London Swimming Professors: Victorian Craftsmen and Aquatic Entrepreneurs.

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Abstract

As sporting opportunities expanded during the eighteenth century, a number of individuals made a living from exploiting their skills, initially as competitors and later as instructors. Subsequent practitioners invariably drew from, and elaborated on, these existing practices ensuring a degree of consistency both in how such knowledge was transmitted and in how it was subsequently sustained and developed. The key elements of this process were the linking of oral traditions to personal experience, the ongoing existence of a body of craft knowledge operating within communities of practice, and an ability to innovate and apply entrepreneurial skills. The sporting context which provided a framework for these practices altered during the nineteenth century, influenced by an increasing internationalisation of sport, technological advances, and mounting urbanisation and commercialisation, all of which enabled sportsmen, and women, to make greater entrepreneurial use of their expertise. However, constraints on traditional practice also emerged through the formation of governing bodies of sport by middle class amateurs, who espoused views that marginalised coaching and training and subsequently employed regulatory mechanisms to exclude professional coaches. This paper explores coaching continuities and changes through the lives of some London based professional swimmers of the Victorian and Edwardian periods who made their living as competitors, entertainers, promoters, teachers and coaches.

Introduction

During the nineteenth century a number of individuals made a living from exploiting their athletic skills, initially as competitors and later as trainers and coaches, in the process of which they invariably drew on existing knowledge and practice. While this maintained a degree of consistency in the approaches taken to the coaching role these traditional continuities were always susceptible to changes in the sporting context. In the later stages of the century the opportunities afforded to sporting professionals by increasing

urbanisation and commercialisation, significant technological advances and a broader international interest in sport, led to alterations in existing practice by coaches who wanted to make greater entrepreneurial use of their expertise. In addition, some structural constraints emerged in this period as the formation of governing bodies of sport by middle class amateurs resulted in the introduction of exclusionary regulations which effectively relegated professional coaches to the margins of their sport. This paper explores these coaching continuities and changes through the lives of some London-based professional swimmers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, men and women who made their living as competitors, entertainers, promoters, teachers and coaches.

The term 'coach' appeared quite late in British swimming. It was 1907 before authors were advising novices to ensure their faults were corrected by an expert 'coach'. [1] Instead, the prefix 'professor' was much more commonplace for expert professionals, just as it was for men in sports such as boxing and among music teachers and skilled stage performers. If the term is interpreted in the context of its modern usage, that of the holder of an academic post, then it is easy to become satirical about the presumed pretentiousness of those who adopted the title. Realistically, however, the word needs to be read in the context of the age and should be interpreted in the sense of describing someone as an expert practitioner rather than an aspirant to academic status. Sporting professors were advertising their personal expertise in the field, the fact that they earned their living through the activity, and that they were available for coaching engagements. These men generally emerged from within sport and used the knowledge and practical skills developed during their competitive lifetime to work as coaches. They also experimented in applying emerging knowledge, intuitively accepting or rejecting appropriate material, particularly as commercial opportunities became more widespread. Both existing coaching knowledge and innovative ideas were transmitted orally and the power of this method of communication to establish and maintain sporting traditions should not be underestimated. Rules for Cornish hurling, Welsh 'knappan', and Shrove

Tuesday football, survived into modernity and it seems reasonable to suppose that the longevity of these sports forms, sustained by oral knowledge transfer, might be matched by the resilience of coaching and training knowledge in these and other contexts.

Nineteenth century professional coaching can be considered a trade or a craft. Indeed, this may still be the nature of coaching two thousand years after the Greeks referred to trainers as craftsmen (technêsi) and Pindar referred to trainers as the tekton (carpenter or builder) of the athlete. [2] In conventional craft processes, the worker was presumed to be the master of a body of traditional knowledge, with no distinction being made between 'knowledge' and 'skill'. Although a son invariably inherited a business, thus protecting the continuity and the secrets of the craft, the master-apprentice relationship often engaged individuals from outside the family. The tacit nature of craft transmission involved the master modelling and the apprentice continually observing, a process described as 'stealing with the eyes'. [3] It has been argued that this inhibited innovation, since the apprentice was taught only to copy, but craftsmen have also been constantly stimulated to experiment by competitors, commercialisation, and emerging technologies. [4] Oral traditions and experience, combined with personal or observed innovations, provided nineteenth century professors with their own body of specialist knowledge, which was passed on through kinship groups and through coach-athlete relationships. This craft knowledge was not incorporated into formalised guilds but embedded within informal communities of practice such as the close-knit interest groups surrounding nineteenth century swimming professors. They were practitioners who developed a shared methodology and a common repertoire of resources that contributed to their coaching 'toolbox'. [5] These professors adopted multiple roles as coaches and teachers, inventors, promoters, and entrepreneurs, and recruited participants from within the family or from the immediate community. Operating mainly, but not exclusively, at a local level they assumed responsibility not only for their athletes but also for the progress of the sport, since their financial success depended on both for economic gain and social status.

