventing future generations from enjoying years of pleasure, exercising in a safe environment and sharing many happy memories.

Janice Newing (née King)

MY SILENT WISH TO RICHMOND

7.30 silent swish, the skaters make a silent wish. Please stay open Richmond rink, without you we would surely sink.

The year was 1992 and I was watching my mum out on the ice for the last time before Richmond Rink was closed, torn down and luxury flats built in its place. This was her home from home. A place to indulge in her passion and meet up with friends. She wasn't a mum or wife for a few precious hours each week but a talented skater and follower of her bliss.

I used to skate too at weekends when I was young. I borrowed my mum's spare pair of white leather boots which fitted perfectly. I much preferred them to the battered blue plastic rental ones which had been worn by a million different people. I loved the smell of the place, and the little pink paper ticket the man handed me at the entrance.

The bustle of the changing room always made me feel grown up for some reason. It wouldn't have been the same without the loud tinny organ music belting out waltzes. It wasn't my kind of music but I loved it anyway.

Then of course there was the little corner kiosk where they sold sweets through a hatch. I'd take ages choosing and pointing through the glass and pocketing my Bounty chocolate bar with relish. A quick skate then it was time for tea and biscuits in the café.

I loved picking up the brown mock-wooden tray and pushing it along those metal bars as I decided what to have. It was usually the same; tea (which I never drank at home) and a doughnut or orange Club biscuit.

It's a unique feeling to go from walking clumsily on rubber floors in those big boots to taking one step out onto the ice and gliding and swishing your way round and round the rink.

For a brief time I had Saturday morning advanced lessons in the small, quieter rink next door. It always felt too serious though and took the fun out of it.

The good and the great practised in the little rink. Torvill and Dean were regulars to my mum's delight. I preferred to spend my Saturday mornings out with my friends playing games or making perfume from crushed rose petals.

Despite months of petitions and placard waving the rink was eventually closed. I skated elsewhere occasionally but it was never the same. My mum had to give up skating altogether a few years later due to a knee injury. She still sometimes dreams of being there though, the sound of the blades on the ice, the crisp cold... and always that wonderful organ music.

Richmond Rink may be gone but it will never be forgotten.

Lois Collins (Right) *photos from David Daines*



RICHMOND RINK WILL NEVER DIE

I spent the first 24 years of my life at the family home in Twickenham and the nearby Richmond Ice Rink was part of my childhood. I first went when I was five years old.

My father and I would often go to the rink skating on a Saturday. I remember that skate hire was upstairs and that having to walk down those stairs in skates was terrifying. To a small child it wasn't a staircase, it was the perilous descent of Mount Everest.

I know common sense would dictate walking down the stairs before putting the skates on, but it made sense to ensure a good fit at skate hire rather than go down stairs, find they didn't fit, go back upstairs and queue up again only to repeat the process. This was also in the days before health and safety had been invented.

Once on the ice we would often bump into (no pun intended) other parents and children from my school and us kids would often end up playing "It" or "Tag" with the face off circles being the safe zones or "Homie" where you couldn't be caught.



After going skating I always begged my father to let me watch the Zamboni. When you're five years old a Zamboni is one of the coolest things ever. I even remember trying (unsuccessfully) to make one out of Lego.

November 30th 2013 and history was made as Richmond Ice Rink was reborn this time in the grounds of York House in Twickenham. It was a privilege to work there and I was delighted to be invited back in 2014 when the Twickenham Alive temporary rink was at Strawberry Hill House.

Samuel Viscardi Smith

Richmond Flyers

OFFICIAL PROGRAMME



Richmond Ice Rink,
Clevedon Road, Twickenham,
Middx. TW1 2HX. Tel: 01-892 3646

November, 1938

The Skating Times



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WATCHING FROM THE WINDOW LEDGE

When I was five, I remember standing on the window ledges outside of the Rink and holding onto the curly iron railing and watch the skaters – it was magical. When I got to about 10 years old I took skating lessons, and learned how to do a ‘teapot’.

As a teenager I remember queuing outside and waiting to go in – the atmosphere was electric. When the doors opened, everyone rushed in, first buying tickets and collecting boots. Then into the changing rooms – I remember the wooden stool with the ‘split in the middle’ to rest boots in while tying the laces. Once your boots were on, you walked along the corridor where all the trophies were, then opened the doors at the top of the stairs, which was just a wow factor.

“The Flight of the Bumblebee” was always playing, the ice rink ploughs were cleaning the ice, and the unique rink smell was everywhere. Periodically, everyone had to come off the ice for



it to be re-cleaned, so we went along to the small rink and watched people’s lessons. There were also the speed skaters and trained skaters who would rush over and pick you up when you fell over.

The canteen, if I remember rightly, had black matting and you had to put your blade-covers on before going in – even in the canteen there was a unique ice rink smell – which was great.

The Rink was also a great place to meet people and long friendships were formed – I was very sad when the rink was closed as it was a great social venue where people had lots of fun. I would love to see another permanent ice rink established in the area.

Karen Bayles



The cause of it
 30th Sept 1940.
 SPORTS- DROME
 E. TWICKENHAM
 in Richmond Bridge

*Richmond Ice Rink
 suffered
 a 2000lb bomb
 - fortunately
 it did not
 explode!*

2

The 2000lb bomb pictured above (contributed by Derek May) fell on the Rink during WWII... but thankfully it didn't explode. Instead, the device slid along the ice into the machinery room before bomb disposal experts removed it. Amazingly, the rink re-opened the next day!

The cutting (right) underlines just how keen local people were to attend the Rink's opening in December 1928.

5,000 RUSH A RINK

More than 5,000 skaters made a rush for the ice at the opening of the winter sports season at the new Richmond Sportsdrome yesterday.

There was so much confusion that officials had to marshal the skaters into relays, allowing only 2,000 on the ice at a time.

BIRTHDAY IN HOSPITAL

In the late 1950s, my best friend, Christine, and I began skating every weekend at the Richmond Ice Rink, learning to move out of the way of the speed skaters zooming around and finding our feet (literally).

We had met at junior school in Ealing, but my family moved to Putney, and then shortly afterwards, her family moved to Balmoral Mansions in Clevedon Road – right around the corner from the rink. From then on (into the early 1960s) I would take the bus to Richmond every weekend and off we would go.

