HEALTH AND RECREATION: ISSUES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF BATHING AND SWIMMING, CIRCA 1800-1970, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BIRMINGHAM AND THETFORD, NORFOLK.

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the historical development of bathing and swimming, circa 1800-1970, helping to fill a massive research void. It identifies providers and regulators - their intentions and expectations, the opportunities and who took advantage - their motivation and response. The emphasis is on the oft neglected populace.

Bathing was probably a universally-shared experience, and local studies of Birmingham and Thetford enabled detailed examination of evidence. Extensive use was made of primary sources, especially archival material at libraries, record offices, schools and the ASA. Council documentation was invaluable, and reports in The Times and local newspapers enlightening. Public appeals and interviews provided a wealth of information.

Health was principally responsible for the activity's provision and promotion, and changing emphasis from curative to preventative and more holistic welfare is evident. However, baths' standards were questionable until after the 1970s, and recreation rapidly dominated participation. Public baths were responsive to community needs, and during the World Wars and inter-war depression assumed vital crises-management roles. Other important findings are that swimming, little advanced in public schools, headed state-school physical education, women had considerable opportunities, and clubs developed from the late 1850s with transformation post Second World War, from primarily adult-recreative to youth-sport dominated.

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Jane Brunt.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ASA	Amateur Swimming Association
BAI	Birmingham Athletic Institute.
FINA	Federation Internationale de Natation Amateur
LSS	Life Saving Association
RLSS	Royal Life Saving Association
SC	Swimming Club
TV	Television
WCASA	Warwickshire County Amateur Swimming Association

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INTRODUCTION

This introduction begins by looking at the development of the study of sports history. It moves on to the subject under investigation, bathing and swimming, highlighting the paucity of knowledge, despite a long tradition of sports writing, and then reviews the limited literature. The hypotheses, aims, objectives and methodology are then outlined, and a rationale given for making special reference to an urban and rural settlement, together with the particular choices of Birmingham and Thetford. Background information regarding their histories and traditions in bathing and swimming is provided, and the sources, largely primary, are discussed. Finally, the structure and content of the thesis is outlined, with a brief explanation of the contribution each of the four main parts make to the testing of the initial hypotheses.

Development of the sports history genre commenced in Canada and USA during the 1950s. By the 1970s, historians were appreciating its richness, and a plethora of specialist journals were inaugurated: The Canadian Journal of the History of Sport and Physical Education (1970), and The Journal of Sport History (1974), published by The North American Society of Sports Historians, were amongst the first. Stadion published from 1975 claimed to be the first international, scholarly journal, and The British Journal of Sports History, now The International Journal of Sports History, followed in 1984.[1] The subject's growth was facilitated by changing concepts of history. The post-war rise of social history, which dramatically transformed historiography, included the study of sport and recreation. In the latter's embryonic stage, much progress was made by exposition of sporting narrative, embracing the traditional empirical trend, focusing on events, sports and personages. However broader concerns, for the social development, and place and significance of sport, were neglected. From the mid-1970s, ideas were increasingly borrowed from the parallel disciplines, sociology, anthropology and political science,

producing an uneasy inter-disciplinary thrust. The links required strengthening as "evidence becomes history through theoretical-conceptual intervention".[2]

In 1983, Journal of Sport History published a special review issue, "The Promise of Sports History - Progress and Prospects", in which William Baker assessed the British position. He noted the lack of attention by serious historians prior to the 1970s, and their persistent unwillingness to inquire into sport per se, suggesting they were too conservative to tackle such an unconventional theme. Never-the-less, during the following decade productivity was prolific and standards rapidly improved. Realisation of the subject's value was demonstrated by mainstream journals carrying articles, and commissions from reputable publishers. Despite considerable gaps in existing research, Baker stated:

> An integral part of social history. British sport history now thrives as a self-conscious discipline attuned to economic causation, to class distinctions and conflicts, to the masses as well as the elites, to cultural continuity and change, and to sociological and anthropological insights as well as traditional modes of research and analysis.[3]

In 1996, Jeffrey Hill suggested the prominent formative influence was post-war social and educational reforms, bringing "a younger breed of scholars, much more responsive than their elders to the problems of popular culture" and "history from below".[4]

Expansion continued despite difficulties, as identified by Richard Cox, in accessing sources, and lack of university sports history courses.[5] A notable exception is De Montfort's International Centre for Sports History and Culture, opened in 1996. Its orientation is significant of the advancing cultural approach. The class paradigm, which profoundly influenced past debate, will undoubtedly persist, but has analytical limitations. In addition to filling gaps, sports historians must confront fundamental problems of epistemology. "Empiricism", the verifiable evidence, and "reflectivism", sport reflecting social reality, have dominated British sports history. To aspire beyond consolidation as a

sub-discipline of social history, attention must shift from causation to ideology, examining the role of sport in giving meaning to social life and as an agent of change. Closely associated is the notion of identity, and sport has long been recognised as important in construction of the self and community. Consideration must also be given to activity context, because experience has no inherent meaning. Its ideology is created by interpretation of those involved - directly and indirectly. Thus an event can be decoded in diverse ways. As stated by Hill, further complications arise from temporal and cultural differences between participants and historians.[6] For this reason sports history has followed labour history's "bottom up" approach, making local studies pertinent. M. Adelman considers sports historians must identify imprints of the past, and ask existential questions to explain causation and meaning. This will also promote awareness of contemporary links.[7]

This text focuses on the history of bathing and swimming. Bathing has antiquity and ubiquity. The Romans popularised bathing in England, but during Europe's Dark Ages sport was generally discredited. Anything pertaining to the body was held in contempt, and water thought to be responsible for spreading disease, especially population-decimating epidemics. Although the nobility considered swimming a necessary military skill and gentlemanly art, the populace shunned bathing. Fear of water persisted until the seventeenth century, when immersion's curative potential gained acceptance. However, for many years bathing-derived pleasure was considered immoral. Invalids patronised Bath from the Middle Ages, and other inland spas from the sixteenth century, but in the eighteenth century taking the waters became fashionable and renowned spas developed as commercial centres. Their success heralded a spa boom, and discovery of the benefits of salt water caused sea-side villages to become popular resorts. Leisure was now important at "watering places" but until the mid nineteenth century, the working class were largely excluded.

Commercialised bathing continued with the spread of private baths establishments, often including swimming pools. According to Norman Wymer, an open-air pool was built in London as early as 1734.[8] Almost a century later (1828), the first public baths opened in Liverpool. Local baths campaigns arose in the early 1840s, and the 1846 Baths and Wash-Houses Act empowered local authorities to provide facilities, primarily for working-class benefit. Like much Victorian social legislation it was permissive, yet it met remarkable success. Industrialisation had caused overcrowding and ill-health, and many dwellings lacked water supplies; indeed not until the 1960s were domestic bathrooms commonplace. Within a few years of the 1846 act, every sizeable town in the country began planning facilities for "the great unwashed", including shower and slipper-baths, wash-houses, and open-air and covered swimming pools. Bathing was now considered a valuable hygienic weapon and wholesome recreation.

There was an established tradition of open-water bathing. The 1615 History of all the Schools and Colleges in and about London, states that country boys usually learnt to swim with bundles of bulrushes or corks tied around them, and for two centuries there were men in London who could teach swimming well.[9] Robert Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy (1621), repeats Cardane's advice:

> To all men as mean to live long - to bathe in fresh rivers, as it agrees with all ages and complexions and is most profitable.[10]

In 1801 Strutt said there was little doubt that a higher proportion of English could swim than ever before, and the century saw increasing expansion of participation and frequency of accidents.[11] Additionally, pollution of waterways was a growing problem. Although less treacherous, standards of health and safety at swimming pools left much to be desired until after the Second World War. Often for reasons of safety, swimming was encouraged in public schools, and soon spread throughout the educational system. Professional instructors emerged with the development of public baths, and clubs offered tuition.

Competitive swimming had started in the late eighteenth century, clubs developed from the 1850s, and, in 1869, a body which became the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) was formed. The sport had spectator appeal and gained impetus from inclusion in the first modern Olympics (1896). Towards the end of the century progressive employers were also promoting swimming. Expansion continued, with working-class participation greatly boosted by employment-related opportunities. Mixed bathing was gradually introduced, gaining increasing acceptance during the inter-war years. After the Second World War, it became the norm, and swimming one of the most popular recreations, although clubs transformed from predominantly adult-recreative to youth-sport orientated.

The long tradition of sports writing includes limited books on swimming and bathing. Probably the earliest, in 1538, was by Dutch author, Nicholaus Wynman, and the first published in England was Sir Everard Digby's Latin treatise of 1587. Plagiarism was rife in subsequent texts. In 1658, William Percey virtually copied Digby's work, and Melchisedech Thevenot's, The Art of Swimming was largely cribbed from Wynman and Digby. In 1873, Charles Steedman produced, A Manual of Swimming, which was essentially an appraisal. His objective, a history of swimming and famous swimmers, was hampered by lack of information. Although swimming appeared in every encyclopaedia, works on "Manly Sports", and the "Boy's Own Book", he found there was "not one comprehensive work in the English Language". The best nineteenth-century text is Swimming, by Archibald Sinclair and William Henry (1893), from the Badminton Library Series, which includes a lengthy bibliography.[12]

Literature of academic merit is scant, particularly pertaining to Britain; surprising as it is an island nation with a strong maritime heritage and spear-headed the global development of modern swimming. Introducing his text, Sport in Britain - A Social History, Tony Mason (1989) notes the "unfortunate absence" of swimming. He considers it has generally received insufficient attention, and that further research is necessary in

view of its widespread popularity and long-standing competitive role in many communities. Nicholas Orme's Early British Swimming, 55BC-AD1719 is the sole scholarly text devoted to the topic, but terminates well over a century prior to the major expansion, consequent upon the Baths and Wash-Houses Act. Other sports historians gloss over the subject, often in substantiating a different issue. Richard Holt and Denis Brailsford are eminent, prolific writers, but neither the former's Sport and the British, nor the latter's Sport and Society - Elizabeth to Anne, Sport, Time & Society, The British at Play, or British Sport - A Social History, devote more than a few lines to bathing. Similarly, Hugh Cunningham, Peter Bailey and Stephen Jones almost ignore its existence. Many social history texts, including Edward Royle's, Modern Britain - A Social History, 1750-1985, have leisure sections but these similarly neglect bathing. Furthermore, nothing academic exists regarding the activity at Birmingham or Thetford.[13]

Only very recently has bathing attracted greater discourse. Holt's Sport and the Working Class in Modern Britain (1990) includes a chapter by David Bowker, "Parks and Baths: sport, recreation and municipal government in Ashton-under-Lyne between the wars", and in Scottish Sport in the Making of the Nation - Ninety-minute patriots? (1994) by Grant Jarvie and Graham Walker, the latter writes on "Nancy Riach and the Motherwell Swimming Phenomenon". Articles in journals include Polly Bird's "The Origins of Victorian Public Baths, with special reference to Dulwich Baths", and Thierry Terret's "Professional Swimming in England before the Rise of Amateurism, 1837-75". Furthermore, older clubs and organisations, including the ASA, have celebrated centenaries and produced historical documents. In the Swim - The Story of the ASA from 1869 to 1994 by Ian Keil and Don Wix, relates how the organisation grew to encompass all branches of swimming, and encourage competence, fitness, recreation and competition for millions. In line with the current trend of exploiting local studies to explore sports and leisure histories, the authors are local historians. Other local-based research has been carried out by John Lowerson and John Myerscough, and Andrew Davies.[14]

This text is intended to help fill the bathing research void. The hypotheses are that provision of opportunities in bathing and swimming were primarily motivated by health and safety issues, whilst recreation was the key motive and outcome for participants. Taking an ideological approach, the aim is to identify providers and regulators; their intentions and expectations; the opportunities available and who took advantage of these; and the participants' motivation, realisation and response. The relationship between these variables will be tested, with emphasis on the changing focus of health from curative to preventative and more holistic welfare, and the often neglected experiences of the populace. Any recurrent themes will be identified.

