

At the deep end teaching kids to swim

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Byline: Dave Robson

Body

KIDS and water -they love it!

Readers of a certain age may remember Rolf Harris telling us as much in an old TV public information advert.

Bobbing around in his local **swimming** pool, everyone's favourite Aussie recalled how he "fell in the river at our place -couldn't **swim** -somehow managed to scramble my way to the bank..."

Amphibious Antipodean Rolf thankfully survived his river ordeal, allowing him to **end** the ad on a happier note with advice for parents and their **kids**. "If you can **swim** yourself, why not teach them yourself? It's fun -see ya!" Disturbingly, poor Rolf was then held beneath the water by children who, if they did the same nowadays, would have Asbos served on them.

At least he didn't make the mistake of confusing his catchphrases.

Uttering "can you see what it is yet?" in a public **swimming** baths might have caused an issue, even in the 70s.

Look, I CAN **swim**, but I'm more Duncan Donut than Duncan Goodhew.

I blame school **swimming** lessons at the old Stockton baths, where our tyrannical **swimming** teacher used to bawl and shout at us. A lot. I got a few certificates, mainly because I didn't dare not to, but I came to dread those lessons.

I much preferred Saturday mornings at the old Billingham baths with my Uncle Doug, where the resident coach's gentler technique got a lot more out of me.

He also instilled in me a life lesson I still resolutely adhere to: "Keep your bum up."

So as a **kid**, I learned enough to stay afloat and was generally happy with that.

But then my own **kids** came along. "Ooh, you MUST teach them to **swim**," I was told. So the pressure was on to turn them into Marine Boy and Aqua Marina. And be in the pool with them.

In the last 10 years, I've had more chlorinated water action than in the previous 35 put together and, I have to admit, it's been kind of fun.

But today is daughter's 14th birthday and, with thrifty Mrs R over the road in the shops, I'm sitting in the cafe at Wet N' Wild, melting in 35-degree heat while daughter and her brother hurtle down various ridiculous water slides.

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"Oh, you don't need me," I lazily reasoned, remembering how last time we were here, I barely saw them after 10 minutes. They reluctantly agreed and, as I write, they're having a whale of a time without me.

So I've saved a few quid and stayed dry. Big deal.

The penny's just dropped that, out of misguided choice, I've opted to give up some family fun time with the **kids** who are my life and who, very soon, may not even want me here at all.

Talk about a false economy. So next time, I'm in at the **deep end**. Now pass me those Speedos...

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