We ended up being called 'black and white girls' because she always wore black jeans, a black sweater and black boots and I wore a short white pleated skirt (tennis one I think) a white top and white boots.

We witnessed some of the stars of the day practising, the speed skaters doing their stuff and generally had fun – and, as we moved into our teenage years, we were able to meet boys there! After skating, the ritual was to go and buy coffee at L'Auberge (now replaced by another restaurant) on the corner next to the cinema overlooking Richmond Bridge, and so we gradually became part of the social scene.



Aged 13 someone fell backwards onto me at the rink and I discovered the following day that I had a fractured skull – meaning that I spent my 14th birthday in hospital. However, when I recovered, back to skating we went. Our highest degree of skill was learning how to do some elementary dances, but we had an enormous amount of pleasure from being able to skate and take exercise.

At 17 I had a Canadian Rhodes scholar boyfriend at Balliol College Oxford, and we were invited to watch the Varsity ice hockey matches – held at Richmond – and went to the celebration parties afterwards. It was very exciting, very fast and very exhilarating – I thought they were such heroes.

Lindsay Roberts-Warren

SPORTS-DROME
 RICHMOND BRIDGE
 Phone - - - - - PO Pessgrove 3646

NEW YEAR'S EVE GALA

7-11 p.m.

FRIDAY 31st DECEMBER, 1948

7.0 p.m. GENERAL SKATING

7.30 p.m. DANCING INTERVAL

?? JACKIE VINCENT and MISS IVY BRIDGER ??

MISS EVELYNE HEGARTY Solo

CHARLIE COOPER and "TICH" JOHNSON
 "Dusty Aristocrats"

SPORTS-DROME FOUR
 Johnny Reed and Miss Glenys Riddick
 Cliff Howick and Miss Jo Wright

LEN "Bunk-house" KING
 and his wonder horse "Trigger"

GENERAL SKATING

RICHMOND AMATEUR ICE SKATING CLUB

"Formation Dancing"
 Arranged by Don Crosthwaite

BEAUTY CONTEST !!

MISS WYNN JONES Solo

JACKIE VINCENT ... "Danse Macabre"

BILL and JULIE (Mr. and Mrs. W. Barrett)
 Winners of numerous Ice Dance Trophies

TILTING THE BUCKET
 Members Aldwych Speed Club

GENERAL SKATING till 11 p.m.

Programme and times subject to alteration

For those interested — Dancing will take place until 12.15 a.m. on the First Floor to music of LEW HAKIN

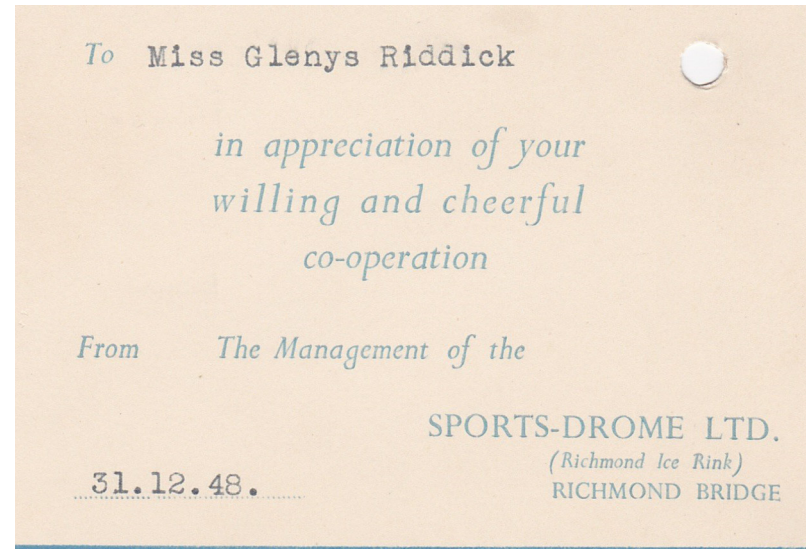
BARS ON EACH FLOOR WILL REMAIN OPEN TILL 12.15 a.m.

To all our Friends — Skaters and others — A HAPPY NEW YEAR

SKATING... THEN ON TO THE BLACK AND WHITE COFFEE BAR

There was always such a lovely, friendly atmosphere at Richmond Ice Rink and it truly felt as if everyone knew one another. Saturday mornings were very special to me and we paid sixpence – when we were young it seemed as if there was so much to do – it is such a shame for today's young people that they don't have the wonderful rink on their doorsteps as we once did...or the Black and White Coffee Bar in the town where everyone used to gather after the skating to chat and socialise.

I remember one evening there was a powercut and all the lights at the Rink went out, but the spirit of the place was such that the large doors at one end of the Rink were opened and all the boys positioned their cars with the headlights on so they lit up the rink and everyone could begin skating.



During the War French Canadians would visit the Rink – they were all fantastic skaters – and on Sundays I would dance and skate with them during the Pairs Session, they were all such great company.

I was also involved in a New Year's Eve show one year and was part of the performance, I got a lovely thank you message from the Rink, which is something I've always kept.

It is sad that all those days are gone, but they were happy days...Very happy days.

Glenys Swain (née Riddick)

(Right) Glenys ties up her boots



ONCE UPON A TIME...

Once upon a time there was a little girl called Dianna who lived with her mother and father and big sister Carol in Hong Kong and sister Carol used to do figure of eights in her roller skates on the pavement. When they returned to the UK to live in Twickenham, Mum and Dad decided to take Carol ice skating. Of course, Dianna wanted to go too. That's when her relationship with Richmond Ice Rink started. It lasted 15 years, and this is her personal recollection of that time, along with press coverage and photos.

The early years (1962 to 1967)

My first visit to Richmond Ice Rink was when I was five years old. I joined the Saturday morning club classes and progressed very quickly. My sister and I then joined the Arosa Club, taking place on the Arosa rink. I'm not sure what it was all about, but I always felt special going to it.

In July 1962 I took part in my first competition, the annual July competition, which was done by age groups. The first group was for five to eight year olds, and I skated to 'Telstar,' which years later I discovered was Number One in the charts at that time! I have a home movie recording of me dashing round the rink doing all my new moves - three jumps, spirals, spins and steps - and I finished third, which was a very thrilling experience.





From that time on I had an amazing attitude to competition, which lasted until I was around 12. I used to say to myself: "If I can get my skate on the ice first for the warm up then I'll win the competition!" It proved to be a great strategy because I went on to do very well in competitions.