Specifically, the text will examine types of activity in the water - bathing, swimming and competitive; types of provision - environmental and enclosed, public and private sector; and investigate the factors underlying provision and participation, and their implications. A multiplicity of issues will be discussed comprising life chances in terms of social class, sex and age, access to opportunities including school and work-based structures, and religious, financial and political matters. This will involve consideration of the attitudinal framework i.e. variable conceptions of participation and potential outcome, and the developmental impact.

Sport, recreation and leisure are social institutions, and in 1990 F.M.L. Thompson declared that "much of the recent pioneering work in social history has advanced through intensive study of particular localities and communities".[15] Use of local studies permits detailed examination of evidence and this text makes special reference to large, urban Birmingham and small, rural Thetford. On the assumption that bathing encounters were likely a universally-shared experience, it is hoped that the contrasting case studies provide representation of nation-wide developments.

Usually similar settlements are compared, urban with urban or rural with rural, but it was believed to be exciting and innovative to look at the urban-rural dichotomy. This approach was pertinent because the division of urban and rural England, consequent of

industrialisation, was a major feature of the nineteenth century. The health implications of urban squalor stimulated developments in sanitation including bathing, and rural poverty also meant poor standards, although these were markedly better than in the growing towns and cities. Urbanisation was a one-way effect, as Alun Howkins describes, "drawing young men and women from the countryside, demanding more and ever different food and imposing its view of progress on the whole nation".[16] Likewise, Simon Dentith argues that much of the culture of rural England is only to be understood as emerging from the town.[17] This would suggest that urban bathing culture would be largely paralleled, but with a time lag reflecting differential wealth. Another factor in linking urban and rural evidence is the frequently noted paradox that the more urbanised the nation became, the more nostalgic and fixated on rurality was its identity. Dentith states this ruralism was an urban phenomenon arising from a perceived threat to rural life from an urban social order i.e. the crisis of irreversible urbanisation, and that this pastoral effect was evident in the movement of more affluent people to suburbia, which occurred in Birmingham and most major cities from the mid-nineteenth century.[18] As Howkins says, by the twentieth century this became a revolution in flight to "the real England of the countryside", which continues today.[19] The central themes of origin, growth and decay of settlements are recommended to local historians by W.G. Hoskins, and these are apt to the relationships between urban and rural towns, and of health and bathing, which is the concern of much of this thesis.[20]

The particular choices of Birmingham and Thetford were necessarily influenced by the availability and accessibility of evidence. The study arose from an undergraduate dissertation, The Historical development of Bathing at Thetford, Norfolk - From Small Rural to Expanded Town.[21] The wealth of information uncovered, vastly exceeded all expectations and made it impossible to do the subject justice. It was known that swimming was important to both places, and that sufficient material could be obtained. Another reason for studying Thetford is that it was an early and classic example of a post

Second World War expanded town, with mass movement of people and businesses from London boosting the economy and hence developmental opportunities.

Nation-wide, market towns were the focal points of rural communities, serving villages and hamlets within a 10-12 mile radius. Their spheres of influence overlapped, but they formed centres of administration, economy and social life, essential to the smaller settlements which had few inhabitants and lacked resources for providing amenities. Rural life was determined by the agricultural year, and fairs, such as Michaelmas when labour was hired, were major events. The towns were visited by travelling players and many had small theatres and developed minor spa centres. Norfolk is a rural county, with many market towns including Swaffam, Dereham, Downham Market, North Walsham, Aylsham and Stalham. Prior to expansion, Thetford was typical in size and nature, barring its medieval importance which has no real bearing on this study. Like many settlements the river was a major factor in its development and a bathing tradition developed. Town expansion seen in Thetford from the 1950s occurred in other similar towns, on a delayed time scale. Dereham is one such example, with corresponding developments in swimming.

As one of the great industrial cities, Birmingham experienced population influx and distinctive zoning of industrial and residential land during the nineteenth century, and shared the problems and opportunities presented by growth in urban sprawl and economy. It responded with the civic gospel and during the 1870s and 1880s acquired international repute. Then Chamberlain was instrumental in exporting the new civic force to the nation and empire.[22] Hence Birmingham led the last phase of the nineteenth century, and during the twentieth century it rose above Manchester and Liverpool, becoming the dominant provincial city.

Gordon Cherry's study of the geography, history and planning of Birmingham found that "events locally were mirrored in other big cities".[23] However, Asa Briggs, who studied nineteenth century towns and cities and had special interest in Birmingham, rapidly concluded that it was necessary to consider problems, such as public health,

affecting all cities, and assess what public and expert opinion did to force change. He said "there were common features in the response everywhere, although timing was different". and that Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds were similar in political outlook and provincial pride.[24] This would make similarities in terms of public services a likelihood, and these exist in municipalisation of gas, electricity and water supplies. Because of the need for generalisation of experiences, each chapter of this thesis is embedded in fundamental issues such as public health.

It is hoped that examination of the two different types of place, will contribute to the understanding of the nation-wide developments in bathing and swimming. Robert Ashton appears to support this approach as he states "local and national issues are not separate but inextricably connected".[25] The thesis examines the motives of providers and responses of participants, therefore collective and individual identities are important. These can be based on territory, customs or environment, and whilst the first is highly specific, the others are more generalised, especially the last, making similarities in different localities likely. For example, in the nineteenth century, public health problems, although variable in extent, were a major problem of cities, and of rural poverty, with ubiquitous need for a response to improve sanitation. Shared experience is more important than shared space. However, simplification of identity and community issues, means results do not necessarily apply elsewhere, and to avoid the cultural implications of home-nation identities, the study's parameters are essentially English. Appropriate links have been made between the experiences of Birmingham and Thetford, but their evidence is used as a focus rather than in direct comparison. This approach enables substantial flexibility in geographical and chronological evidence, which is essential given the bearing of developments elsewhere, and lack of existing research.

Similarly, the period studied, circa 1800 to 1970, covers a vast time scale in order to demonstrate the key developmental elements, across the urban-rural spectrum. Focusing on a limited period such as 1870-1814 would not have enabled the full picture from spas

to public pools, and health to recreation to be revealed. In 1800 industrialisation was underway. It enabled the commercial spa boom and associated development of private baths, and created the shocking living and working conditions which instigated health reform including provision of public baths and wash-houses. By 1970 facilities were widespread and swimming was popular for both sport and recreation, but major changes were imminent; local government reorganisation including leisure services; development of waterworlds with their waves, flumes and rapids; stringent health and safety regulations; and competitive training programs, increasingly scientifically formulated and delivered by professional coaches, for achievement of peak performance.

Significantly different results might be obtained elsewhere than Thetford and Birmingham, and consideration was given to including other case studies along the rural-urban continuum, in the hope of revealing similar developmental patterns with a sliding time scale, according to size. In view of the ground-breaking nature of the work, and the practicalities of handling the volume of material entailed, this was prohibitive within the confines of a PhD. Hence the main body of evidence was restricted to the most contrasting examples. As Harold Perkin states "comprehensive social history...cannot be the unaided work of one historian", and the material provided is intended as a basis for future progress.[26] Further research could test the results against other places to strengthen its accuracy and validity.

Thetford, in south-west Norfolk on the Suffolk boundary, is situated at the confluence of the Rivers Thet and Little Ouse. Settlement developed here owing to a series of fords, and evidence of its existence dates back 3,000 years. Thetford was the ancient capital of East Anglia and its ecclesiastical centre until the dissolution of the monasteries. From the late ninth century, Thetford became an important trading and industrial centre, and by the Norman conquest, was the sixth town in England. The Domesday Book records a largely agricultural town with a number of corn mills. According to Alan Crosby, Thetford then declined because the poor soil was soon

exhausted and nearby Bury St Edmunds grew. By 1350, there were 12 Norfolk market towns within a 12 mile radius, and by the late sixteenth-century, its population had fallen from pre-conquest 4,750 to 1,500. Despite Thetford's decline, Elizabeth I granted a charter, and in 1578 held Privy Council in the borough. When hunting, James I and Charles I stayed at Kings House, now Thetford Council Chambers. However, the seventeenth-century corporation was corrupt. Crosby states that "neglect, incompetence and dishonesty" were its prevalent features, and by early next century its electoral malpractices were infamous.[27]

Improved navigation, in the mid eighteenth century, facilitated transport between the port of Kings Lynn and Thetford, re-establishing it as a trading centre, and by the turn of the century it was again a flourishing market town with associated agricultural industries. Industrial development, mainly Burrell's engineering works and Fison's chemical fertiliser plant, diversified the economy and stimulated population growth, from 2,246 to 3,944, between 1801 and 1841.[28] A further boost was the 1845 opening of the London-Norwich railway, via Thetford. The town now faced acute problems. Overcrowded, insanitary dwellings and polluted water supplies resulted in an appalling public health record. As elsewhere, *democracy*, consequent of the 1835 Municipal Corporations Act, caused political upheaval. In Thetford, the Liberals seized power from the Tories, but neither party forwarded policies, and instead stressed their own financial restraint and rectitude, and alleged opposition failures. The corporation regarded government legislation as unwarranted interference, only taking action under extreme pressure. Although the 1848 cholera outbreak prompted the establishment of Thetford Local Board of Health, and appointment of a sanitary inspector and medical adviser, little progress was made.

