



Reykjanes Swimming Pool



The old swimming pool. The house was later moved down to the pier.

Beginning of swimming lessons in Reykjanes

Swimming lessons in Reykjanes began in a small pool with turf walls on the peninsula. Sources state that the turf pool was dug in 1837 and that lessons began in 1853. This swimming pool was improved in 1890 and again in 1899, and then extended to 20 meters. In 1906, improvements of the pool continued with the concrete walls and the bottom was paved with large, clean sea gravel. People stayed in tents until a wooden house with 20 bunks was built in 1896. It was later moved down to the pier. Gestur Bjarnason taught swimming in Reykjanes in 1853 and perhaps earlier.

In 1925, a concrete swimming pool was built at Hveravík, 30 meters long and 12 meters wide. The swimming pool was extended to 33 1/3 meters in 1930 and to 50 meters in 1944. The Huld Youth Association in the municipality Nauteyrarhreppur with Jakobína Þórðardóttir from Laugaból in the lead worked diligently to have the swimming pool built, and the association was responsible for swimming lessons in Reykjanes in the years 1920-1930. Ísafjörður Town had a boarding house built for students taking swimming courses that were popular with Ísafjörður residents before the school began in Reykjanes. Swimming was taught every day regardless of the weather. Teachers made the young people roll out in the snow before going into the pool, as it was considered to be good for their health.

At the end of the courses there was a “swimming test day” and an outdoor festival was usually held. The coastal ferry Esja transported people from Ísafjörður Town and the Ísafjörður Districts and waited during the festival. The trawler Hávarður also ferried people to the “swimming test day”. The people of Ísafjörður Town also organized sports tournaments during the outdoor festivals. After the school began, students from the Ísafjörður Primary School came to swimming courses during the summer, and adult sailors also, until the swimming pool in Ísafjörður opened at the beginning of 1946.

The first principal, Aðalsteinn Eiríksson, hosted spring festivals where people from Ísafjarðardjúp came to Reykjanes and worked as volunteers for the school on the maintenance of the school buildings and the sports field. Afterwards they were invited to swim. The volunteer work was considered a contribution from the region in return for the state’s contribution to the school. Residents of all four of the municipalities in Ísafjarðardjúp contributed immeasurable voluntary work to building swimming facilities in Reykjanes. At the closure of the school, all real estate was sold through the government and is now privately owned, with Ísafjörður Town as the landowner.



The swimming pool under construction in 1925.

Swimming test rules in Reykjanes

There was a great emphasis on swimming instruction after the Reykjanes School began operating and students often went to the pool every day. Aðalsteinn Eiríksson had a great ambition for promoting swimming instruction. He decided to have special swimming test rules in Reykjanes, which, however, did not receive formal recognition from the ministry as the requirements were considered rather high. There were four levels of difficulty, but the highest level included these disciplines:

- Be able to dive and swim:
- 5000-meter endurance swimming
- 1000-meter breaststroke swimming in clothes
- 300-meter backstroke swimming in clothes
- 200-meter rescue swimming with an eighty-kilogram person, both in clothes
- Take off clothes while swimming
- Diving for a small object at a depth of four meters
- Receive instruction in rescue and resuscitation