One of my favourite recollections is standing for a photo for a German visitor to the ice rink. He sent the photo and accompanying letter, illustrating how much he enjoyed his visit to Richmond Ice Rink. Another photo I have is a group of all the Richmond skaters, members of the Richmond Amateur Ice Skating Club, taken in 1967 when we won the Southern Ice Free Skating league.

The middle years (1968 to 1973)

As I progressed I moved on from my treasured first coach Alison Smith and followed my sister to be coached by the famous Arnold Gerschwiler. He was part of the fabric of Richmond, coaching our very own John Curry (but not when he won at world level); and many overseas skaters used to come and train with Arnold.

The memory of the years 1967-73 was that several visitors used to stay with us, a real privilege. The Dutch male champion, Rob Ouwerkerk, stayed every summer over a number of years, along with the Swiss champion Donna Walter, as well as German and Hungarian skaters too

Each year, Mr Gerschwiler used to return home to Switzerland for three months so that he could retain his Swiss nationality. So what did we do? Go with him of course. For five years at Christmas, my sister and I would make our way to beautiful Davos, train at 4000m altitude on open air rinks, and after a



month come back healthier and stronger as a result of that beautiful mountain climate and training outdoors.

A highlight in my skating career was passing my gold test at age 13 (the youngest ever in the country, I'm proud to say). I recall it took place one morning with very few people around (tests were always very hushed occasions) and I passed all of mine at the first attempt which is quite a record. Afterwards, as I made my own way home, I remember standing at the bus stop at the foot of Richmond Bridge thinking I've just done this amazing thing and now I'm getting on a bus, same old thing.

I competed many times in Richmond. The national championships were often held there but the one big competition I remember well is The Richmond Trophy, an international competition attracting skaters from all over the world. In the years before I competed we used to entertain the skaters and take them to the London theatre shows like 'Jesus Christ Superstar' and 'Oliver'. I presume the organisers paid for all of that, not something that I thought about too much at the time.

I well recall the skaters who used to come from behind the Iron Curtain. We noticed that their tights had holes in them and their boots weren't whitened, signs that those countries at that time just couldn't provide their skaters with the complete kit. How times changed: as the years went by the torn tights progressed to fur coats, a signal that doing well was rewarded.

My own entrée to The Richmond Trophy was in 1962 when I was just 15. I'd done a number of international competitions by then, in Italy and Vienna, but nothing like this one. I still remember, with a shiver, the roar of the Richmond crowd as I performed, and how nervous I was; but I finished a worthy 10th amongst world class skaters from across the globe.

The later years (1974 to 1977)

For all serious skaters good training facilities are absolutely essential, and Richmond was always a great rink - but the income from the public sessions always came first. That meant we had to train outside these hours: early mornings (6am start), late nights (10.30 pm onward) plus lunch times and tea time practice.

In those days I used to train five hours a day, much of it practising over and over again the figure side, long since abandoned, but critical then to getting you up the ranks.

Who now remembers double threes, loops and rockers? How our legs used to tremble in the stony silence of attempting perfection in front of six judges who used to stand on the ice watching our every move!

The free skating, of course, was much more exciting, putting together and choreographing our short and long programmes, selecting our music, doing ballet and other exercise up in the ball room at the top of the Arosa Rink.

My whole life revolved around Richmond Ice Rink - at one time I even worked in the little sweet shop by the big rink on a Saturday morning.

Sadly, my relationship with Arnold took a turn for the worse and my parents and I made the decision for me to go and train overseas in France and Spain. Another great experience, but one that took me away from the Richmond life I knew and loved.

Dianna Ifill pictured through the years at Richmond

TEN FOND MEMORIES OF RICHMOND RINK



As our tea time training sessions ended and the evening public session started, the organist and the organ would rise up out of the stage at the head of the ice rink.



At the end of a public session, the National Anthem was always played. Everyone stopped skating and stood still until it finished.



The man who collected the sixpence from you if you wanted to go from the main rink to the Arosa rink (smaller and quieter) was called Nobby Stiles!



At Saturday morning classes, you progressed from one end of the rink to the other as you got better and went up to the next class.



When it was a high tide we used to get stranded in the ice rink with the river coming right up to the front entrance. We used to have to wait to leave (or for people to come in) until the tide turned!



The lady who worked in the office was called Betty. She was always nice to us when we used to go in and pay for our figure training "patches".



Sunday mornings (early) were taken up by the Curling Club. I used to love watching them dust the ice!



We had a special changing area at the back of the ladies changing rooms by the Arosa rink, reserved for the serious skaters.



The cafe used to serve the best baked beans on toast (well, I was only 10 years old).



The Arosa Rink made Richmond special, a great facility for younger skaters away from the madding crowd on the main rink, and as a warm up facility for competitions.

Dianna Ifill



REMOVING CONDITIONS

When I moved to work for the (then) Sports Council in London, in 1979, I also moved down to live in East Sheen in the borough of Richmond upon Thames. Prior to moving I had worked in the sports facilities team and had been involved with the design, planning and operation of ice rinks in the wake of the enthusiasm of winter Olympic success and the opportunity skating offered for both competitive sport as well as healthy, enjoyable physical activity. I had already visited the ice rink in Richmond as it was certainly the most well known in London, if not one of the best known in the world.

I soon learnt that the ice rink had been sold to a property developer in 1978, it was still in operation and providing for both competitive skaters and ice hockey players as well as recreational skaters from the local community.

In 1987 the ice rink was sold again and was bought again by a property company – the London and Edinburgh Trust which viewed the site as an opportunity for residential development. The London Council for Sport (LCSR) and Recreation and particularly the then Chairman, the Olympic rower, Fred Smallbone voiced objections to the loss of the ice rink and the change of use of this historic site from sport and recreation to residential use.

*(Right) The sad sight of the Rink being demolished
(Previous page) The salvaged Richmond Ice Rink road sign
(photos David Daines)*

The site of the rink was of course privately owned and in those days the option was not available to register the site as an asset of community interest, but planning permission was required for the change of use to residential.

The LCSR recognised that the ice rink did not necessarily conform to the then ice rink specification in terms of size and energy efficiency etc but it played a vital role for the community. If LB Richmond were minded to concede planning consent the LCSR sought the replacement of the rink on an alternative site in the borough and with Sport England provided an outline scheme to do so at the Old Deer Park swimming pool where waste heat from the ice rink could have provided warm water for the pools.