In the following decades, epidemics were almost continuous and in 1868, Cornell Fison, a radical reformer, complained to the Privy Council. It was dissatisfied with the corporation's complacent claim to have "done all requisite for the prevention of disease and otherwise", and sent the Chief Medical Officer to make an inspection.[29] His report

mentioned obnoxious trades, overcrowding, and heaps of pig manure and garbage in back yards, stating:

> The soil is saturated with sewerage and excrementious matter....pierced in every direction by wells....from which alone inhabitants could obtain a supply of water....Many of the wells I examined contained water that was filthily dirty to the eye, nauseous to the smell, or full of living things.[30]

Its ten recommendations, including appointment of a Medical Officer of Health and provision of a sewerage system and public water supply, were deemed too expensive but after continued pressure, in 1877, the latter was implemented by the Urban Sanitary Authority, and the death rate fell steadily thereafter.[31] In 1909 sewerage proposals were rejected, and in the 1920s the corporation refused to even consider the issue, despite mortality again exceeding the national average. In 1938 45% of houses were reliant on pail closets and 32% on privy middens, with just 23% having flush toilets. Seven years later, when the Borough Medical Officer condemned the sanitary state as extremely antiquated and precarious, the council finally accepted the need for action. Next year, the Ministry of Health's inspector averred to never having heard of a case of greater necessity. The 1948 Town Clerk recalls widespread reliance on the night soil cart, and that some flush toilets drained into unlined cess-pits, others into storm-water drains, and hence the rivers. Sewerage provision was finally made between 1949 and 1952.[32]

During the inter-war period Thetford was seriously depressed. Shortly after the First World War, Burrell's, the town's staple employer, failed, causing great social and economic distress, and migration. Attempts to attract new industries failed, and Smedley's canning factory, built on the Burrell site during the Second World War, was short-lived. The economic decay was dramatically reversed by post-war town expansion; Thetford was the first to approach London County Council to accept over-spill under the 1952 Town Development Act, and Londoners started arriving in 1959. Fifty companies, light

industries, accompanied the influx and during the 1960s Thetford was England's fastest growing town. Its population stabilised around 21,000 in 1986.

Thetford's rivers are ideally suited to bathing, as they are slow flowing, with few dangerous currents. The average depth is one metre but there are shallow areas for paddling, and deep pools for diving. Hence, there is long-established use of bathing spots, with evidence dating from 1663, when Grammar School boys bathed.[33] In the nineteenth century, nude, male bathing was very popular in the Little Ouse, on the town's western outskirts.[34] Later, especially in the 1950s, the traditional spots were popular with families, and some children and teenagers still bathe. The first bathing facilities were provided in 1820 at Thetford Chalybeate Spa but it had closed by 1838. A river bathing station was established nearby in 1890. Reconstructed in 1922, it was an outdoor pool with one side open to the river. It was well-used until 1967 when the first indoor facility opened at the secondary modern school. During this decade, citizens raised money towards a new pool. In 1972, when the council provided a modern sports centre, with 25m and small teaching pools, few comparable facilities existed in the eastern region. Fire in 1994 enforced replacement, and in July 1996 it re-opened as Waterworld, a leisure, learning and competitive complex. Additionally, from 1921-1961, public washing baths were available in the guildhall basement.

Unlike Thetford, the history of Birmingham is extensively documented. At Domesday when the former was a well established town, the latter was an insignificant hamlet, but by the sixteenth century it was developing into a small industrial town, with mainly cottage industries producing small iron objects. The following century, population growth continued and industry diversified, notably with the manufacture of knives and swords. The Civil War brought setbacks, but when trade improved Birmingham expanded rapidly, and its population reached 12,000 by 1700. Many new products, including firearms, arose from local enterprise, establishing a significant export trade. Growth continued in the eighteenth century, accelerated by development of the canal network

from 1770, linking Birmingham with the major navigable rivers: Thames, Mersey, Severn, Trent, and Humber. Canals reduced import and export costs and enabled heavier goods to be made; the Soho Foundry produced steam engines. Founded in the mid 1760s, the Lunar Society had strong Birmingham connections. Members, including such innovative men as James Watt and Joseph Priestley were engaged in advancing scientific knowledge.[35]

By 1801 the population exceeded 70,000, and by 1838, had risen to 170,000.[36] The urban area was densely populated with associated poor living and working conditions, and further growth consequent of the coming of the railways: Birmingham to Liverpool (1837), and London (1838). A number of local industrialists, many with Quaker connections, became progressive employers. Cadbury's influential example is renowned. The unique blend of business acumen and social reform of founder, John Cadbury, became encapsulated in company philosophy and, at a time of tentative council action, radical solutions were found. From the 1860s, there was growing support for the principles of the civic gospel, and the era of municipalisation and municipal socialism commenced in 1873 when Joseph Chamberlain became mayor. In the twentieth century, urban sprawl led to the annexation of many surrounding settlements, and Birmingham became England's second city.

Birmingham's Lady-Well Baths, privately managed and extensive, existed as early as 1780. Bathing became popular during the early nineteenth century, so further private baths were established, and there is evidence of participation in local pools and canals. The rivers were used less, because they are largely unsuitable. A public baths campaign formed in 1840, and community fund-raising commenced four years later. The corporation quickly adopted the Baths and Wash-Houses Act but the first public facilities at Kent Street did not open until 1851. This establishment was complete with swimming pool, plunge and "private" washing baths, and laundry. Facility investment was intensive until the Second World War. By 1914 Birmingham had ten indoor and three open-air

sites. Inter-war, seven more indoor baths were built and two reconstructed, although the open-air baths had closed by 1939. Additionally, between 1908 and 1936, eight cottage baths were provided. Post-war, few public or school baths have been built, and many older establishments have closed. Organised swimming developed early and extensively, through clubs, schools and works, and the city is now committed to sports development.

The paucity of published material pertaining to the history of bathing and swimming enforced substantial reliance on primary sources. Newspapers were invaluable. Availability of The Times Index on CD-ROM enabled comprehensive search from 1750-1905, although some references are incorrectly given. Microfilm quality is variable, sometimes making text impossible to read, and copiers give poor reproduction, so laborious note-taking was entailed. However, The Times, albeit London orientated, provided vital evidence of early nineteenth-century bathing, and the development of baths and wash-houses, and school swimming. Owing to the impossibility of thoroughly searching all local papers, over such an extensive period, specific references provided by other authors were used. A local historian produced a substantial list for Thetford and collections of cuttings relating to both case studies proved useful. Thetford Women's Institute Scrapbook of the early 1960s had many interesting articles, but sadly these were mainly undated. Care is needed because selective reporting introduces bias, and contemporary attitudes distort facts, hence newspaper reports of council proceedings often differ from the relevant minutes.

Public appeals within broad outlines were made through local newspapers, and individuals likely to have knowledge were directly approached. Some correspondents were sent specific questionnaires, seeking clarification and further details. Those thought to have considerable information, and others by their request, were interviewed. Dictaphone recordings were later transcribed. Occasionally, interviewees asked that certain facts not be recorded, which was respected, but these were an aid to understanding. Pre-set, standardised questions were avoided to enable the widest

parameters, but conversations were sometimes deliberately directed, for example prompting women to discuss menstruation and bathing. Where cross-checking is not possible, oral evidence lacks total reliability, because memories fade and are often biased. However, it helped evaluate the twentieth-century participation and impact of public baths.

Where possible, bathing sites were identified and photographed, but access to Spring House, formerly Thetford Spa, was not gained. Illustrations were sought through appeals, and searches of library and school archives, yet only limited numbers found. There is a short film footage of Birmingham Kent Street Baths, but The University of East Anglia Archive video of Thetford 1936-1960 has nothing on swimming.[37] "Undress'd for the Beach", a comprehensive exhibition at Westbury Manor Museum, Fareham, 1995, gave understanding of swim-wear evolution, especially women's.

Archival material was extensively inspected at Birmingham City Archives; The University of Birmingham Library; local studies' departments at Birmingham Central, Norwich and Thetford Libraries; Norfolk and Suffolk Record Offices; Thetford Council, Ancient House Museum, and Thetford Grammar School. Resources included primary and published material, including books, journals, law statutes, Kelly's and White's Directories, maps, town guides and school magazines. In addition, Thetford Boys' and Girls' Council Schools' log books (1870-1970) were viewed. Considerable problems were experienced in accessing material, owing to poor cataloguing and missing items, in particular a large proportion of the ASA's archive was on loan; Norwich Library, including the county record office, was gutted by fire in 1995; and Thetford's Baths Committee Minutes from 1922 to 1945 were mislaid, although the Town Clerk's Correspondence Files proved a most enlightening substitute, and the minutes of council proceedings included Baths Committee reports. Indices at Thetford Library and Council Chambers were incomplete, but staff at both produced useful, uncatalogued material,

including a large parcel labelled "Pool Acc", relating to the 1960s pool fund. The museum and grammar school archives were not catalogued.

Council minutes were a vital source of information for both case studies, especially Birmingham, where the complete set relating to bathing (1843-1970) was examined and copious notes made. Some handwriting was hard to decipher, and the meaning at times obscure. Theses, by Denis Molyneux, Terence Monnington and Douglas Reid, concerning aspects of sport and leisure in the Birmingham area, from the university's collection were of great value. SportsDiscus on CD-ROM provided many references, although some were unavailable. The internet was another research tool, but little specific information is published. The broad scope of the study has involved extensive background reading, and a comprehensive bibliography is included.

The central theme of the thesis is the changing emphasis of bathing provision and participation. "Bathing" and "swimming" are used largely synonymously to describe activities involving immersion, but the former implies greater passivity and is often applied where health underlies motivation. Other aquatic activities are alluded to where relevant, but swimming as a serious competitive sport and sea-bathing are largely excluded. Both subjects are vast, involving different issues, and whilst research is needed on the former, the latter has been investigated, particularly by James Walvin.[38] It is important to realise that individual bath tubs are known as "private baths", as are privately-owned establishments, and that unless otherwise specified, the baths named in the text are located in Birmingham.

The text consists of four sections: Health in the Development of Bathing and Swimming, Community Functions of Public Baths, Women's Swimming and Club Swimming. Each commences with a synopsis, clearly stating the main areas of discussion and key findings, and concludes with an overview chapter. Part I investigates the role of health in promoting participation and provision. Tracing developments from spas to public baths, and in school swimming, it demonstrates progress from curative to

preventative, and more holistic welfare focus. The benefits of participation are examined, revealing the importance for recreation as well as health and safety. Part II examines community functions of public baths, their diversity and total importance. The relationships between providers and participants are evaluated and, although health issues were fundamental in provision, it contends that recreation was the primary outcome of usage. Parts III and IV investigate significant user groups in more detail, identifying their opportunities and the factors influencing participation, and its implications. Part III explores women's participation in swimming, arguing their opportunities were considerable, whilst Part IV looks at development of clubs, their nature, and transformation post Second World War. Overall, it is propounded that health issues, including safety, were primarily responsible for provision, but recreation became the primary motive for, and outcome of participation.