Swimming Professors and Communities

Where authors have touched on the lives and practices of swimming professors, they have invariably focussed on Frederick Edward Beckwith, whose longevity and impact on nineteenth century swimming make him prominent in the historical record. [6] It is not the intention of this paper to reprise directly a biography that has been covered in depth elsewhere, [7] but it is inevitable that his name reappears at intervals in this narrative since his entrepreneurial flair and extensive social networks maintained his position at the heart of what was a very small cadre of swimming professors. Compared to other career choices made during the period, professional swimming, and indeed professional sport in general, was essentially a minor and intermittent activity. The 1881 census returns for Lambeth, for example, show over two hundred music teachers and more than a hundred and sixty professors of music. In contrast, billiards apart, there were only six individuals earning their living solely through sport.

Beckwith was swimming master at Lambeth Baths for over twenty years. He also taught at several prestigious London schools, wrote *The Whole Art of Swimming* in 1857, and two years later formed the National Philanthropic Swimming Society to promote swimming among the working classes. [8] His aquatic promotions in baths, theatres and aquaria were prominent features in the sporting and entertainment landscape for more than thirty years and he used the symbolic capital associated with his status as champion to attempt a number of commercial ventures. Between 1859 and 1860 he ran a beershop, *The Leander*, and in 1861 he took over *The Good Intent*, a pub which became reportedly the most celebrated sporting resort on the Surrey side of the Thames by 1862. [9] The professor was also involved at different times in another beershop, *The Perseverance*, the Post Office Stores in Kennington Road, and an hotel, *The King's Head* in Westminster Bridge Road. [10] Business directories in 1884 listed him variously as a teacher of swimming, agent for aquatic galas with his family, tobacconist, and swimming instructor. [11] Unfortunately, his financial acumen failed to match his ambition. In

June 1861, Beckwith, described as swimming master, beershop and eatinghouse keeper, and tobacconist, appeared in the Court for Relief of Insolvent Debtors, and he was in the London Bankruptcy Court, as a licensed victualler and teacher of swimming, in 1879. [12] There were also complaints in 1872 that swimmers were experiencing problems in getting their prizes from the professor. [13]

Beckwith's core community contained both his immediate family, children Jessie and Frederick, then Willie, Charles, and Agnes, and finally Lizzie and Robert, and others, like Thomas Attwood and David Pamplin, who were drawn into his orbit either as an athlete who could be trained for competition or as someone who could contribute to his entertainments. Both Attwood and Pamplin had a lifetime involvement in swimming, although each played to his own particular strengths.

At a Beckwith entertainment in the Lambeth Baths in 1863, a race of twice the length of the bath for youths under sixteen was won by Thomas Attwood. [14] In 1867, 'Natator', the twenty-year-old Attwood, was to be seen in Cremorne Gardens exhibiting through the plate-glass front of a huge tank filled with six feet of water. [15] Attwood was Beckwith's assistant swimming teacher by 1869 and in July 1870, a large crowd was attracted to Lambeth by another Beckwith entertainment in which Attwood gave a display of ornamental swimming. [16] In 1871 he appeared in Hamburg and he performed regularly in aquatic shows inside and outside of London during the 1880s, during which time he was referred to as a professor. [17] Census returns from 1871 to 1891 record Attwood as a 'teacher of swimming' or a 'swimming master'. [18]

In August 1858, a Beckwith benefit included a race between two of his pupils for a silver medal, won by Master Pamphlin *(sic)*. [19] David Pamplin exhibited regularly with Beckwith, although his occupation in the 1861 census was given as 'working in a sawmill'. His father was a waiter at the metropolitan baths until his death in 1883. Pamplin went to Australia in 1862 and returned in December 1863, eventually becoming

swimming master at Camberwell and Dulwich Baths, [20] and he raced regularly and successfully throughout the 1860s. When Webb described sidestroke as the most elegant form of swimming, he considered Pamplin as an ideal model and Professor Charles Newman observed that both Pamplin and Willie Beckwith had achieved their success with the ordinary over-arm stroke and the 'perfect manner with which they could use it'. The leading swimming journalist of the period, Robert Watson, believed that Pamplin, 'The Scudding Seal', had a style that had 'never been surpassed'. [21] Census returns from 1871 to 1911 confirm that Pamplin consistently earned his living from swimming. He listed 'teacher of swimming' as his occupation in Islington in 1871 and in 1881 he was a 'teacher of the art of swimming' in Sandhurst. He experienced financial difficulties at the end of 1878, partly because of losses sustained during a tour of the provinces and partly because of the illness of Elizabeth, his wife, and subscriptions were raised on his behalf. [22] By 1891, the family, including nine children, had moved to Kingston, Surrey, where Pamplin was a swimming master at a school. In 1892 he published a 'very useful guide to natation' and he was appointed swimming instructor at Tunbridge Wells baths where he was expected to 'impart many a "wrinkle" in the knack of swift swimming'. [23] In 1901, the 52-year-old Pamplin was a swimming master at a school under his 'own account' and in 1911 he still was listed as a 'swimming instructor'. [24]