Despite the almost universal lobby from across the sport and the community as well as LCSR in 1989, the council, withdrew this condition to replace the ice rink and accepted planning gain of £2.5m.

In 1992, the rink closed, the building was demolished. No replacement rink ever has been built but we now have the seasonal ice rink at Strawberry Hill!

Andy Sutch
Chair of Sport Richmond



RICHMOND MEANT SO MUCH TO BRITISH SKATING

Richmond Sports Drome occupied a unique place in Richmond, both geographically and historically. It was in danger of becoming a memory lost to a generation if memories such as those contained within this book are not preserved.

The importance of Richmond Ice Rink in British Skating cannot be understated. It was, and a great many of us think of it as still being, the spiritual home of British Ice Skating. Such was its prominence in the sport worldwide.

The British Championships were regularly held on the main rink and hugely important international competitions were held there annually. The Richmond Trophy and the St. Ivel Internationals attracted the worlds' best skaters.

Arnold Gerschwiler built up a skating school of such renown that skaters from all over Europe came to Richmond to be coached there. The skating school produced World and European Champions, who became part of the local community.

Locally, children and adults wanted to learn to skate and to take advantage of such a wonderful facility – local employers formed skating clubs and met regularly at the rink, whilst local charities benefited from galas and shows.

The main rink also catered for public skating and was always crowded and, until the 1980s, had live organ music. The organist, Robinson Cleaver, was world known as providing music for ice skating.

Richmond meant so much to British skating, to World skating and to local skaters. Children who began skating at Richmond are still working as professional or Show Skaters all over the world. There are few venues in Richmond's history that benefited so many and I hope this book brings so great memories back to life.

Elaine Hooper

Honorary Historian, National Ice Skating Association of Great Britain & N.I

*(Right) Dorren Denny, World Champion Ice Dance
1959 & 1960 with Courtney Jones, European Champion
1959, 1960 & 1961, skating at Richmond*



THE YOUNG BRITONS

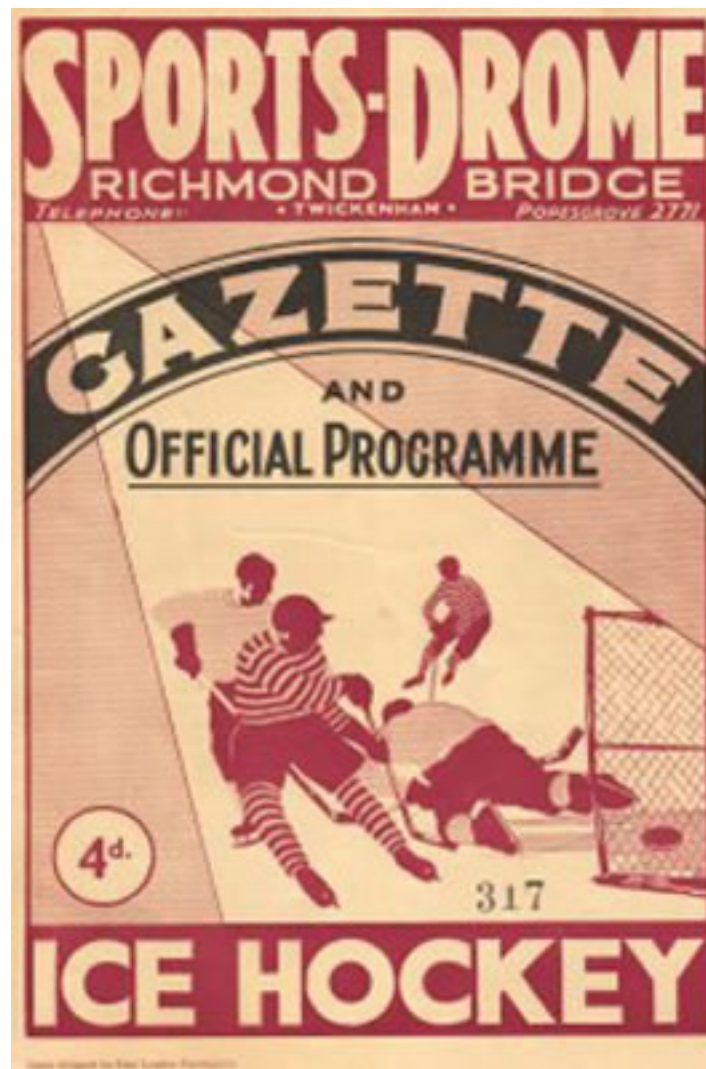
This photograph opposite shows me and a group of young lads who were learning to play ice hockey at Richmond in about 1950. You will see that we are all dressed differently, with all sorts of equipment.

This was because, just after the War, there was little money and no specialist sports gear available. We all made do with what we could find or could make. I remember ruining my mother's sewing machine whilst making padding for my shorts and second-hand skates were bought from Minterns in Duke Street.

We went under the name of the YB's, which stood for the Young Britons. I can recall that it was quite thrilling for 15 year olds to be playing out our fantasies on the ice even if more than somewhat rough.

The person front left was Billy Field and at the back right was Jumbo Nind, next to him is myself Michael Bettles and next is Doug Muncey. I don't know who the guy is in the helmet or the other four in front of the goal., the old gents were the trainers.

Michael Bettles





TRANSPORTED TO ANOTHER WORLD

How lovely that Richmond Ice Rink will be remembered through the memories contained within this book – I was so fortunate to have skated there through most of the Sixties. Arnold Gerschweiler ran a wonderful school, he had junior and senior National Champions from all over the world: Holland, France, Germany, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Hungary, Poland to name just a few. I was lucky enough to skate at the same time as Sjoukie Dykstra and all the other National Champions, who were also international skaters like myself. There were more champions skating at Richmond than at any other rink in Europe. Arnold also had more Gold figure skating test passes than any other coach.

The Ice Rink was very well known in the Richmond area and was one of the great attractions for the town. It was a lovely sight as you crossed Richmond Bridge and saw the bright red sign saying 'Sports Drome', with 'Richmond Ice Rink' underneath it. The lovely thing about skating there was being able to see the river through the windows, which were positioned all along the side of the rink while you were skating, with all the boats passing down the Thames. It was even nicer in the

summer when they opened the fire exit doors along the side – you felt like you were skating in the open air.