Notes - Introduction

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PART I

HEALTH IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF BATHING AND SWIMMING

I.1 Synopsis

Part I examines the role of health in promoting bathing participation and provision, and changing emphasis from curative to preventative and more holistic welfare. Chapter One investigates the rise of commercialised spa resorts from 1800-1850, evaluating the health and leisure benefits. Prescribed treatments often proved beneficial, despite lack of scientific basis, but dishonest practices, mismanagement and growing competition caused downfall. The spas' legacy was long lasting: acceptance of healthy immersion, facility development, and influence on baths' services including provision for the poor. Chapter Two considers development of public baths and wash-houses. It argues provision, always affected by finance, resulted from increased outdoor bathing which offended propriety and the 1840s health debate. Attracting widespread support, the movement for improving working-class health and morals was an early and most successful manifestation of the sanitary revolution. Provision was demand led and expansion rapid. However, for many years baths' standards of health and safety were questionable; water purity became an issue inter-war and safety received increasing attention post Second World War. Chapter Three traces development of school swimming, and its relationship with physical education from military origins to welfare policy. Swimming was slightly advanced in public schools but spearheaded state physical education.

I.2 Introduction

Health was the primary instigator of bathing participation and provision of facilities. Three chapters, "Spadom", "Public Health and Baths" and "School Swimming" demonstrate changing motivation from curative, to preventative and more holistic welfare. Spas, which established facilities for bathing and its rational practice, boomed during the first half of the nineteenth century. This caused spread of private baths and strongly influenced development of public facilities. Ironically, the latter were critical in spas' post 1850 decline. Significant features of spa mania were commercialisation of bathing and leisure, and the associated endemic greed, collusion and quackery. Medical support was vital, and although treatments lacked scientific basis many patrons genuinely benefited.

In the nineteenth century, the impact of industrialisation developed concern for the working class, and the consequent promotion of cleanliness increased outdoor bathing. Affront to propriety led to bans, but bathers' persistence highlighted needs and instigated calls for provision. The Baths and Wash-Houses movement arose from the 1840s health debate, and soon gained momentum. Throughout the century, progress was dominated by the sanitary revolution, an acceptable reform choice serving middle and upper-class interests, including social reconciliation, and public baths provision attracted widespread support. Albeit permissive, the 1846 Baths and Wash-Houses Act was extremely successful, enabling provision and promoting participation. Provision occurred in three phases: pre First World War, inter-war and post-war, and was primarily demand driven, with facilities in accordance with community needs and requests. In addition to working-class health, key influences were safety and decency issues, municipal socialism and, most importantly, finance. However, was participation truly beneficial to health and safety? For many years baths' standards were undesirable, largely due to lack of effective water

treatment and staff. Inter-war, water purity became a major issue, and post-war, safety received increasing attention against a background of growing public expectations.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, concerns for economic and military strength brought realisation that sanitation was insufficient. A new welfare focus was implemented through physical programs at educational and works institutions. Chapter Three examines the development of school swimming and importance of welfare. Safety concerns motivated early provision, and progress was aided by health reforms and expanding public awareness of the issues involved. Swimming was not considered character-building, but was rationalised and believed to benefit mental health and morality. But welfare for whom? Participants definitely benefited, but it is theorised that national interests of security and economy were underlying motives for provision. The relationship between school swimming and physical education is traced from common military roots to educational welfare policy. Swimming is viewed as significant for early and widespread provision with public schools hardly leading the state sector, in which the activity spearheaded development of physical education. The key issues identified as affecting progress are: public support, availability of facilities including instruction, and finance.

CHAPTER 1: SPADOM - TAKING THE CURE

1.1 The Historical Background of Bathing for Health

Bathing for health is an ancient practice and reference to the beneficial properties of certain spring waters appear in the earliest historical records of civilised nations. Such waters were considered magical and often believed to be gifted by a god or saint. The Greek and Roman Civilisations greatly developed bathing for "sanitas", meaning health. As the latter's empire expanded, bathing was widely promoted and the first spas were established in many provinces. The Romans popularised bathing in England, developing Bath's hot springs and introducing immersion. However, Bath's legendary dates to the ninth century BC, and springs elsewhere had been used prior to the invasion.

During the Middle Ages bathing largely fell into disuse. Anything pertaining to the body was held in contempt, and water was feared and considered responsible for the spread of disease, frequently epidemic. The church regarded warm baths as sinful but tolerated mineral springs, considering them "holy wells". These were primarily used by the poor, but some aristocrats swam, mainly to ensure their safety. Beyond preservation of health, bathing was deemed to have little purpose. The early Tudor period saw renewed interest, but the Reformation suppressed the trend and Puritans with their inflexible moral attitudes, abstained from all pleasurable activity. In 1574 the Vice Chancellor of Cambridge University decreed against river bathing. Both Henry VIII and later Oliver Cromwell objected to the religious overtones of use of mineral waters, and public gatherings were feared as dens of iniquity. Following the 1605 Gunpowder Plot, aimed at deposing the Protestant James I, pressure on Catholics increased, and the government attempted to prohibit public bathing and quaffing at holy wells and mineral waters. However, Catholic recusants began travelling to Spa, in the Spanish Netherlands, ostensibly to take the waters, and such emigration threatened national security by the possibility of their assistance in an invasion. This, together with public reluctance to

abandon traditional use of holy wells for cures, forced a policy review and the ban was lifted. As stated by Phyllis Hembry, only a limited number of springs were promoted, but with a more secular, scientific approach, shorn of religious context.[1]

Following the Restoration, Charles II promoted sport and recreation, and the scope for healthful exercise expanded rapidly. Increased medical interest in balneology helped lessen fears and the search for new springs commenced. As public anxiety dissipated, and the aristocracy became increasingly health conscious, immersion was accepted as having curative powers. Taking the waters became fashionable, although drinking remained the predominant method. According to Ernest Turner, this was because of the nation's paucity of thermal springs.[2] From the early seventeenth century, the word "spa" or "spaw" was used, and in England "spa" became a generic term to describe resorts where people went both to bathe and quaff. This text adopts Hembry's definition, which regards a spa as having facilities developed around the site, approval by a medical practitioner and serving more than the local community. It excludes numerous healing springs which, although called spas, were merely local wells or watercourses channelled into a basin. Hembry's map of English Spas 1560-1815 shows 152, including 17 in London and 10 on the coast.[3]

Coastal spas developed from the start of the seventeenth century, inspired and greatly influenced by those inland. Early eighteenth-century doctors recommended sea-bathing and by 1735 both sexes were participating, although dipping rather than swimming. Doctors, ever seeking new miracle springs, soon realised any coastal location had health-resort potential, and a 1750 book by Dr Richard Lewes extolled the virtues of bathing and sea air.[4] Sea-water treatments were deemed to maintain health as well as effect cures and, although less sophisticated, coastal spas were cheaper and better suited to families. They rapidly gained popularity and by 1850 large numbers of the middle class were taking an annual vacation by train. When cheap day-trips instigated similar working-class exodus, the middle and upper classes sought more remote locations, travelled

abroad, or took out of season holidays, irrevocably changing the nature of sea-side resorts. Although belief persisted in the therapeutic values of sea water, air and subsequently sunshine, the new clientele primarily sought leisure with bathing and paddling immensely popular.

From the late seventeenth century, commercialisation, aided by growth of publications, cultivated spas as health resorts, and tapped the nation's growing affluence. Urban spas and a plethora of minor rural ones developed. Facilitated by improved travel, the trend gathered pace in the eighteenth century, creating a spa mania and establishing the holiday industry. Immersion became more common, but remained predominantly medicinal rather than cleansing. The Industrial Revolution expanded the consumer market by creating a large, affluent middle class, keen to appropriate upper-class customs and, despite recession consequent of the Napoleonic Wars, spas boomed during the first half of the nineteenth century. The principal watering places of Bath, Cheltenham, Leamington and Tunbridge Wells, together with 11 seaside resorts, saw population increase of 254%, more than any other type of town.[5]

1.2 Medical Theory of Spa Treatments and the Role of Doctors

From the late Renaissance, medical men displayed increasing interest in the benefits of minerals, believing nature possessed a cure for all ills. Emerging spring water was thought to hold an innate curative principle, although its character and effects were largely speculation. Roger Rolls states that patients expected health to be restored by absorbing "an etherial quintessence", and given prolonged association of religion with mineral water cures, this is a credible explanation. Doctors lacked adequate analytical techniques, and understanding of disease processes. Traditional aetiology was based on the ancient Greek theory of imbalance between body humours: blood, phlegm, choler (yellow bile) and melancholy (black bile). Hence, Bath's waters, which were warm and dry, in terms of

mineral properties, remedied excess phlegm, believed to be cold and wet. By the mid-eighteenth century this approach was considered overly simplistic and attention switched to purgative treatments. Mineral waters were used to dilute and wash out the malicious humours and noxious effluvia which had built up in a body part causing it disease.[6]

The main methods used were applying water as a panacea and attacking prominent symptoms. The former had clear commercial advantages and most watering places claimed to cure a wide range of conditions. However, mineral waters had differing properties and strengths, and hence efficacy. Lawrence Wright states the purpose of analysing a water was to determine its appropriate applications, but it was also fundamental to competition. In particular, minor spas promoted their water's similarity with those well-known, and Frederick Accum compared Thetford's to Tunbridge Wells'.[7] Although established tests determined water content these were somewhat inaccurate, theories were fanciful, and how dissolved minerals acted was largely speculative. Dr Patrick Maddan's, A Philosophical and Medicinal Essay on the Waters of Tunbridge (1687) was an extreme example. His many claims included the boast that if a universal remedy existed, it was Tunbridge Wells' Water whose "chalcanteous or vitriolic juice" moved the belly to "blackish excretion" and provoked copious urine, whilst "volatolising the effete and 'depauperated' blood".[8] Imprecise diagnostic nomenclature used in patient reports makes retrospective study difficult, but according to Rolls, doctors manipulated their limited knowledge to justify prescribed treatments. In 1799 the placebo effect was investigated and heralded more critical evaluation, yet in 1841 Augustus Granville found the methodology was generally unchanged.[9] However, as scientific knowledge advanced, medical opinion became increasingly divided. Whereas, in the first half of the century, growing interest in science encouraged analysis and use of water cures, by the early twentieth century, according to K. Denbigh, availability of synthetic drugs reduced their credibility and favour.[10] Perhaps fear of this eventuality was why spa doctors previously claimed drug treatments nullified waters' effects.