Both Attwood and Pamplin had begun swimming under Beckwith and then subsequently built their careers around the activity. Other swimmers followed similar routes. In 1873, Richard T. Giles, then swimming master at the Albion Baths, swam an exhibition race with Willie Beckwith at Lambeth Baths, he was second to Willie in an All England Handicap in June 1874, and in 1875 he was part of the Beckwith troupe, along with Attwood, that provided aquatic entertainments in Eastbourne. [25] Richard was a 'teacher of swimming' in Holborn in 1881 and a 'swimming instructor' in Islington in 1891, at which point his son was working as a 'bath attendant'. By 1901, the family had moved to Essex and Richard was a 'teacher of swimming', 'own account', while in 1911 he was shown as a 'swimming instructor'. [26] Another professor, Henry R. Pearce, a

twenty-year-old 'swimming instructor' living in Chelsea in 1881, concentrated on teaching rather than competing, reportedly making £500 a year by 1889. [27] In 1890, this 'professor of swimming and illusions' was teaching and producing entertainments at Hampstead Swimming Baths. [28] One report from 1892 noted that he held testimonials from Ilex and Otter Swimming Clubs as well as from the Duke of Cambridge, Lord Kensington, and other noblemen. A 'practised and careful teacher, Professor Pearce makes it a point to teach an effective style of swimming, which, once learnt, is never forgotten'. [29] By 1901, Pearce had become 'superintendent' at the St. James Baths in Westminster, where his wife Minnie was the matron. In 1911 the 'professor of swimming' was living in Fulham and among his boarders was Howard Davies another 'professor of swimming'. [30]

Although census returns can be useful in identifying and tracking swimming professors and teachers, there are some inherent difficulties, not least the transitory nature of professional involvement in sport. Sport was not unique in this respect. In one study, approximately 35 per cent of men eventually had an occupational status different from their fathers, and about 30 per cent changed occupational status over their careers. [31] Unlike Pamplin, Attwood, Giles and Pearce, many professional swimmers, teachers and professors only committed themselves fully to the role when they could be assured of sufficient financial returns or stability of employment. For some men the limited rewards from their involvement in swimming and/or the status of the sport meant they were reluctant to nominate their swimming activities as their primary occupation. Charles Whyte, swimming master to the Elephant Club in the 1860s, established himself as a champion five-mile swimmer and by the time he defended his title against Coulter in 1870 his reputation was such that he was being referred to as a professor. The loss of his title merely meant that Whyte now referred to himself as an 'ex-champion' in his subsequent adverts for work as a swimming entertainer or teacher. Whyte was variously the swimming master and instructor at Harrow School, and the professor in residence at the King Street Baths, Camden Town, where he was 'prepared at any hour of the day to

teach pupils'. He sat on the first committee of the Professional Swimming Association in 1881, and, as swimming master at Paddington Public Baths, he organised annual swimming entertainments over a long period, many of the later events being advertised as 'Under the Laws of the Amateur Swimming Association of Great Britain'. At the twenty-third such affair, when he also included age group races, medals were presented by Miss Humphrey, swimming mistress at Paddington Baths, and by Mrs. Crocker (his daughter), another swimming mistress. During the evening 'Prof. Charles Whyte, Sons and Pupils' gave a display of ornamental swimming and the programme was keen to note that Whyte had received five prizes from the Royal Humane Society for saving life. [32] Despite this level of involvement Whyte referred to himself consistently as a 'fret cutter' in census returns between 1871 and 1901. It was only in the 1911 census that he described himself as a 'swimming instructor' and his son, Charles, was recorded as a 'swimming tutor'. [33]

Swimming had many examples of families like the Whytes, not least because children were introduced to the activity early in their lives as part of family aquatic displays. In an 1885 Christmas show, Beckwith included Minnie Ward, a product of a swimming family, in his troupe of lady swimmers. [34] Alfred W. Ward was an 'agent, teacher of swimming and dancing' living in Hampstead in 1881, along with ten-year-old Minnie. In 1883, Ward, now swimming master at Hammersmith Baths, gave a fete at the Granville Hotel, Ramsgate, with his naiad of a daughter, 'whose grace and dexterity in the water are well worth witnessing'. That same year, Ward demonstrated his invention of waterproof covering for Channel swimmers by using nine-year-old son Alfred to paddle in one of the suits from Dover to Folkestone. By 1891, Ward, now a 'professional swimmer and house decorator', was living in Kensington with Alfred (18) 'professional swimmer and stationary assistant', Florence (17) 'professional swimmer and upholsters helper', Ernest (15) 'professional swimmer and bookbinders assistant', and Maud (13) 'professional swimmer'. [35] Minnie was living with the Beckwith entourage and appearing in his entertainments at the Royal Aquarium. [36]