Richmond also was used for many television productions, as the Arosa Rink made the ideal spot for companies to hire. It was also home to the Penguin Club, which held children's classes every Saturday morning. Prince Charles and Princess Anne also learnt to skate on the Arosa Rink.

The Richmond Trophy was a real highlight of the calendar and one of the early internationals that I was privileged to have skated in, along with the Rotary Watches event, St Ivel and Skate Electric, which were held there in later years.

Wherever you went in Richmond, the shops, restaurants and coffee bars, as they were then, everyone knew us, and although it was always a busy town, the Ice Rink seemed to play a large part in the town's identity.

The Richmond Amateur Ice Skating Club (RAISC) was also a marvellous asset to the rink, and contributed a huge amount for the skaters, as well as their social lives. British European Airways (BEA) used to have a club session on the Arosa rink every month for their staff, and every Christmas; they held a big party on the ice at which Arnold's pupils, usually three of us, performed an exhibition. It was always great fun and they asked for the same skaters each year, which was very nice. Airline travel in the Sixties was very glamorous, and we were transported to another world for a few very special hours.

I have such wonderful memories of my years at Richmond. It certainly went a long way to making me what I am today.

Vanessa Riley (née Simons)



L to R:- Pat Dodd (later British Ladies Champion) Margaret Hankinson, Vanessa Simons, (now Riley), Yvonne Suddick (Later medalist in 1966, 65, 66 ,67 and 68 European Ice Dance Championships and 1967 and 1968 World Ice Dance Championships), Angela Williams and Alison Smith (later to be John Curry's Coach at Richmond).

RICHMOND WAS FIT FOR ROYALTY

Richmond Ice rink is known as the Most Famous Ice Rink in the World as it was just that: Princess Anne and Prince Charles and Torville and Dean were a few of the famous people who learned to skate at the rink, taught by world-class instructors.

The rink, situated between Richmond and Twickenham, was not only a sporting centre but also a social centre; it was where friends met and marriages celebrated, literally skating on ice in wedding dresses.

The rink closed in 1992, but the legend lives on – at many gatherings I attend it doesn't usually take long before the topic of the Ice Rink raises its head. The importance of Richmond Ice Rink spreads throughout the Borough, with people on the borders, in places such as Barnes, still demanding to know when the ice rink will return, something which has been promised for many years.

The memories of the Rink are stories that truly need to be told and are part of the heritage and social history of the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames.

Douglas Orchard

I WAS GUTTED!

At started going to the rink in the early Eighties with a number of friends over a ten-year period. It was a great environment and it allowed me to meet up with a lot old friends from primary school and at one stage I was there four or five nights per week.

There was a DJ called Steve who was a lot of fun, and if we spotted a bit of a looker on the ice, we'd often skate around them in pairs to try and get to know them better; or wait for a romantic song to be played, which was always good fun. It is probably no surprise that I met first boyfriend there.

I had to endure hired skates initially, but after a lot of nagging to my mum, I eventually got my very own pair after two years – that was absolutely thrilling going onto the ice the first time in them, and I remember we would always be changing the laces to make hem more funky.

In time I got to know people who worked at the Rink: in the bar and in the skate hire and generally had a fantastic time because of the wonderful community spirit. The ice hockey was also very exhilarating and dangerous and I watched them home and away for a while. Really enjoyable.

I'd moved away by the time the Rink had shut for good, but I was as gutted as anyone. It was such a shame for local kids – it was the centre of our world when we were growing up.

Emma Matthews

Prince Andrew takes lessons at
Richmond Rink in 1967

Now that he's seven ... Prince Andrew puts his skates on

THE sturdy little figure of Prince Andrew, slightly out of control, has been whizzing across the ice at the Richmond rink in Surrey for the past three weeks.

The Prince, who was seven years old yesterday, has added yet another sport to his growing repertoire. And he has taken to the ice with the same enthusiasm he produces on the Soccer field, in the Palace swimming pool, and in exercises at a Knightsbridge gymnasium.



He is taken with other members of his Buckingham Palace class to Richmond once a week. They all skate together, except that Andrew is likely to break loose and end up on his backside rather more regularly than the rest.

"But he's picking it up very easily," said his instructor, 32-year-old Roy Lee, yesterday. "He is a very strong, robust little chap, there's no doubt about that. I think he's a great chap. He'll be a very good skater. He's quite fearless."



On ice—Roy Lee and the Prince

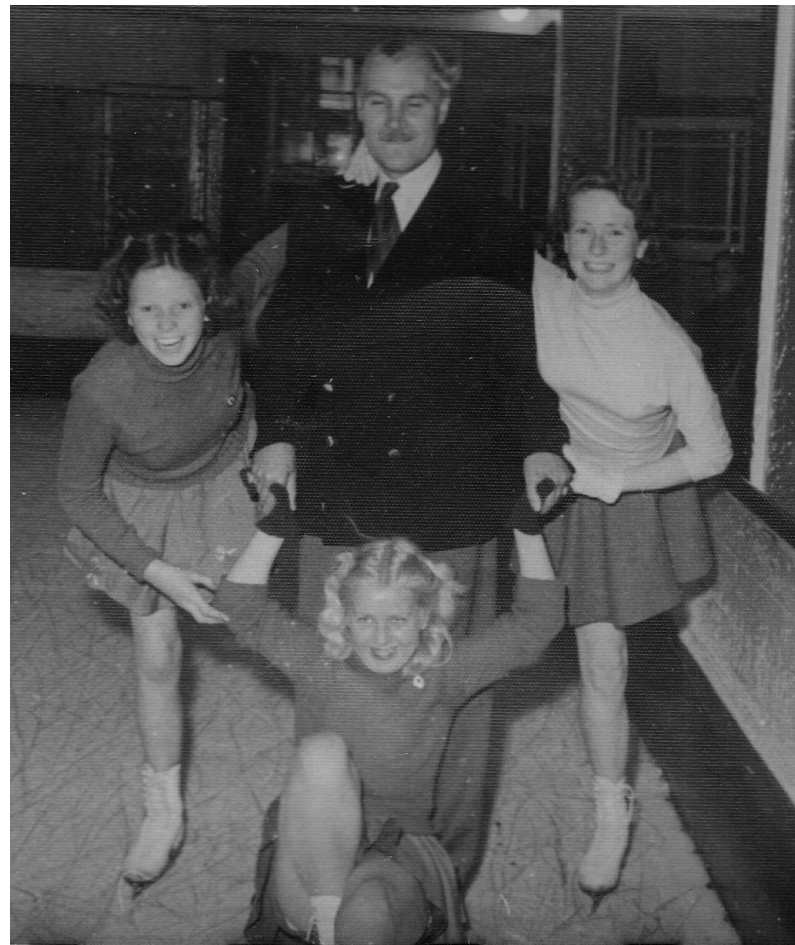
SKATING SOON BECAME A BIG PASSION

I grew up in Sheen and started skating at Richmond from the age of 11, more than 50 years ago. As a small child I had suffered from Polio and skating had been recommended by my doctor as a way of building up the strength in my legs – it soon became a big passion.