Support from the medical profession was vital. In addition to referring and treating patients, doctors played a critical role in spa promotion. They analysed waters and wrote numerous treatises, rhetorically disguising lack of scientific evidence, and extolling their spa's virtues to inveigle visitants. In 1746 Matthew Manning, a Thetford physician accredited with discovering the town's chalybeate spring, eulogised its water in an analytical treatise, and Dr Russell mentioned it in a 1760 work. Publicity was essential and, in addition to medical details, spa literature often included historical and descriptive accounts of the local area. Accum's Guide to the Mineral Spring of Thetford (1819), gives copious details.[11] Hembry considers such texts are part of a general move towards the town-history genre. Leigh Hunt's 1860 study of Thetford, Capital of the Ancient Kingdom of East Anglia is grandiose and partially speculative, but gives a basically factual, nineteenth-century account. He praised Accum's work in ascertaining the properties and medical virtues of Thetford's "very remarkable spa". There was also a growing number of spa survey compilations including seventeenth-century Celia Fiennes's, and Granville's definitive nineteenth-century account.[12]

Hembry found medical men associated with 21 of the 48 spas established between 1660 and 1815, and that they were increasingly involved during subsequent boom decades.[13] Nineteenth-century spa clientele was more discriminating and had higher expectations, requiring far greater investment. Post 1815, spas were usually promoted by a syndicate, often including a medical expert, rather than a sole landowner. In 1818 Thetford Chalybeate Spring was enclosed by the corporation, and the poor and sick had free usage. Excitement generated by the derived benefits resulted in moves towards it becoming a spa. The following year, Accum of London, a chemical professor and author of several provincial spa guides, was appointed to analyse the water. He pronounced it "a highly valuable and powerful Chalybeate", bearing strong resemblance to that at the renowned Tunbridge Wells. His analysis, together with increasing visitors and attested cases of restored health, prompted the 1820 formation of Thetford Mineral Spring

Company. Its intention was to develop a fashionable health resort. £1,500 was raised in £20 shares and it was resolved that the spring and adjoining field should be taken on a lease, a pump-room and baths erected, and other improvements effected for public accommodation. The Spring Committee was appointed to carry out these resolutions.[14]

Spas had great commercial potential and the doctor's role was very profitable. According to Rolls, it was every aspiring, eighteenth-century doctor's ambition to gain a foothold in the trade, and this remained true in the nineteenth century.[15] In addition to fat consultancy fees from business syndicates and patients, many spa doctors were shareholders. Dr Jephson of Leamington Spa had interests in several local enterprises, and at Thetford both Accum and local doctor, H.W. Bailey, were financially involved.[16] Although the mayor stated that public benefit was the principal motive for the considerable outlay, and the title page of Accum's guide praised the citizens, "united and disinterested exertions", the shareholders' objectives appear commercially orientated rather than altruistic. One of the joint landowners of Spring Meadow, the spa site, held shares, but the original initiative came from Messrs Munn of the nearby paper mill, who sought to organise a mineral water trade with 60 agents throughout East Anglia. Sale of bottled water was a spin-off trade from spas' commercialisation and, according to Hembry, by 1816 was profitable for 36 nation-wide.[17] By June 1819 Thetford had secured considerable custom. Dr Bailey, writing to Accum, said the superintendent had informed him that 120-160 gallons were bottled daily and despatched to adjoining counties. Nine months later, when the pump-room opening was imminent, the company had sold upwards of 15,000 gallons and gratuitously distributed considerable amounts to residents. Bottles cost 2/6 per dozen, which seems cheap when compared with Purton Spa's 1869-1880 charge of 12/-.[18] Thetford's other investors were local dignitaries and business men. Some served on the notorious corporation, including Mayor Faux, "a wily sort of person and having an eye on deriving an extra penny or two for the coffers of Thetford", and J. Burrell whose engineering firm, founded in 1803, was expanding.[19] In

addition to direct profits, shareholders from the industrial and commercial sectors stood to benefit from the town's increased exposure and any health benefits derived by the work-force.

Collusion to maximise profits was commonplace. The economic advantage of persuading patients to take local lodgings is obvious and Thetford's visitors were recommended to apply to the Spa Superintendent, yet another shareholder, for a list of "genteel ready furnished lodgings".[20] No doubt he and his colleagues benefited from channelling trade; certainly two children stayed with Dr Jas Best. Accum's continued involvement is particularly suspect, as it far exceeded his scientific expertise. He was even contracted for "furnishing and fitting up the Baths, with Pumps, Coppers, and all necessary Apparatus".[21] His guide strongly recommended external applications of the water, and an entire chapter was devoted to bathing instructions and observations. Thus he probably convinced the others that provision for bathing, popular elsewhere, in addition to the existing quaffing would be highly profitable. Thetford Spa opened in 1820, and in May 1821 an advertisement in the Bury and Norwich Post read:

> Hot or Cold Baths, either Chalybeate or Common Water may be had from six o'clock in the Morning to Nine in the Evening, at half an hour's notice, unless engaged.[22]

Growing availability of coal led spa patrons to expect warm baths, and these became the norm by 1824. At this time, recent improvements to the Little Ouse had made Thetford accessible by river, permitting import of coal and export of agricultural products. Accum declared that using the warm bath, two or three times a week, would renovate the emaciated and retard old-age infirmities. In addition, for treating various diseases and promoting cleanliness, he considered it a great luxury and that the resultant tranquil state of mind and body was "exquisitively delightful". He felt it "quite impossible to recommend it too strongly".[23] It is unclear whether the Thetford establishment had private or communal facilities, but many spa complexes had plunge or swimming baths.

Peter Havins and Turner agree that doctors emphasised that spring waters were best utilised at source because they lost much of their value on surfacing and did not travel well. Accum's guide explains that, when fresh Thetford's water was effervescent, "as transparent as rock crystal and perfectly colourless", but because of the iron suspension became turbid within a few hours and precipitated within 24, losing the beneficial properties. Hence, conveying it any distance was inadvisable.[24] In fact, water may lose some solutes on surfacing, and according to Bruce Osborne and Cara Weaver, chalybeates are renowned for precipitating ferrous oxide. They state that because chalybeates were distasteful they were rarely used medicinally, and would dispute Accum's claim that Thetford's water was "distinctly chalybeate and by no means unpleasant". He also compared its odour favourably to that of iron in contact with water.[25] It must have been most unpalatable, but the commercial implications are axiomatic.

Similarly, the need for strict medical supervision was stressed. In the seventeenth century, Maddan warned that without a physician's advice, Tunbridge Wells' water could prove "a Sword in a Mad Man's hand".[26] At Thetford, in 1819, Accum recommended consulting not one, but two or three doctors of high repute, well acquainted with the spa, undoubtedly conspiring with his fellow shareholder Dr Bailey, and colleague Dr Best. The latter, writing to a London physician, stated that in his experience the water was undoubtedly beneficial for treating various "morbid conditions", provided its use was regulated. Accum's guide indicated the folly of disregarding medical advice by stating the potential dangers. It gave lengthy, complex descriptions of treatments, which would have baffled the reader into seeking guidance (see the title-page, overleaf). Despite claiming to have undervalued, rather than overrated, the spring, it is unlikely Accum's assessments were reliable and unbiased.

GUIDE

TO THE

CHALYBEATE SPRING

OF

Thetford,

EXHIBITING

THE GENERAL AND PRIMARY EFFECTS OF THE THETFORD SPA—RULES ESSENTIAL TO BE OBSERVED WHILST TAKING A COURSE OF THE WATERS—AN ACCOUNT OF THE DISEASES IN WHICH IT WILL MOST PROBABLY BE FOUND EFFICACIOUS—CAUTIONARY HINTS AGAINST THE INDISCRIMINATE USE OF THIS WATER IN DISEASES TO WHICH IT IS INAPPLICABLE, AND TESTIMONIALS OF MEDICAL MEN, SHOWING THE CURATIVE EFFECTS OF THE SPA IN CERTAIN OBSTINATE AND LINGERING MALADIES;

WITH

OBSERVATIONS ON BATHING,

AND A SKETCH

OF THE

History and Present State of Thetford.

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WITH COPPER PLATES.

London:

SOLD BY T. BOYS, 7, LUDGATE HILL;

AT THE SPA BY THE SUPERINTENDANT; AND BY ALL THE BOOKSELLERS AT THETFORD, BURY ST. EDMUNDS, NORWICH, AND DEREHAM.

1819.

Accum's Guide (Norfolk Library and Information Service - Thetford Local Studies)

Ironically, even with medical direction, spa treatments could be hazardous. In the eighteenth century, hygiene was not a prime consideration and baths were often dirt-encrusted and slimy. Bathers sometimes contracted bath mantle, characterised by a pimply rash, and as conditions were ideal for spreading contagious diseases, cross contamination was likely. Animal excrement was a common pollutant. Even in 1956 Bath's water became contaminated by avian bacteria, and treatments finally ceased in 1978 after a meningitis fatality, caused by bathing.[27]

Originally, spa treatment focused on quaffing but from the late seventeenth century bathing rapidly developed, and by early next century it was commonplace at inland and coastal resorts. According to Rolls, by the time Bath Mineral Water Hospital was founded in 1738, drinking was only supplementary.[28] Expansion of bathing continued and an 1820 bathing treatise, published in Birmingham, stated that owing to the historical success of its use by physicians "to this day many nations cure almost all their maladies merely by baths", and stressed the need for promotion.[29]

Predominant use of external water cures appears to have encouraged growth of baths establishments in urban areas. Norwich had baths in 1789, Leeds by 1820, Exeter and Sunderland the following year, and Liverpool, Manchester, Wakefield and York within two decades. Although Hembry refers to these as public baths, they were mostly privately managed, because prior to the 1846 Baths and Wash-Houses Act authorities were not legally empowered to provide facilities.[30] Such baths were not usually supplied by mineral springs, but were influenced by and benefited from the contemporary spa boom, with some deliberately aping spas.

Hembry considers Norwich, with hot, tepid and cold baths a pioneer, but Birmingham's Lady-Well Baths were established nine years earlier, in 1780. William Hutton, prominent local historian, claimed they were the most complete in the whole island with hot and cold baths always available for immersion or amusement. He mentions seven, including a swimming bath, costing almost £2,000, but the bathing treatise (first

edition, circa 1815) details only six: a ladies bath, two cold, one temperate, two hot baths (one adjustable), and a large, open-air swimming pool. Although supplied by common-water springs, in many respects Lady-Well Baths were similar to spas, including emphasis on the health benefits of bathing, provision for poor people and a rhetorical bathing treatise. Furthermore, according to Walter Showell, the original Lady Well was a holy well, dedicated to the blessed Virgin. It was close to a house which for centuries had sheltered priests from St Martin's, later known as the parsonage or rectory, and alluded to in an 1347 document as a "dwelling in Edgebaston Strete leading towards God well feld".[31]

The bathing treatise gives copious detail of the effects of cold, warm and hot baths. Both the 1815 and 1820 editions list four doctors and, whilst it is uncertain whether they were on-site, bath five could be adjusted in temperature according to the directions of physician or bather, and was proclaimed a "valuable acquisition to the town" with its "great utility in a variety of cases...attested by hundreds". This must be gross exaggeration, because no case studies or testimonies are given and comparatively few people could have afforded such luxury; it was constructed of veined marble and had a warm dressing room. The establishment was very concerned with restoring and maintaining health, and had lengthy poetic inscriptions on mural tablets, extolling the benefits of bathing. Those in the ladies' bath, gentlemen's cold bath and pool respectively, promised restoration of good health, enduring health and success where medicine had failed, and that swimming was the purest exercise, improving quality of life and safety.[32]