Teaching professionals also generated family dynasties. John Howarth was 'superintendent of baths' at the Victoria Baths in Ormskirk in 1871 and he was still the 'baths manager' in 1881 when wife Agnes was the 'matron' and daughter Frances was a 'swimming teacher'. The 1891 census lists John as the 'baths manager', Agnes as 'superintendent at the baths' and both Frances, now twenty-six, and nineteen-year-old Edith as 'teachers of swimming'. [37] The widespread policy of only allowing women to teach females meant that women could generate careers as swimming teachers but, even though individuals like Agnes Beckwith and Emily Parker taught swimming and appeared in contests, challenges and aquatic entertainments, they were rarely directly referred to as professors. [38] Fanny Easton was working as a 'swimming mistress' between 1881 and 1901, as well as appearing in swimming entertainments, 'assisted by her clever pupils'. [39] Eleanor Mary Classey was a 'professional swimming teacher' in Marylebone in the same period, and the Humphrey sisters, Charlotte and Jane, spent all their working lives as 'swimming teachers' in London. [40]

Amateur and Professional Swimming Associations

The swimming context gradually altered in the last decades of the nineteenth century as constraints on professional practice were introduced by the amateur administrators who initiated and then consolidated the controlling power of a national governing body. By 1886, when the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) was formally created, embryonic amateur swimming bodies had already agreed to support only entertainments at which the laws of amateur swimming were adhered to. Committees of vigilance had also been appointed to attend galas, and, in 1878, these fledgling bodies established laws for amateur swimming that excluded anyone who had 'competed for money for a wager, for public or admission money, or who has otherwise made the art of swimming a means of pecuniary profit'. [41] The ASA continued this process of regulation and, judging by the experiences of professionals living around Manchester, the opportunities for many professors to earn a living subsequently became 'very precarious'. [42] The ASA

constantly reinforced the subsidiary status of professionals. In 1895, for example, it stipulated that no professional could make an amateur handicap or hold any office within the ASA, its districts, or in any affiliated club. Officials also pronounced regularly on the position of amateurs engaging in teaching. [43] Schoolteachers giving instruction in swimming to their pupils, or at Education Authority evening schools, would not endanger their amateur status, nor would a baths manager who was not a personal attendant on swimmers. [44] Archibald Sinclair, amateur swimmer and co-author with William Henry of the Badminton volume on swimming, considered such men useful since they were 'capable of expounding to the teachers not only the theory of the art but its practice as well'. They should be able to strip and demonstrate where they were going wrong in their teaching. [45]

By 1900, with the power balance firmly in their favour, officials were rigorously enforcing ASA laws. In this, they were applying the principles of their membership and reflecting the views of their social class with regard to the notion of amateurism. Sinclair and Henry, both founder members of the Life Saving Society, observed with satisfaction in 1893 that the interest increasingly being shown in swimming by public schoolboys had raised the tone of amateur organisations by introducing into the more prominent clubs men 'fully imbued with the true principles of amateurism'. [46] Without a broad consensus of agreement, resulting from shared values and practices, amateur officials would have been unable to develop the ASA to the extent that its power had become virtually unchallenged within fifteen years. In some respects swimming professors actually contributed to the process of centralisation and, thereby, to their own demise. There had been ample opportunity between the formation of the ASA in 1886 and its entrenchment by 1900 for professional interests to reject the amateur ethos of its officials and establish a durable organisation of their own but their single significant attempt in this direction faded away at the beginning of the 1890s.

When a proposal to refuse permits to professionals to organise galas, including amateur races, was passed in 1894 the ASA Committee observed that they wanted to see a strong professional association formed, and were prepared to support it, but that the current practice of amateurs supporting professionals was 'undignified to the one, and unsatisfactory to the other'. [47] These officials were well aware that after the Swimming Association of Great Britain (SAGB) barred amateurs from competing with professionals in 1881, [48] a Professional Swimming Association (PSA) had been formed to organise professional competitions and promote professional activity. The PSA headquarters were at the *Northumberland Arms* in Charing Cross and the first rules of the organisation provided for members to meet for practice and racing every Wednesday evening at the Lambeth Baths. [49] The SAGB expressed their wish to support the PSA and passed a resolution declaring that an amateur would not lose his status by becoming an honorary member. [50]

A snapshot of the PSA taken in 1886, five years into its operation, suggests an organisation that was thriving. E. J. Kirk, captain for that year, presided over the Association dinner in February. It was attended by a large number of professionals and amateurs, including Horace Davenport, Amateur Champion of England, who was deeply involved with both the SAGB and the ASA during the 1880s. [51] Unlike in other sports there was little hostility between amateurs and professionals in swimming and Davenport's networks consisted of all branches of the sport. He had learnt swimming at the Endell Street Baths with baths superintendent Mr. Durham, and subsequently 'graduated in swimming at one or two of Beckwith's aquatic fetes, which are really stiff competitive examinations in natation' eventually receiving from 'the veteran ex-champion the coveted medal.' [52] At a PSA smoking concert in April, A. Clark, Esq. (President Amateur S.C.) took the chair, and among the crowd were Alfred Ward and Charles Whyte. Also present were several amateur 'natationists' including G. Bell (long distance champion) and representatives from Sandringham, Amateur, Zephyr, Grosvenor, Dreadnought, and North London swimming clubs. A second 'smoker' was

planned for June, after James Finney and Willie Beckwith had raced over 500 yards for £200. [53]