I used to have lessons with an instructor, who taught me to skate properly and eventually I partnered him in the Ice Dancing. I also had a couple of girl friends who used to come with me too, and we would get to the Rink early and practice the Walz.

I had six happy years at the Rink, but when I got to my later teens and had grown up, I moved on to other things... I always look back at those days at Richmond with a lot of affection though and will never forget the Rink.

Christine Shaw



(Above) Christine is held by her friends, Genevieve and Deirdre McDonagh, along with their skating instructor Richard Howe

ARNOLD WAS A TRUE SWISS GENTLEMAN

I worked for the Ice Rink from 1949 all the way through to when the Rink shut in 1992, so it was my life really, or at least half of it. I worked in administration and was involved in practically everything at one time or another – starting in the downstairs office, then working my way upstairs, eventually becoming a director for the final few years. Working with young people was a great asset to me as I find I can still relate to them, I really don't feel an old lady now.

I can look back at a life-time of happy memories and good friends that were made at the Rink, including the famous coach, Arnold Gerschwiler, who was a true gentleman and close friend and a man who helped so many Olympic, World and European Champions get to the very top.

Betty Hainey

(Right) Arnold Gerschwiler's World champion nephew, Hans Gerschwiler, with actress Dame Anna Neagle



WE EVEN TAUGHT ROYALTY

We skated at Richmond Ice Rink for over 35 years and were the professionals who taught several generations of local people to skate – we had the children's classes running on a Saturday morning with approximately 500 kids and 18 teachers, which were a great success.

When they closed the rink down I honestly couldn't imagine what those 500 children would then do every weekend. It was marvellous watching some of the children progress from not being able to even stand on the ice without falling, to becoming accomplished dancers.

We had Prince Andrew at the Rink and I was lucky enough to have taught him to skate, but it wasn't always royalty, almost every local school came down for sessions as well as children of all abilities, including the blind. Our oldest pupil was 84!

When I first moved away to Lincolnshire to do my National Service I thought my skating days were over for a while, but I decided that every weekend I'd catch the train back one way or another to skate. It was straight off the train at Kings Cross, then straight to Richmond in my uniform and I skated for as









(Previous pages left) Roy and Anne competing at Richmond Rink in the Fifties

(Previous pages right and above) Anne taking a Saturday morning lesson

(Left) One of the many charity Gala evenings at the Rink

much of the weekend as time would allow, then travelled all the way up north again.

When I left the Air Force, that's when I started to teach and was introduced to another new teacher, Anne. We used to skate a lot together before being eventually persuaded to enter into the Championships, and for the next five years, between 10:30pm until 1.30 am most evenings, we'd be training, and eventually we won the Championships.

I also remember when the Arosa Rink, the smaller of Richmond's two rinks, was made into a swimming pool. Can you imagine that? Warm water next to an ice rink. Anyhow, it didn't last very long, and it was soon decided to reverse the decision, so they put scaffolding in the shallow and deep ends, then large heavy timbers, then a layer of sand and rows of pipes, then we had the Arosa Rink back again.

It was so sad to see the Rink close – in the later years I think we all realised that the Rink was getting old and needed money spending on it, but there was absolutely no reason why we couldn't have had a new rink. I was chairman of the Save Richmond Skating campaign and personally visited 25-30 potential new sites, but all to no avail.

The committee and the people that supported us did all we could to raise awareness, including marches to Parliament, parachute jumps and a petition with 46,000 signatures from local people urging the local council to save Richmond Rink, but I'm afraid to say they didn't listen to any of us. Not even the sight of 500 children enjoying themselves on the ice made a scrap of difference.

Roy & Anne Lee

FASTEST WITH MY DAD

It seemed that I spent so much of my early life at Richmond Ice rink – from a new born baby up until my late teens as my dad, Roy Welham, raced for the Aldwych Speed Club, before becoming a judge and starter. The 'Aldwych Corner', as it was known, had the huge old radiator upon which we sat and tried to keep warm between the races, remains a vivid memory for both my mother and I. We also recall shouting support for the team very loudly... It was a way of life back then... a long time ago.

It was quite a trek from where we lived in Ascot in those days, but my parents would take me to Saturday morning classes, then we would often be back in the evening for the racing, or off elsewhere around the country doing the same. I would go on the ice during the crowded general sessions between the racing then join in with the 'speed sessions' where the more able skaters could show off their speed, although I never went nearly as fast on my own as when I accompanied by dad on the pairs sessions – wow that was fast.

As a youngster I can also recall skating VERY carefully down the rink with a huge bouquet of flowers to give to those presenting the trophies at the end of the evening, which was a very scary moment for this young skater. Ah, so many memories.

Julie Sheppard



JIM ANDERSON



Jim Anderson (pictured above in his tracksuit top) was the Pee-Wee coach at Richmond and a man who kick-started a lot of boys' careers. He nurtured local, young talent and was always an enthusiastic and thorough coach. In my eyes Jim excelled in teaching the kids all they needed to know to progress and a lot of us owe him a big debt of gratitude. Jim sadly passed away recently after a battle with Leukemia – but he was part of the very foundations of Richmond Ice Rink and was such a lovely guy. Rest In Peace Jim and a big thank you from those that you taught to love the game... We will all miss you.

David Heath



● Freezing weather last weekend brought an unexpected bonus to young members of Richmond Ice Hockey club. A stretch of water between the Thames and Old Deer Park iced over and out came the hockey sticks. At front is David Heath. From left to right, Steve Heath, Kelly Williams, Stephen Huggett and Roy Williams, the "B" team coach.