During the first half of the nineteenth century, when spa mania was accelerating, Birmingham grew rapidly in size and wealth. In common with existing spas, the already luxurious Lady-Well Baths were further developed. Between 1815 and 1820, the proprietor invested substantially in repairs and improvements, including sinking a deeper well. Although this was partly necessitated by the falling water table, caused by increased industrial and domestic extraction, it suggests growing demand. Prosperity was enduring

as Mr Munrow, the 1820s owner, built a handsome house, and made further improvements and additions. William West's Topography of Warwickshire (1830) lists these, giving the cost as exceeding £2,000. There were now ten "invaluable" baths.[33]

From the late eighteenth century, there was growing demand for hot as well as cold baths, as it was widely believed that temperature largely determined the effects. Birmingham's bathing treatise strongly recommended cold baths for chronic sufferers, children and the healthy, but temperate ones for those unable to withstand the shock. It concurs with Accum's guide that age-related conditions particularly profited from hot water. The thermal waters of Bath, Bristol, Buxton and Matlock were the most accessible to poorly served midlanders, and from at least 1815 Lady-Well's hot bath was adjustable to simulate these and others, and its temperate bath could be rendered to the 82°F of Buxton's waters. These, and Matlock's, were also reproduced at Leed's baths by 1820. Convenient and regularly accessible spa-type baths would have been a great attraction, hence mimicry indicates rivalry. As transport links improved, competition with proven watering-places, especially coastal and foreign, escalated, forcing aspiring spas to emulate their facilities. By 1830 Lady-Well Baths offered "artificial water" resembling that of the major contemporary spas: Harrogate, Leamington and Cheltenham. Havins states that virtually all spas surviving by the turn of the century had waters resembling most major English and continental resorts.[34]

As clients became more discerning and sophisticated, spa treatments became diversified and increasingly exotic. At Lady-Well, sulphide, aromatic, tropical, and fumigating or vapour baths were introduced, and the latest shower baths installed. Bedrooms and private apartments were available, and the water level could be raised to that of the dressing room to accommodate invalids. The ladies' department, in a separate building, included a Jewish Bath complying with the high priest's requirements. By 1849 the complex had expanded to 19 baths, including a £4,000 swimming pool.[35] Two years later, advertisements in the Birmingham Journal show Lady-Well still catering for the

elite. Patrons were waited upon by "respectable and obliging attendants". The facilities. now overhauled, offered warm and cold, plunging and shower baths, and the "Pleasure Swimming Bath". However, Monro had moved his sulphurous, fumigating and medicated vapour baths to Snow Hill. These purportedly cured many complaints including scurvy and diabetes, relieving internal inflammation by aping nature; drawing blood to the surface and promoting skin secretion. Monro claimed to achieve success where all other modes of treatment had failed, and certainly these baths would kill germs.[36] Until the Second World War, buildings where there had been diphtheria and other highly contagious diseases were fumigated by burning sulphur. In 1846 new baths were established at George Street, in the wealthy suburb of Balsall Heath. Open for the season, they were, according to civil engineer Robert Rawlinson, "situated in a most salubrious atmosphere" and had a continual supply of pure water.[37]

Spa doctors prescribed complex internal and external treatments, with detailed protocol of when, how, and the order or combination which should be taken. Outstanding results were claimed, and published in local papers. Rolls considers these should be viewed sceptically as demonstrating high cure rates was commercially essential.[38] Unfortunately, a spa could fall victim to its own success. Sensational recoveries, especially of well-known people, attracted cases which proved incurable, causing disrepute. Quackery was endemic in the spa business, with bevies of medical men relieving the gullible and desperate of large fees. A 1709 visitor to Bath remarked that physicians were numerous, and he had been cured of more diseases in one week than he had suffered in his lifetime.[39] Limited medical knowledge prevented accurate diagnosis and scientifically-based treatment. Whilst physicians held an appropriate degree, surgeons and apothecaries learnt by apprenticeship. At the end of the eighteenth century these practitioners could, if sponsored by a medical graduate, purchase their degree from the new Scottish Universities, a system clearly open to abuse. Nevertheless, Hembry is almost

certainly correct in claiming growth of the medical profession aided the expansion of spas.[40]

Treatments were usually holistic, with attention to diet, exercise and fresh air. Many patients may have benefited from the changed lifestyle and environment, or placebo effect. The latter would be very effective if illness was psychosomatic or psychological, such as ladies suffering socially-constructed weaknesses. According to Eric Baxter, Dr Jephson of Leamington Spa had a remarkable reputation, reaching the height of fame in 1832. He adapted customary spa treatments and gave sound, general advice. His patients who were resident for six weeks, took the waters and medicines, ate a plain, limited diet, exercised and maintained regular hours. It was decreed that they must have absolute faith in the doctor, and follow his instructions to the letter.[41] The latter provided a loop-hole but improvement was likely.

Treatments were often prolonged, and at Bath Mineral Water Hospital the standard admission was six months.[42] Lengthy stays enabled natural progress, a view supported by the unsuccessful experiences of the new rich. Speed was the essence of commercialised and industrialised nineteenth-century society, and consequent short stays halted progression. As treatments were too unscientific to have much real benefit, results were frequently unsatisfactory, and Havins states that disappointment lent support to mid-Victorian, anti-hydropathic campaigns.[43] It may also have contributed to spas' decline. Naturally-occurring improvement must have been significant because, as well as quackery, malpractice was commonplace. When the saline spring at Epsom ran dry, locals filled the well with ordinary water, so any benefits to visiting Londoners would mainly have been due to the clear atmosphere. Thomas Powell, in Tom of all Trades, The Plain Pathway to Preferment (1631), indicated the ease with which physicians could be fraudulent::

> And if all fail. And if the Bath will afford no room: Let them find out some strange water, some unheard of spring. It is an easy matter to discolour or alter the taste of it in some measure (it makes no matter how little). Report strange cures that it hath done. Beget a superstitious opinion on it. Good fellowship shall uphold it. And the neighbouring towns shall all swear for it.[44]

However, in 1752, Smollett investigated external applications of water and suggested efficacy resulted from its inherent properties rather than foreign substances, an unpopular opinion which has recently been substantiated. In 1985 Drs O'Hare and Heywood compared the effects of tap and Bath mineral water, revealing prolonged immersion in either produced profound but identical physiological changes, and, according to Osborne and Weaver, space research has shown immersion causes redistribution of body fluids.[45] Dr Harcup, Chairman of the Medical Advisory Committee of the British Spas Federation is fascinated by the way modern science is proving nineteenth-century doctors right. He says,

> Immersion in cold water stimulates the kidneys and produces a number of extra hormones. The heart rate changes in water. It's a natural way of altering the fluid balance, without the use of drugs. It produces immunities.[46]

Unfortunately for Thetford Spa, unscrupulous people bottled river water, which was almost certainly polluted. To counteract this stigma, the Spring Committee announced that special stoneware containers would be sealed "Thetford Chalybeate Spring".[47] One of these is exhibited at Thetford Ancient House Museum.

Some treatments were genuinely advantageous. In the eighteenth century, metal poisoning, through industrial and water pollution, was a growing problem, especially amongst the urban working class. Rolls states that painters, refiners, plumbers and glass workers were frequently affected, and physicians were aware that these trades exposed partisans to the pernicious effects of lead.[48] Bath's waters probably proved effective because the increased calcium intake would facilitate elimination of metals from the body.

Space research has shown imbibing water with high sodium and calcium content encourages expulsion of lead, and E.G. Baxter states that modern medical research found Bath's waters cured Colica Pictorium, a condition caused by lead poisoning. He conjectures this explains Roman use. Their lifestyle was gregarious, and Osborne and Weaver link gout with lead poisoning through food production and storage processes.[49] Gout was a common complaint amongst the affluent English, and during the nineteenth century increasingly afflicted the working class, as their living conditions improved and diet became more varied. Considerable improvements could be attained by taking the waters and adopting a healthier lifestyle. In the early twentieth century, effects of radium were recognised and Bath's waters discovered to be radioactive. This and other constituents, including salt, have found transient favour in the history of water treatments. Patients have taken the cure in every imaginable form. From the mid nineteenth century, methods became increasingly complex and reliant on appliances:

> They have been immersed in it, had it sprayed and douched in every possible bodily orifice, suffered it hot and cold or mixed with pine and sulphur, tasted it neat or mixed with cardamoms, sat steaming in it in a sweating box, had it mixed with mud and been subjected to electric shocks through it.[50]

Nevertheless spas declined. Limited treatments persisted until the late 1970s, but only hydrotherapy has remained important, for treatment of the injured and disabled, and it no longer uses mineral waters.

1.3 Nineteenth-Century Boom

There was proliferation of spas in the early nineteenth century. The peak decade, the 1830s, saw 30 new ventures and numerous improvements.[51] Spa mania was aided by improved roads, development of coaching routes and commercialised transport. With the continent closed and threat of invasion, between 1790 and 1815, inland spas had lacked

competition and tapped the growing leisure market. Nineteenth-century spas were predominantly patronised by the expanding middle classes, created by growing affluence in agriculture, commerce and industry, rather than the aristocracy Consequently, new resorts developed, challenging the supremacy of traditional spas, and numerous minor ventures jumped on the bandwagon.

Thetford was a typical minor spa. It was located on the eastern outskirts of town, in Spring Meadow, a narrow strip of land between two rivers, The Little Ouse and The Thet. Exactly when the spring's curative powers were recognised is unknown, but Manning's treatise was published in 1746. It is also mentioned in Vanishing Spas (1760), pre 1820 editions of Encyclopaedia Britannica, and listed as one of Europe's mineral springs in Brooks Natural History.[52] The spring was not developed until 1818, when many invalids were attracted to this "fountain of health". The large influx must have been strongly influenced by Rev. C.H. Manning, Headmaster of Thetford Grammar School, who wrote an English memoir of the 1746 analysis; a scholarly, Latin treatise, inaccessible to most people. Interest was so great that the spring was enclosed, the ground around it cleared and a stone pavement laid.[53]

Despite suggestion of much earlier use, there is no real evidence. H.W.D., writing for the Gentleman's Magazine in 1821, accredits Manning with being "primarily instrumental" in the spring's rediscovery after "the probable lapse of ages". Hunt (1860) attributes him with investigation of its mineral properties, but also infers earlier usage, and Thetford historian Jim Deacon, speculates that the spring may have been used by the Romans.[54] On Peutinger's maps of The Empire, Thetford, known as Sitomagus, is the only place of importance in East Anglia. Major archaeological discoveries include the Thetford Treasure, 81 objects dating to the 4th century BC, thought to indicate existence of a local temple. Although the Romans promoted bathing throughout Europe, Thetford's spring was small and cold, so exploitation was unlikely.

Rapid growth of towns from the late eighteenth century negatively affected living conditions and health. Consequently, urban spas were founded, but provision in the rapidly developing midlands remained inadequate, despite the potential demand and availability of coal. There were a number of insignificant local springs and wells, and the nearest spa centres, including Malvern and Droitwich, were comparatively small, generally cold, and unattractive. Leamington Priors, 22 miles south-east of Birmingham, was the most prosperous. In 1792 its expansion was fostered by the Warwickshire Canal's construction and, by 1806, visitors had a choice of five sites for drinking and four for bathing.[55] Birmingham's closest answer to the spa mania was Lady-Well Baths, but wealthy residents would have travelled further afield to provincial spas such as fashionable Cheltenham, especially as communication links improved.

