

## Cecelia and Beatrice Wolstenholme

The international medal-winning swimmers, the two sisters Cecelia Wolstenholme (later Celia Thornton), 1915-68, and Beatrice Wolstenholme (later Beatrice Whalen), 1920-2008, came from Withington.

Pat Souza, daughter of Beatrice, has kindly supplied the following article about the two sisters and their achievements:

In the late 1920's and 1930's two of the best English woman's swimmers were from Withington, Manchester, England. Cecelia (Celia) (Wolstenholme) Thornton and Beatrice (Wolstenholme) Whalen were at the top of their games and were often the swimmers to beat. They lived on Oak Bank Ave. (now Hazelbank) and attended St. Paul's School. Celia was a world famous breast stroke champion and Beatrice was equally as famous in crawl and back strokes.

Both were members of Moss Side Swim Club and trained under Northern Counties Coach Jack Lavery and his daughter Nellie Lavery. Celia represented England and Great Britain in Empire Games, (1932 in Canada's first Empire games in Hamilton, Ontario and set a world record), European Games and the 1932 Olympics in Los Angeles. All this was done while she was in her teen years. Beatrice set notice that she was good also, at the tender age of 12 years. At the Tailteann Games in Dublin Beatrice set the pace and was the most outstanding swimmer having won four first places, something no one else had done at Tailteann games. Due to her young age of 12 years she did not join the English team for LA Olympics in 1932. Beatrice participated at the European games held in Magdeburg, Germany during the tense times preceding World War II and placed third while on the 400 metre freestyle English relay team.

Celia retired from swimming and married Crossley Thornton and they had three sons. Beatrice married William Whalen III of the US and relocated to the New England area. They had five children...three daughters and two sons. In 1959 Beatrice returned to visit family in Withington and by invitation she and sister Celia attended the rededication of the construction of Wythenshawe Baths with Duke of Gloucester as guest of honour. In 1997 Beatrice attended the ceremony in Hamilton Canada commemorating the Jimmy Thompson pool and the first British Empire Games where Celia set a World Record.

Beatrice continued her swimming interests in the US and was well known for her personal swim skills as well as her prowess in productive swim teams. Her knowledge of teaching swimming and expertise in this field made her a recognized personality in her new area as well. Beatrice continued this until late 1990's.

These Wolstenholme women represented England/Great Britain with their swimming achievements and are fine examples of the best of Withington.

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June, 2014.