RICHMOND ICE HOCKEY CLUB

SUNDAY 1st DECEMBER 1985. RICHMOND -vs- STREATHAM.

Good Evening Ladies & Gentlemen - Welcome to RICHMOND ICE RINK.

FANCY THAT!

I have painted the rink a few times. The first time it was as a commission for one of the owners of a prop supplier that my husband used in his profession as a Production Designer at the BBC. The prop suppliers would often give all the designers and buyers a lovely gift at Christmas. This man used to really push the boat out and spend a great deal on "fun" at Christmas. The best fun present that we had was a whole Stilton and a bottle of vintage Port with an invitation to a Christmas Party at the Richmond Ice Skating Rink.

It was a fancy dress party. My husband dressed in my Father's old fancy dress outfit of very exaggerated blue and yellow chequered trousers and a scarlet waistcoat, a white ruffled shirt and a top hat. He looked a bit like a mad hatter. I went as a geisha girl because Paul had bought me a kimono on one of his travels, and I had long hair in a pigtail down my back.

We arrived at the party and lots of people were skating around the rink in their fancy dress. We had been issued with skates when we first arrived. One of Paul's friends, with her boyfriend were dressed as Christmas trees - with lights that worked on a battery, and there was a Tarzan and Jane, a Cinderella and Prince Charming, and lots of clowns, all having fun on the ice when we arrived.

Also as we arrived the man who was giving the party was carried out on a stretcher dressed as Donald Duck and his

wife - Minnie Mouse was following on. She apologised briefly on their way to the ambulance, apparently he had attempted a dodgy jump and had fallen on the ice and broken his leg! So that was the last anyone saw of him that night.

Eventually those on the ice got into their own shoes and abandoned the skates and went into the hospitality room at the back of the Arosa rink where there was an open bar and some absolutely scrumptious food - prawns, raw beef, hot sausages, tiny sandwiches etc. After a while I decided that I would leave the everyone else to talk shop - films and TV and design etc. and I went back to the main rink and got another pair of skates and skated endlessly around the big rink - the only one by then on the ice. It was a fabulous party because of that alone.

Anyway, the poor man who gave the party knew that I painted, and he asked me to paint him a commission of the skating rink and the party. I painted a picture of the rink similar to the one I still have, but with all the characters that I could remember from the fancy dress party including Donald Duck lying on the ice, and Minnie Mouse, the Christmas trees, the clowns and the mad hatter and the geisha girl - and loads more.

I presented it to him framed a few months later and as far as I know he still has the original on his wall to remind him that he cannot skate very well! I also painted a picture of the rink looking from the Arosa rink end to the other end of the rink and called that one "Saturday Skating, which showed lots of people having fun, some not, some doing Twirlys in the middle wearing all the proper gear and the awfully nervous ones clinging to the barrier.

Judy Joel



FROM RINK RATS TO RICHMOND FLYERS

My first memories of being at the rink was as an eight-year-old, my older brother, Steve, was told by my parents to take me skating and look after me – he really wasn't happy about that, or about having to tie my boots up for me – but we'd spend all day there on Saturdays and Sundays.

I remember my first skates cost five quid and were in fact girls white figure skates that had been painted black – I had the Mickey taken out of me terribly for wearing those. In the end I had to beg my dad for a pair of black Lange hockey boots, which I absolutely loved, but I still wasn't strong enough to tighten them up.

Jim Anderson was the kids' hockey coach, and he spotted me with my brother on a general session and encouraged me to come along with my dad the following Sunday for an under-13s trial on the Arosa Rink. I passed and started to play for the Richmond Pee-Wees five years below the age group maxi-

mum, but I was tiny compared to the others. I remember that training kit was really hard to come by in those days and I had to make do with hand-me-downs from the other lads – the few shops that did deal in ice hockey gear didn't do anything small enough for me.

Although my dad Dennis had been a professional footballer with Brentford, he really got into ice hockey and would always be there, watching and socializing with the other parents. There was a great social scene and it became part of all our lives, including my sister Joanne, who was also a really good skater too and was there every week.

Living in Isleworth, and with the Rink on our doorsteps, it meant that during the school summer holidays I'd ride my BMX there every day, and I vividly remember on those sunny mornings, as you approached, you could see and hear Nobby, who ran the Skate Shop, sharpening the blades freehand on his lathe with soul music blaring out. Nobby was a real character and was the best sharpener I ever knew, it was a real craft.

After my bike was chained up, it was time to help 'sweep up' after the morning session, which was basically child labour, but it earned us a free pass to skate in the afternoon, then we'd sweep up again to get another pass for the evening.

So, I was in the Pee-Wees, while my brother had moved onto the Juniors, and eventually we were both in the same Senior side. We literally travelled around the whole country too, from the old rink at Bournemouth all the way up to places like Billingham and Durham in the North East of England. We would set off on those away matches with all the teams on one Double Decker bus, without our parents usually, which seems remarkable looking back.



A lot of the Richmond Flyers team (pictured on previous page) that I played with back in the mid-Eighties are still close friends today: Kelly Williams (who also played for the England under-16 team), Gary Gibbs (who went on to play for the Bracknell Bees), my brother Steve (who also played at Haringay and Bracknell), Tony Nicholson (who now coaches the juniors at Bracknell), Jason Reilly (who played for the Great Britain teams with me), Darren Peries, James Nesbitt, Tony Cooper, Adam Anderson, Ian Broomfield and Dan O'Hanlon, plus many more, still all see one another socially and regularly stay in touch via social media.

The games room at Richmond holds many happy memories too, including some of the dodgy things that we used to get up to, which included learning the art of making fake 50p pieces for fiddling the Asteroids and Defender machines. We used to take the plastic wire out of our hockey bags, melt it with a lighter, before molding it into the correct shape. We would clock up so many credits on the machines that eventually Ronald would try and chuck us off the machines – but he'd be amazed to see we still had 99 credits remaining – he must have thought I was loaded. Ronald was the guy that basically tore the tickets when you came into the rink – he let you in and would chuck you out! He was a good guy, and took a lot of stick from the young kids; we used to really test his patience.