Industrialisation created a distinct leisure class whose members' status was maintained by conspicuous consumption. This group withdrew from mainstream leisure, participating in expensive, hence privatised, activities. After the Napoleonic Wars, royalty and aristocracy increasingly patronised the more exclusive and vibrant, continental spas, whilst English resorts catered more for the expanding middle class who emulated upper-class manners. Thus, visitors' social standing was crucial to popularity and much publicised, and watering places offered eminent personages incentives and gifts. According to Searle, Cheltenham's guests of 1823 included four dukes, three duchesses, six marquises, four bishops, 10 earls, eight countesses, 53 lords, 70 ladies and many honourables.[56] The rivalry increased with growing competition. In 1819, when efforts were being made to develop Thetford as a fashionable spa, Accum's guide refers to the courteous, sociable inhabitants, and he arrogantly suggested that provided they remained welcoming, "The City of The East" might become "as eminent for its waters, as another far famed city of England, has long been for its waters in the west".[57]

On 13th September 1819, the Duke of Grafton, Lord Lieutenant of Suffolk and Recorder of Thetford, presided over the pump-room, stone-laying ceremony. Flags flown

from the many churches, town hall and, historic mound, Castle Hill, drew attention to the event, and a large crowd gathered. The Spa Superintendent, carrying a standard inscribed "Thetford Spa - Fountain of Health", led a grand procession from the Guildhall. Other flag bearers and constables preceded the master mason carrying a silver trowel, and the master bricklayer bearing the plans. Next came the Spring Committee and Thetford Corporation with their insignia and banners, with the mayor and other local dignitaries accompanying the duke. Celebrations continued into the evening with a sumptuous dinner for 115 at the decorated Guildhall. A Mr Winkup performed his composition, to the tune of the National Anthem, praising the venture and expressing hope that the spring with its healing virtues would flow forever.[58]

The following month, HRH William Frederick, sixth Duke of Gloucester and regular spa patron, inspected progress at the site, "encourag'd and commended the design", and declared the chalybeate water stronger than Tunbridge's. George Bloomfield's 1820 poem "Thetford Chalybeate Spa" refers to the duke's visit, stating "Hither the great and noble have repair'd".[59] His interest would have promoted trade, and the families of nobility and gentry, 34 with seats within 10 miles, probably used the spa. There were definitely some wealthy patrons, as in 1820 the Suffolk Chronicle advertised a dinner costing 14/- and a ball for 5/- including tea and coffee, to launch the season. Hembry states that later in the decade spas' proprietors were commonly adopting such public relations tactics.[60]

Although Hunt states that for some years Thetford Spa was held in "great repute", there is no evidence to suggest it was ever more than a very minor provincial outlet.[61] In 1820 Dr Bailey published seven examples from the "numerous cases of benefit" for the attention of Thetford's Spring Committee and general public. With the most remarkable cures having greatest commercial potential, it is likely the selection was biased. Had distinguished personages been healed they would have been mentioned. The client base covers a wide range in terms of age and social background: a Cambridge academic, a respectable washerwoman of "spare habit", a labourer, and four children. The patients

with least distance to travel came from Bury St Edmunds and Methwold, about 10 miles away, and the most distant lived in Hertford, with nearly all lodging at Thetford.[62] This situation does not suggest renown, and had nation-wide fame been achieved another chalybeate spring nearby would probably have been developed. Flourishing spas usually had more than one outlet, offering customers choice. In 1816 Leamington had seven, and Cheltenham eight.[63] However, Thetford Spa may have been popular on a regional scale as eastern counties' provision was very limited, and there was no successful competitor in Norfolk. Thetford's relative prosperity was probably due to a large catchment area, and its location on regular coaching routes to London, Norwich, Cambridge, Kings Lynn and Bury St Edmunds. Nevertheless, the spa was ephemeral, and little is known of the venture after 1820, except that it had closed by 1838.

Spa trade was one of the earliest manifestations of commercial leisure. From the late seventeenth century it became fashionable to take the waters, whether or not a cure was necessary, and leisure was fundamental to this experience. Landowners and entrepreneurs realised that a modest investment in spa sites and amenities could prove highly profitable, and the holiday industry developed. There was rapid growth in accommodation, churches and entertainment. Recreation facilities included assembly rooms, music galleries, coffee houses often encompassing libraries, and tree-lined promenades. By the eighteenth century, most resorts offered a wide array of social and cultural activities, including music, concerts and plays, which filled the long intervals between treatments. The consumer towns flourished so well that many others discovered curative springs. Expansion was aided by the commercially-orientated society, created by the technological and economic advances consequent of the Industrial Revolution. As rapid urbanisation caused many forms of popular leisure to decline, new or adapted activities were increasingly promoted. The nineteenth-century spa boom was part of this trend. Superior amenities were required as customer expectations and competition grew. A pleasant, health-enhancing environment was an important attraction, especially with resurgence of

interest in the health benefits of spas. According to Havins, health before pleasure was the chief difference of Victorian spas.[64] Partly a commercial ploy, this was aided by contemporary developments in public health.

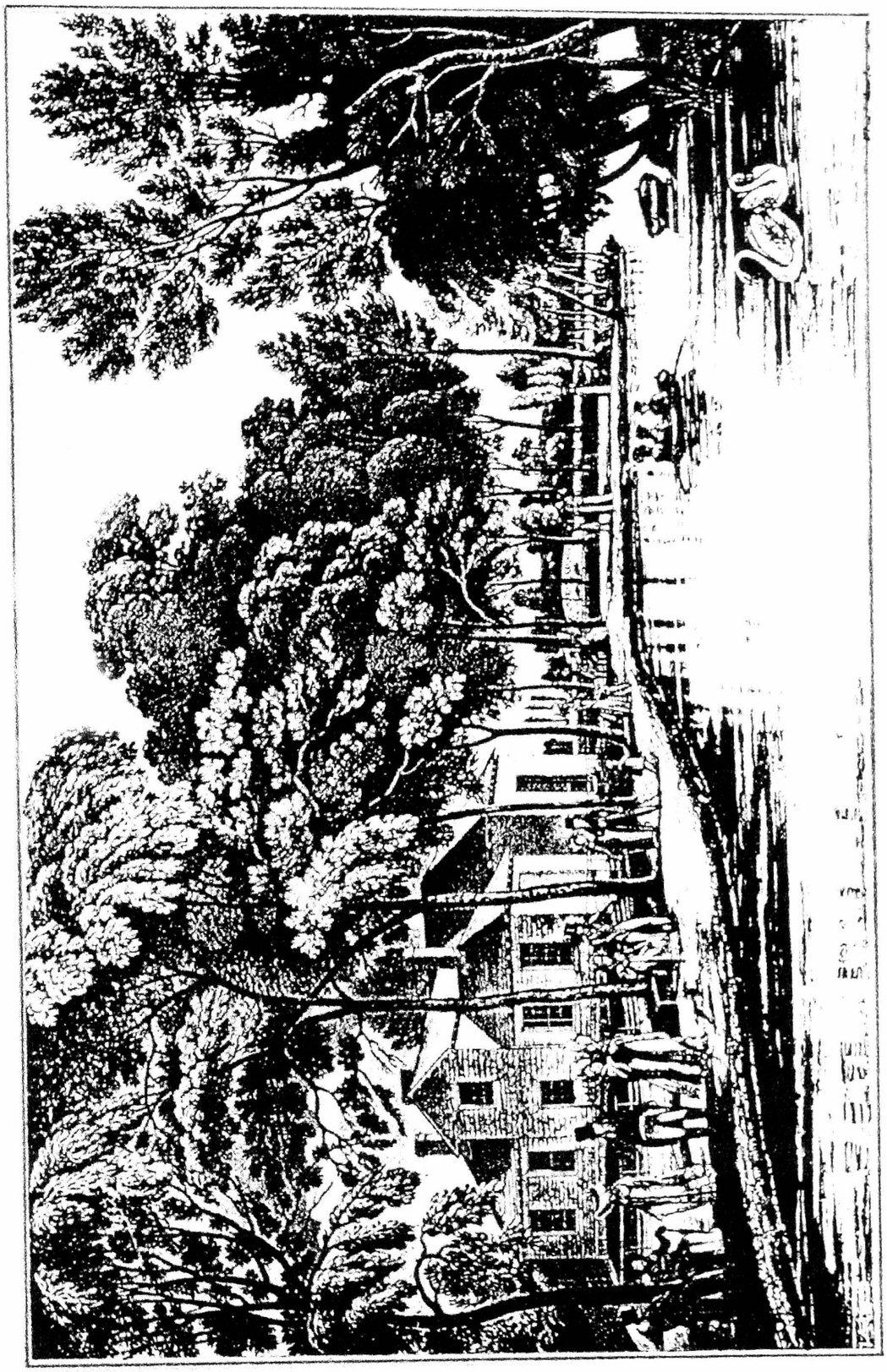
Early nineteenth-century Thetford was a prosperous parliamentary borough and market town, with many of the adjuncts of a successful commercial and social life including a bank, circulating library and theatre. According to Hembry, libraries were often the focal point of spas, acting as registries for accommodation and servants, selling tickets for entertainments, collecting relief funds, displaying visitors books and exchanging gossip.[65] Thetford's small theatre was successful but short-lived. Well attended during assizes weeks, it was little used after 1833 when the courts transferred to Norwich.[66] Music was popular at the spas, and Vullimony, an eighteenth-century writer, described women undergoing the cure, accompanied by it.[67] This, or other musical entertainments occurred at Thetford, as the spa poem states:

> Breathe music's sounds adown the liquid plain,
> While echo sweetly vibrates ev'ry strain.[68]

From 1833, horse racing was another local feature.[69] However, Thetford's main attraction was its location. Section one of Accum's guide gives a glowing report of good lodgings, shops to vie with any, beautiful lawns, favourable soils, clean streets and excellent police. It boasts about the healthiness and longevity of residents, with many living for 80-100 years: surely gross exaggeration.