The 1886 AGM, held at the *Northumberland Arms*, elected W. J. Innes as president, with R. Topping as vice-president, Robert Watson as treasurer, Easton as honorary secretary, and E. J. Kirk as captain. David Pamplin was in attendance and among the new committee members were James Finney, Frederick Beckwith, and Alfred Ward. Association rules were confirmed, with an addition under Rule 3 where the objects of the Association were expanded 'to assist members in needy circumstances, and give encouragement generally in other ways foreign to swimming'. [54] In April, the PSA had given Pamplin six guineas to tide him over until the swimming season began in earnest and they also organised an entertainment at Lambeth Baths for his benefit. [55]

As to the competitive side of the Association's activities, the PSA handicaps were decided at Lambeth Baths in October. Twelve started for the professional 500 yards handicap, in three heats. The final was easily won by Robinson of Leeds, off 45 seconds start, with Charles Beckwith, off 40 seconds, in fourth. The 100 yards professional handicap attracted twenty-eight starters from all parts of England in six heats. Haggerty declined to start the final from scratch, and Professor Beaumont won it easily. In December 1886, the Association dinner took place at the Holborn Restaurant. [56]

According to Watson, the PSA might have continued prospering if its financial stability had not been undermined by its members. [57] It was always going to be difficult for competing professionals to organise an effective collective and things started to go wrong after October 1890 when Easton resigned, having been honorary secretary for nine years. [58] Within six months the PSA was in turmoil and the numerous resignations tendered at the April 1891 meeting suggested that matters were coming to a head. The postponement of a handicap fixed for the previous Saturday was discussed, and 'verbosity flew around to an alarming extent. Filthy lucre, too, obtruded itself on the

attention of members present'. Later in the month the PSA had another meeting at which the honorary secretary Charles Newman resigned and a week later, with Alfred Ward presiding, members met to examine the accounts, which unfortunately failed to materialise. The PSA subsequently slid into oblivion although there was a short lived attempt to revive the association later in the year when H. R. Taylor won the first captaincy race of the 'newly formed' PSA from four others at *The Welsh Harp* on 15 August and Joey Nuttall won the PSA's handicap at Lambeth Baths in October. [59]

Amateur Structures and Constraints on Coaching

Even leading advocates of amateur swimming like Sinclair and Henry regretted that 'the honest attempt which was made by the promoters to raise the status of professional instructors of the art' had resulted in failure. [60] These same authors, however, had reservations about the contemporary standards of swimming professors, reflecting the views expressed in 1883 by William Wilson, the Scottish based swimming instructor and journalist, who believed it was a mistake to assume that a successful competitor was necessarily a good teacher since many of these men could not coherently explain why they swam so fast. On the other hand no theorist, without practical experience, could ever become even a moderately successful teacher. [61] Sinclair and Henry observed that many swimmers, who called themselves professor on the assumption that they could teach because they were successful champions, rarely, if ever, applied scientific principles and they were generally unfamiliar with the laws of propulsion and resistance. Theoretical knowledge was progressive, because it developed new ideas and modified existing tenets, while practical knowledge was obstructive since it considered nothing possible that had not been actually demonstrated and it discouraged innovation. Having said that, theoretical knowledge alone, unaided by experience, was equally dangerous. Either way, they argued, teachers should be conversant both with details of technique and with the natural laws which governed swimming as well being able to transmit this knowledge in an intelligible manner. [62]

Although various systems had been proposed for teaching swimming, professional instructors continued to utilise their own theories and methods, with no two men teaching swimming movements in precisely the same way. Amateur commentators argued that the 'absurd notions' which existed regarding the qualifications for a swimming master exacerbated this problem. Self-appointment as professor, or election by club committees and bath commissioners, was often based upon competitive achievements. Alternatively, ex-servicemen were appointed on the basis that they had acquired the habits of drill and discipline required by instructors. For Sinclair and Henry, champion swimmers and drill sergeants were not necessarily good teachers, and amateur stalwart Austin considered the drill sergeant 'out of place in the swimming-bath'. [63]