Other people that worked at the rink, who we all got to know, were Mr. Parker, the Rink's manager – he always used to wear very smart suits and ties and looked as if he ran an old fashioned department store along with Mr. Bowman, who seemed frightfully posh. Then there was Noel, who ran the café with Brian Raccani, they were both hilarious and basically gave us the run of the place. Peter Tyler was the Zamboni driver and

ICE HOCKEY PROFILE

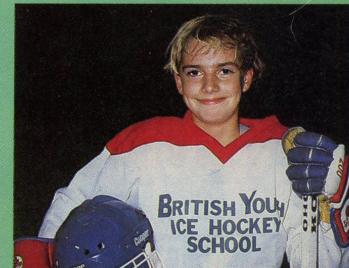
David Heath

Age: 11 years

Experience: 3 years

Home Team: Richmond

Ambition: To play for Richmond Senior Team and the next British Olympic Team.



Although David Heath started skating when he was only eight, other members of the team started even younger. He is eleven now and is a member of Richmond's Pee-Wee team and also plays for the junior team. He trains 3 nights a week at the moment which means about 8 hours skating. He spent time recently at a Hockey School in Peterborough with a coach from Toronto, Canada. David is one of Richmond's most talented players – his advice to a newcomer: "Skate as much as you can at the general sessions, until you get good

enough – then try for the team. Don't give up because the 'blue wellies' hurt a bit!" 'Blue wellies' are the plastic rented skates which everyone starts off with. "Some of my friends thought that all skates were like that and they gave it up."

Ice hockey is David's main sport although in the summer he plays football as well with friends. "I like hockey first – then football."

David has travelled around the country playing ice hockey and has made a lot of friends.

worked all the hours God sent keeping the ice in great condition. Once you were known down at the Rink you were pretty much in with everyone – we used to spend so much time there that we were basically called 'Rink Rats'.

Halloween night at Richmond Ice Rink was always one of the best nights of the year – of course everyone would be in fancy



dress – but the real horror highlight of the evening, which I can only recall being allowed once a year, was the Figure of Eight speed session. Anyone with 'Blue Wellie' rented skates had to get off the ice, but the rest of us were allowed to skate around as fast as we could, then cross over in the middle. I've never seen so many accidents in my life – with people being stretched away – we're talking 200-plus people bombing around with a death wish. It is one of the most dangerous things I have ever witnessed.

New Year's Eve at the Rink was another special night, with many people wanting to see the year in on the ice – it would be rammed all night. But one particular year, when we were 15, a boy called Darren Fitzpatrick, whose dad was coach of

the junior team, and had a set of the Rink's master keys, decided he'd nick them from his dad's bedroom so that we could let ourselves in once everyone had gone home. It was like a military operation, with a group of us hovering down by the river waiting for our chance.

Eventually, at about 3.30am, the coast was clear. We had the place to ourselves on a beautiful, freshly cut rink, and we played hockey in our gear until about five in the morning. We were too scared to spend the whole night there because of the rumours about there being a ghost upstairs near the Royal Box. Although we put everything away before we went home, the ice was all cut up and we heard that the figure skaters went ballistic when they arrived for their New Year's Day morning training session. A few of the lads got in a lot of trouble for that night's skullduggery.

Snogging seemed almost as big a pastime as the skating at the Rink, and the radiators were notorious on Friday and Saturday nights with teenagers going at it. On those nights the Rink was a youth club, disco and skating rink all rolled into one, which is why it was so popular with the local youngsters back then. If you went on a date, you would go to Richmond Ice Rink.

It was so sad when they closed Richmond, but my family were all there for the last night's session and I remember watching people taking souvenirs and mementoes from the walls etc. The DJ kept playing 'one last song' to prolong the inevitable and people sat on the ice refusing to move when it was eventually time to go home. People tried to have a last night sit-in, but they didn't save the Rink.

David Heath *pictured winning a prize*

A LOSS TO TWICKENHAM

As a resident of East Twickenham I was always very aware of Richmond Ice Rink and the numbers of young people who went to and fro to skate. I, in common with the rest of the Borough, took it for granted that there was an ice rink in Twickenham; it was part of the local social fabric, and it would always be there. It was not surprising that as a birthday treat my older daughter wanted a skating party at the rink and following the party at the Arosa rink she started to ask for skating lessons on a Saturday morning.

However, we were too late. Suddenly the rink closed, albeit with a promise that a new one would be built. We waited so long to find out how and where this promise would be fulfilled. Over the years, story after story appeared in the Richmond and Twickenham Times with new possible locations, and rumours were rife. There was even an Early Day Motion in Parliament at the beginning of 1995 about the failure to replace the rink.

Finally however we all gave up hoping that a new rink would come to Twickenham. It was not until 2010 when I started working with Berkley Driscoll organising community events as Twickenham Alive that I finally found out the truth, namely that there was never going to be a new rink in Twickenham.

Berkley and I have a strong interest in local history, and we try to help recreate some of the things that Twickenham has lost, includ-

ing the ice rink. Looking into local history we came across a document which indicated that there would not be an ice rink built in Twickenham or anywhere else in the borough. Thus, it seems we had all waited in vain.

It remains very unlikely that Twickenham will ever get back a permanent ice rink through official channels, so as Twickenham Alive Berkley and I decided to bring a temporary ice rink to Twickenham at Christmas. It was called Richmond Rink and staffed by some of the people who were associated with the original rink in East Twickenham. At the same time, we were also lucky enough to gain a Heritage Lottery Fund grant, through a local charity (The Richmond Environmental Information Centre, REIC) of which we are trustees. This grant has made possible the research involved in collecting and publishing the Memories recorded in this book.

Berkley and I would like to thank all of the people who have come together to contribute to The Most Famous Ice Rink in the World, especially Jeremy Hamilton-Miller who is the Chairman of the REIC. We would also like to thank Elaine Hooper of NISA, our publisher David Lane, all the Richmond Rink staff managed by Gary Stefan (who is in the Ice Hockey Hall of Fame) and everyone who is named in the book and on the icerinx.com website. Also a special thanks to Zac Goldsmith MP for Richmond Park and North Kingston who has supported this project from the very beginning and Fi Stephens at the Heritage Lottery. Finally, I must not forget Jill Garrow who has always been there to give very good advice.

Berkley and I have really enjoyed working together on this project and we hope you will enjoy this book for years to come.

Teresa Read *picture by Dennis Gilbert*



thanks and credits