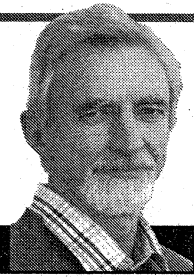


Mike Longhurst



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No grand design for swimmers

PERCHED on a roundabout, near the Herald's Derriford HQ, stands a Thing.

It's about 40 ft tall and looks like it's made of cardboard, but probably isn't.

Hands on hip, it stares balefully down the road in our direction through small beady eyes set in its thin, forked head.

It could have been dragged out of the Dr Who storage cupboard for silly props, created for an ancient episode when Jon Pertwee was still a Timelord.

Nobody knows how it got there, what it's for, and nobody much cares; but the rumour is it cost a sackload of money, possibly ours.

Just across the road is a sad-looking building, Seaton Pool, whose function is known to all and is used by many, and which could have done with that cash. But, tragically, unlike that unwanted sculpture, apparently, Those Who Know have decreed that it doesn't fit into the grand design for our city.

So on April 9, the funeral will be held at the pool of a valuable public recreational and sporting facility, starved of cash and neglected until the only option left was to turn off its life-support systems.

It's changing rooms were Third World, its glamour appeal zero. The exterior walls were cracked and discoloured and there were no gimmicky attractions. But in the school

holidays the sound of laughing and shrieking rang off the walls, and most days women of a certain age could be seen gossiping as they cruised majestically along, as many as three or four abreast, like Beryl Cook creations come to life.

Empty and belated pledges have been made that the needs of these people and all the others who use the pool will be addressed – but let's not hold our communal breath.

The South West Regional Development Agency (*a line from its website – 'We help people to regenerate their communities'*) says it has much more exciting plans for the neighbourhood, probably more flat-roofed factory and office units, than a boring old swimming pool which, unfortunately for the rest of us, it owns. Plymouth City Council, which leases and operates Seaton Pool, says it hasn't got the £1million or so needed to haul it back from the sorry state to which it has been condemned thanks to its – and the SWRDA's – insensitivity to community wishes.

■ *Friends of the pool only at the service please. Members of the RDA and the city council not invited. Flowers to Plymouth Civic Centre and the RDA's headquarters at Sterling House, Dix's Field, Exeter. Donations? Too late.*

EVENING HERALD 31/3/06

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Anti-swimming

COUNCILLOR Santillo has not been paying attention again!

In his letter (Postbag, March 14) he claims that Labour's amendment only talked about swimming in the north of the city. In fact our amendment read as follows:-

"This council pledges to improve public swimming facilities in the city, not just in Central Park".

All Labour councillors voted in favour of this resolution.

All Conservative councillors, along with Councillor Santillo, opposed this resolution, and at a stroke opposed any improvement to any swimming pool at any time.

Put another way, these Conservative councillors have opposed any improvement to swimming in the North, the South, the East and the West of the city forever and a day.

Just thought you'd like to know.

Councillor TUDOR EVANS
Leader of Plymouth City Council

Please clarify...

ON behalf of those who use Seaton Swimming Pool, I attended the full council meeting on March 6.

After sitting through various items, and the Lord Mayor deciding to adjourn the meeting from 5.30-6pm for tea, I was, unfortunately, unable to wait to speak about the motion regarding the swimming pool. I had come into the city on a bus and in the evening my buses only run every hour.

I have previously written to Baroness Fookes, the Prime Minister and received replies from both.

I also wrote to Councillor Creber on this subject, but to date have not even received an acknowledgement.

I did have questions to raise, but one thing which was stated after the motion on the papers I read was that the council was committed to providing swimming facilities in the north of the city. I would very much like to know where these are, as Marjon has been proposed, but this is not really a public pool.

(Mrs) P PALK
Eggbuckland