Despite these reservations, some ex-army personnel demonstrated that they could become successful swimming professionals and the life course of William Tuohy demonstrates both his own longevity and the evolution of a kinship-based community of practice. In 1841, aged thirty-five, he was a 'sergeant in the Royal Artillery' at Woolwich where he was a 'drill sergeant' ten years later, although he was also giving swimming exhibitions. In 1850, 'fancy swimming' at Holborn included Sergeant Foohey *(sic)* with his 'wonderful little boy', and a year later Sergeant Tuohy was exhibiting with his two children, one two-and-a-half and the other four years old. These 'little prodigies in the art of natation' were introduced under a canopy of pink muslin covering a cot formed on floating mattresses and towed in by champion swimmers. [64] By 1861, Tuohy was 'instructor of sword exercise' in the Royal Artillery College in Gosport, Hampshire, where he had been organising a swimming establishment since 1853. [65] He was at Portsea in 1871, having retired from the army, hence his status as 'Chelsea pensioner and fencing master'. Aged sixty-three he was living with thirty-six-year-old wife, Sarah, a 'teacher of dancing'. By 1881, Tuohy had become a 'swimming and fencing master' and fifteen-year-old daughter Sarah, was his 'swimming and fencing master's assistant'. The whole family was involved in swimming by 1891. Tuohy was now calling himself a 'swimming

instructor' and Sarah, his wife, was a 'swimming instructress', as were daughters Sarah and Mary, aged eighteen. William was living in Portsmouth when he died, aged ninety-five, in 1902, at which point both his daughters were both swimming instructresses in Nottingham. [66]

For the Victorian middle classes outside of the elite professional societies, exams both defined and illustrated social change. During the latter stages of the nineteenth century, there was an increasing focus on achieving formal qualifications, [67] and it was entirely in character for amateur administrators to want to formalise the teaching of swimming by introducing exams and certification. Wilson hoped to see the day when the 'empty and ignorant appellation of "Professor"' would have a very different meaning,

> when self-styled professors would find their level in quite another walk of life, and when those who, at the present time would be ashamed to be styled professor, may by dint of close application, and a thorough knowledge of all aspects of the art, be enabled to pass an examination which will make the title the very antipodes of its contemporary meaning. [68]

Sinclair and Henry observed that to make swimming teaching more systematic, the title of 'Professor' or 'Instructor' should imply a different sort of individual and a proper system of principles should be established to provide strong foundations for the fabric of the profession. Developing this policy should have been undertaken by celebrated professors but they were 'subject to personal considerations which created powerful barriers to reform' and previous attempts to introduce certificate examinations had been 'rendered futile by the very men who would chiefly benefit by them'. Although professionals apparently supported proficiency certificates, they wanted them awarded without examination, possibly because 'the ordeal would have been too much' for some of them. In the absence of a professional organisation, it was felt that amateurs should take responsibility for developing a proper examination system. This would then enable

those deterred from teaching for a living, mainly because of the poor reputation of professional swimming, to assume 'their proper place among the teaching ranks'. [69]

When the Board of Education included swimming as part of the Code of Education, the ASA offered the free services of amateur teachers, which the London School Board accepted in 1891. [70] As more local authorities began to encourage swimming, there was a view that this practice should be replicated nationally but the problem was that volunteers could not be recompensed without losing their amateur status, tensions which were reflected in debates about 'broken time' during 1898. [71] Given the difficulty of supplying enough amateurs, the ASA eventually conceded that professional teachers were essential, declaring that the organisation aimed 'to raise the status of professional teachers and to bring under the notice of Schools, Institutions, and Bathing Authorities the importance of having a properly qualified and properly paid teacher'. The key was to ensure that professionals remained under ASA control and this was part of the rationale for the introduction of a Professional Certificate in 1899, granted upon application 'to such as are desirous and deemed worthy of obtaining them', which the committee hoped would 'be the means of raising the status of recipients in all parts of the country'. [72] Factors other than the ability to teach swimming were considered since District Executives had to be 'satisfied as to the character and antecedents of an applicant as well as to his ability as a professional teacher' before making a recommendation for the award. [73] By 31 December 1902, sixty-seven certificates had been awarded to both male and female candidates, the first of whom was Miss Muriel Austin, 23, of Richmond, who was awarded certificate number fifteen. [74] There was general satisfaction with these arrangements within the amateur swimming community with one commentator noting that ASA restrictions on professionals should not be taken as evidence of antipathy towards them since the association had done more to raise their status than any other body, as demonstrated by the list of names of those men and women who had 'satisfied the association of their ability'. [75]

Early Twentieth Century Professors

While their rhetoric consistently argued the case for the marginalisation and subservience of professionals, there was considerable leakage around the margins of the amateur hegemony. As amateur athletes, faced with the demands of elite sport, compromised with respect to coaching, the lines of demarcation between professional and amateur became blurred, especially with respect to suitable artisan coaches. Although there were always differences of degree concealed within the term 'artisan', an artisan's position often survived because a craft, such as professional coaching, remained highly skilled and specialised. [76] There was a long tradition of tolerance for the 'educated mechanic, the intelligent working man', [77] and just as some English workingmen could be considered worthy and respectable, so it was with some professional coaches. When the British team attended the Stockholm Olympics in 1912 it was accompanied by a number of acceptable 'artisans', including Alec Nelson, athletics coach at Cambridge University, and Walter Brickett, who was attending his second Games as trainer to the swimming team. [78] In contrast to traditional swimming professors, who had normally begun their careers as professional swimmers, Brickett was an amateur swimmer and coach who initially earned his living outside of swimming, at least until the early 1900s, when he began to be referred to as 'Professor'.

Walter Brickett was born in 1865 and by 1881 he was following in the footsteps of his brothers as a pianoforte maker, which remained his nominated occupation to census enumerators until 1911 at which point he described himself as a 'swimming instructor'. [79] Between 1883 and 1898, he competed regularly in amateur athletics and swimming events and, crucially for his future acceptance within the amateur swimming community, he was involved in the creation of the Life Saving Society, along with Henry and Sinclair, in 1891. [80] Brickett later became involved in training channel swimmers, including Greasley in 1904, Jabez Wolffe, who made twenty-two attempts and never succeeded, and Lily Smith, who abandoned her second effort in August 1913 after a 'wonderfully plucky attempt'. [81] In 1908, Brickett was appointed trainer to the Olympic team and

after the Games he was presented with a testimonial from the ASA, 'bearing testimony to, and sincere appreciation of, the valuable and unremitting services of professor Brickett, to whom all British Olympic swimmers were greatly indebted'. [82] His appointment for Stockholm as trainer and adviser-in-chief to the British swimming team was confirmed at the 1912 annual general meeting of the ASA. The committee report following Stockholm commended Madame Jarvis and Professor Walter Brickett, who had accompanied the team as 'professional trainers and attendants', for carrying out their duties 'in the most capable manner'. [83]

Nineteenth century swimming professionals had always relied on their personal swimming performances to establish their reputation as a champion and then converted this capital into the status of a swimming professor. After he became a paid professor, thereby excluding himself from amateur events, Brickett combined his athletics and swimming into unique multi-event challenges, which helped to establish him as a 'Champion'. The value to his coaching career of these physical achievements, together with his appointments as Olympic trainer, was demonstrated in subsequent literature advertising the services of Professor Walter Brickett, the 'famous Olympic swimming trainer and coach, holder World's athletic record'. After his death, in 1933, Brickett's children carried on their father's involvement in swimming. Sidney and Reg were founder members of the National Association of Swimming Instructors, and Reg became President of the Swimming Teachers Association of Great Britain. [84]

While Brickett represented a new type of amateur-friendly swimming professor at the beginning of the twentieth century, some more traditional professors also continued to find employment, although much of their work was abroad. The increasing structural constraints during the last quarter of the nineteenth century had encouraged many swimming professors to follow the Beckwith example by performing swimming feats and exhibitions in crystal tanks in theatres and aquaria. Professor Cottrell, champion swimmer and diver, appeared at the World's Fair at the Royal Agricultural Hall in

Islington in December 1881 and Professor Taylor, the 'great man fish' appeared in a swimming entertainment at the Assembly Rooms in Folkestone, Kent, in 1891. [85]

One of the few aquatic entertainers who managed to sustain his career into the twentieth century was James Finney, only eighteen in 1881 but already a 'teacher of swimming' in Oldham. He was a regular competitor during the 1880s, winning an endurance race against Willie Beckwith at Lambeth Baths and the PSA 1,000 yards championships in a record time in 1887. [86] Finney was also well known in the music halls. He was a major attraction as a tank exhibitor in Glasgow and Dundee during 1884, and his attempt on the underwater record at the *Canterbury Music Hall* in Lambeth in April 1886 attracted a large audience, including many leading sportsmen. Just before the watch registered four minutes thirty seconds he surfaced to be met with tumultuous applause. Finney, billed as having 'won more Championship Races than any other Swimmer in existence', subsequently appeared in an extended run at the *Middlesex Music Hall* in Holborn in October 1888, assisted by Mdlle. La Grand, and alongside acts such as Dan Leno, vocal comedian and champion dancer. He also appeared at the *South London Palace* in Lambeth and at the *Trocadero Music Hall* in Piccadilly where he was headlined as 'Professor Jas. Finney' and performed in the tank alongside his sister Marie (Mary). [87] When Finney took a benefit at the *Trocadero* in 1889 the hall was crowded with 'gentlemen intimately associated with various phases of sport' and during the evening Marie was presented with a gold medal in recognition of her 'clever and plucky dive' from London Bridge. [88] Finney was in Battersea in 1891, and registered as a 'teacher of swimming', as was his sister, then nineteen. In 1901, his brother William, 'high diver and swimmer', was also lodging in Battersea although William died while performing a high dive at a fete in Walsall in August 1903. [89] Following the example set, among others, by the Beckwiths in the 1880s, Finney appeared in America with Marie in 1894, he was in South Africa and Australia in 1897, and in December 1900 he embarked on another twenty week tour in America. [90] In 1905, Finney was appearing in Hull with Marie where his feats included picking up over sixty coins with his mouth

from the bottom of the tank. [91] Reflecting the diminishing opportunities available in England, he was back in America with daughter Elsie in 1906 and again in 1907, 1908 and 1910. [92] Finney also spent much of 1911 in America performing with Elsie, as did his other daughters Maud Evelyn and Ethel Gladys, both professional swimmers. [93]

Exclusion, International Performance and Compromise

Bourdieu regarded biographies as illusions, arguing that the straightforward, one-dimensional life story could not exist and that lived lives were chaos, [94] but every swimming professor's life course reflected the context in which it was lived. Increasing class differentiation within British sport in the nineteenth century led to a rejection of professional coaches by elite sections of the middle class who employed structural definitions to exclude these men when formulating rules for their sporting associations. Faced with structural exclusion, and with the hostile values of amateurism, professors like Finney utilised their entrepreneurial skills to ensure that they could make a living from their expertise, while others, like Brickett, found ways to work within, and alongside, the dominant amateur structures. Brickett's biography in particular demonstrates the imperfect way that amateur structures were applied to professional pedagogues. The growing importance of international competition meant that preparation for major events often required a degree of regimentation that did not, at least on the surface, fit with the amateur ethos. Professional coaches remained integral to competitive success. Despite structural constraints, they continued to apply their craft although this might mean moving abroad. These initiatives, however, resulted in the loss of a substantial body of craft knowledge and left English swimming in the hands of a relatively small group of amateur officials. [95] Technical developments were discouraged by amateur traditionalism, something of a paradox given the widespread perception of craft conservatism as holding back innovation, and it was English craft coaches working overseas who developed new swimming strokes. Professor Frederick Cavill emigrated to Australia in 1879, following two failed attempts to swim the Channel. He established baths in Sydney where he trained competitive swimmers, including his

sons, some of whom went on to coach in America. In the tradition of the sharing and developing of craft knowledge and driven by a desire for competitive success, the front crawl stroke evolved from their observation of local practices and a willingness to experiment. In 1902, Dick Cavill broke a minute for the 100 yards, swimming 58.6 seconds in a handicap race at Hornsey Road Baths, London, although the ASA committee decided 'with regret' that, since this was not a scratch race, a record could not be approved. [96]

The rapid decline in the competitiveness of British swimming became serious enough to concern even some ASA members who rejected an official report on the Stockholm Games resolving instead that a sub-committee be appointed to 'report on causes of our failure and draw up a scheme by which we may...improve our chances in Berlin in 1916'. [97] During 1913, the ASA planned to use money raised from the ongoing Olympic Games appeal to appoint professional instructors, three for the crawl stroke, two for distance, and one each for breast and back, for a period of twenty-five weeks during the summer at an estimated cost of £1,000, although the organisation eventually only received £600 for training purposes. [98] However, even as these initiatives were taking place, amateur administrators were retaining the outdated trudgen stroke, both within the ASA teacher certification structure and within its educational material. Part of this intransigence was the traditionalism of officials proud of the English position as initiators of organised swimming and resentful of foreign developments, especially if driven by professional coaches. In England, these professors had been marginalised and their focus on improving speed had been supplanted by amateur values of health, fitness, and participation. The emphasis now was on increasing the numbers of people swimming, retaining the breaststroke, because of its lifesaving connotations, and protecting amateur ideals. While one consequence of this approach may have been a decline in international fortunes the main intention, which was to express a collective view of existing social norms and values within a well organised environment, had been achieved and within a relatively short period of time.

Although the amateur ethos ostensibly downplayed the importance of coaching, Brickett's appointment as Olympic trainer in 1908 and 1912 highlighted the increasing opportunities afforded to coaches by the creation of formal international competitions. Although his swimming activities overlapped, spatially and temporally, with those of traditional professors, he encountered a different environment to that faced by his predecessors, whose own coaching careers were distinguished by their entrepreneurial activities and a sense of coaching community, maintained through family, colleagues, and organisations such as the PSA. In some respects, there remained a degree of continuity in the nature of coaching lives. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, swimming professors still relied on oral traditions and personal experiences, their individual ability to innovate and apply entrepreneurial skills, and on a body of craft knowledge operating within communities of practice. Coaches shared information with trusted confidantes and, when athletes became coaches, they perpetuated traditional practices, drawing on the knowledge and social networks developed while in training. The legacy to the sport that Brickett left through his children, and through athletes like Jabez Wolffe, who subsequently went on to coach a number of successful Channel aspirants himself, is resonant of the traditional practices found in coaching communities. However, the social constraints that surrounded coaching lives clearly altered in the late nineteenth century as a result of the articulation of amateur ideology through the use of regulatory power to marginalise professionals. In Brickett's case, his involvement with life saving, and the personal networks that he created with influential amateurs like William Henry and Archibald Sinclair, allowed him to be accommodated within the amateur system even after becoming professional. His social contacts and his symbolic capital, generated through medley event records, sustained his status as a worthy professor, even though his origins were clearly rooted in the artisan class. It is an indication of the potential democracy of organisations like the ASA, that, as an amateur from this class, he could be involved in the formation of the Life Saving Society and then be appointed as trainer to successive British Olympic teams, despite being a professional

coach. Nevertheless, his aquatic career, and that of other professors such as James Finney, is also confirmation of the increasing power of national governing bodies of sport to structurally determine the nature of the coaching environment at the beginning of the twentieth century.

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