The town's historic features include Castle Hill, thought to be a pre-historic fortified mound, and extensive Priory Ruins, and its rural landscape provided attractive walks in the fresh air. Accum wrote:

> Nothing can be more beautiful than the rivers in the immediate vicinity of the chalybeate spring. The banks are picturesque, the water is as clear as rock crystal. Every part is in unison.[70]



The Baths at Thetford (Norfolk Library and Information Service - Thetford Local Studies)

Spas were often built in the classical style and many inspired water poets. Thetford's was no exception, and its poem is the author's celebration of the spring and beautiful, historic town - a local man, he often wandered the vicinity and highly recommended its scenery:

> When of the Spring the thousand charms unfold,
> And earth is deck'd in green emboss'd with gold,
> In this blithe time the Invalid will find
> Rural delights a cordial to the mind.[71]

H.W.D. agreed the pump-room view was picturesque, and mentioned the tree-lined river banks along the promenade towards town.[72] This was constructed in 1818, at the mayor's personal expense. His generosity was probably motivated by financial prospects, as established spas had landscaped promenades and gardens to attract wealthy visitors. Spring Walk proved a legacy to the people of Thetford. In 1894 William Clarke said in summer the shady path provided escape from the oppressive town atmosphere, and it is still used.[73] Fashionable ladies and gentleman, some accompanied by children, are depicted strolling and socialising along the promenade in the nineteenth-century engraving, "The Baths at Thetford" (see previous page). It also shows boating, another popular activity described by the spa poem. Such amusements provided the moderate exercise endorsed by many spa doctors. Accum's recommendations included dancing, and he said even the "softer" sex could benefit from using the newly invented velocipede or hobbyhorse.[74]

Many treatments, such as lifestyle restrictions, were less than pleasurable, and some, including quaffing vast quantities of chalybeate or brine waters, were outright unpleasant. Nevertheless, leisure was central to the spa experience and frequently an intrinsic response to bathing, especially in clean, warm water. At Birmingham's Lady-Well Baths there was strong emphasis on both health and pleasure, which Hutton considered "the guardians of the place". The introduction to the 1820 bathing treatise states:

> There are very few towns in England that are furnished with such complete springs of pure water, and with such convenient Baths for health and pleasure, as the town of Birmingham. At the Lady Well Baths the swimmer may enjoy his diversion unmolested, and the young practitioner learn with perfect safety. The valetudinarian may renovate his reviving frame with the warm or tepid bath; and the man in possession of health may prolong the blessing by the invigorating influence of the purest natural fountains.[75]

By the 1930s leisure was considered vital in treatments at Droitwich where patients enjoyed bathing in warm brine. Approximately ten times the strength of sea water, 30% solution, its high specific gravity gave extreme buoyancy and the effects were subject of much amusement. H.B. Hollyer stated:

> Visitors from all parts flock to enjoy the unique and exhilarating experience of bathing in a water in which it is impossible to sink, where one could drink tea in the water and play ping-pong or billiards while supported by the concentrated brine![76]

During the early twentieth century, a middle-class family from Birmingham took guests to the "sea-water" lido. It was extremely popular and is said to have had an early wave machine, operating for about five minutes in ten.[77]

Prior to the development of spas, mineral springs were predominantly used by the poor, which may explain why, following commercialisation, many made philanthropic provision. According to Rolls, medical charities spouted like mushrooms in the early nineteenth century.[78] This coincided with major expansion and growing competition. Frequently their funds supported a mineral water hospital, available to poor patients on a doctors' referral. Well-known establishments included Bath and Harrogate, and coastal Margate. Droitwich Spa rapidly developed following the successful use of brine bathing during the 1832 cholera epidemic.[79] Its strong brine was warm and radio-active, and treating of gout and rheumatism became specialisations. Although the baths were expensive, efforts were made to maintain access and, throughout the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, contingents of patients came from the surrounding area.

The wife of a Birmingham paper mill worker, born 1928, wheel-chair bound until cured at Weston-Super-Mare, continued her salt-water treatments in the open-air bath.[80]

In August 1818, Thetford Corporation granted "free and unrestrained use" of its newly enclosed spring to the poor and sick, and although the site was rapidly commercialised, this was considered to be of widespread public benefit.[81] In addition to use by Thetfordians, the Mineral Spring Company's first annual report of April 1820 alleged 10,000 visitors. This must be exaggeration as the road and transport links could not have coped, and the region was sparsely populated. Nonetheless, numerous people were claimed to have benefited:

> Plainly indicating to the Inhabitants of *Thetford* in general, and to the Mineral Spring Company in particular, that providence has conferred on them a boon for the benefit of mankind, and that it is incumbent upon them to extend its benefits as widely as possible.[82]

The report concluded that the company, with its now almost completed buildings, would bring "Health to the Afflicted Visitors - Ample Remuneration to the Share-holders - Prosperity to the Town - and Improvement to its Vicinity".[83] Less than a month later, Dr Bailey congratulated the committee on "formation of an Establishment, the benefit of which will be daily increased and felt by the country at large", and provision of warm baths to "greatly assist in the alleviation of human suffering".[84] Only the wealthy could afford the bath-house, with its hot and cold baths, "replete with every convenience" but, as at Harrogate, the poor continued to be supplied with a "considerable quantity" of water at a courtyard pump.[85] Thetford's spa poet claimed inspiration from the commercialisation and expressed his appreciation of those responsible:

> For some with gen'rous zeal have foremost stood,
> And Rooms erected for the public good:
> With care advanc'd the plan in various ways,
> And fairly won the meed of public praise.[86]

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He described his work as the "simple effusion of attachment, gratitude and respect", of a "humble parishioner of St Peters!" However, it is unlikely he was poor, because his lengthy work is eloquent, and water poets were usually patrons, composing in leisure time. Little is known about Bloomfield, except he was born in 1757 at nearby Honington.[87] He probably used the spa, and perhaps sought to promote personal interests.

Birmingham's Lady-Well Baths intended to offer a public service, as well as satisfying financial interests, and the 1815 bathing treatise denotes the proprietor's outlay as "patriotic and praiseworthy. In order "to accommodate the indiginent", the price for bath two was held at 2d on a casual basis or 5/6 quarterly subscription. Although popular, it was beyond the majority's means. Unlike many of the spas, provision was neither free nor truly philanthropic. The treatise asserts the benevolent must have noticed the effects of general "neglect of frequent wafhing" in the town, and that this, rather than "fevere labor, clofe confinement; and unhealthy manufactories", is responsible for the unhealthy appearance of the poor and prevalence of disease. It declares encouragement of cleansing is, "the duty of thofe who fuperintend the laboring clafs", but far from being sentiments of social welfare, the actual purpose was protection of middle and upper-class interests. The introduction reasoned that prevention of ill health would enable the labouring classes to contribute to, rather than drain, national wealth, a growing, contemporary concern.[88] Moreover, blaming lack of bathing, effectively absolved the bourgeoisie of guilt for their failure to address the dreadful living and working conditions resulting from industrialisation.

As class divisions intensified, they were characterised by withdrawal and exclusivity. By 1820 Lady-Well Baths were deemed the preserve of "middle and higher classes", and the revised treatise was marked by discrimination. It is questionable whether working-class access was retained, especially as the treatise now commended the bathing opportunities for the male manufacturing population, provided by numerous local

canals.[89] Whereas in 1815, bath two was comparatively inexpensive and intended for "the indiginent", by 1820 it was for "gentlemen" and described more attractively. It appears to have been re-fitted complete with dressing room, making high charges likely. In an 1842 letter to Aris's Birmingham Gazette, "A Mechanic" complained sixpence was too much for the working classes to pay.[90] Provision for working-class women is not mentioned, and even if they were permitted to use the ladies' bath, the cost would have been prohibitive. Nevertheless, the 1820 treatise clearly states the need for working-class bathing, quoting "cleanliness is next to godliness". Throughout the century, such adages were used as justification for reforming and rationalising the masses, and bathing for cleansing was deemed particularly applicable to them. Havins suggests development of social exclusiveness contributed to the spa movement's downfall.[91]

1.4 Decline

Spa trade declined from the mid nineteenth century, with competition largely responsible. Foreign travel was increasing and sea-side resorts had become the hub of health and pleasure for the middle classes. By 1838 Thetford Spa had closed and the pump-room was converted to a private residence, "Spring House". The cause is unknown, but a multitude of factors may have been contributory. Alan Crosby's view that the strengthening appeal of sea-bathing was partially to blame adds weight to Denbigh's rationale that problems arose due to delay in exploiting the spring, and the enterprise's small scale.[92] A.B Anderson and M.D. Anderson agree with Godwin who blames the remote location, but this seems unlikely. There were regular coach services, and distance from competitors is usually advantageous.[93] Nevertheless, competition must have been important. Hembry found only four new spas were established post 1850, and whereas in 1841 Bath was still the largest resort, by 1851 Brighton was supreme.[94] Competition was compounded by the coming of the railways. According to Havins, the problem was that

lines were inflexible and linked major centres of population with coastal resorts, promoting these rather than spas.[95] The coach trade, which had served the spas, was also severely affected. Faster rail travel enabled wider distribution of bottled mineral waters, negating the need to visit spas. However, many contemporary doctors considered spas were undermined by the loss of waters' curative powers in transit. Either way, railways were destructive.[96]

The 1846 Baths and Wash-Houses Act presented a new threat - municipal facilities. Although intended primarily for working-class benefit, they offered convenient, first-class bathing and swimming facilities. Later, a wider range of features including exotic treatments were available. Birmingham's private baths were successful until the first public establishment opened in 1851. By the early 1860s there were three, and by 1885 Lady-Well Baths had closed. They were filled with sand from the New Street Tunnels, and the site became a timber yard, although Showell states spring water could still be obtained from a pump, presented by Sir E.S. Gooch, Bart.[97]

Spa mismanagement was widespread. From an early stage, Thetford Mineral Spring Company faced difficulties. Problems arose concerning the lease of Spring Meadow, as a third party successfully held out for a higher rent. In April 1820, the buildings, constructed by Palmer, were almost complete and, subject to raising an additional £300, the committee expected to open the baths and pump-room within a month.[98] At the end of the first financial year, further deficiency had to be met, and although in 1821 the spa was reportedly flourishing, no record of subsequent usage has been traced. This implies the venture was less profitable than anticipated, and this would be especially likely following the 1833 transfer of the Assizes, which severely damaged the town's economic and social standing, which Hembry suggests caused the spa's closure.[99] Its company probably had to cease trading, as over-speculation during the boom period, combined with limited returns from the short viable season, caused a number of bankruptcies and safer investments to be sought. Commercial greed may have

been influential. Rising expectations would require a proportion of profits to be re-invested for maintenance and provision of up-to-date facilities. In the 1840s Granville considered the latter were often unduly expensive and neglected, and blamed misrepresentation of spa waters and trade.[100] In contrast, new public facilities were cheap and successful. Despite temporary revival of spas in the late Victorian Period, by the First World War decline had returned, and subsequent changes to the social order meant far fewer could afford visits.

The boom period may have encouraged development of less than ideal sites. Thetford's spring water was cold, 10°F below atmosphere, which according to Accum implied a source in the lower strata of rocks.[101] However, geologist, Dr Alan Batstone, disputes this and even queries the spring's existence. Thetford is situated in a gentle river valley whose sand and gravel floor is underlain by permeable chalk. If a fault, or other geological feature exists in solid rock below the site, water might pass upwards due to an artesian effect from the water table of surrounding higher land. The resulting hydraulic pressure would push local ground water outwards but some mixing would inevitably occur because of lack of surface rock. Seepage from the adjacent rivers would be filtered and largely pollutant free, but the spring water would differ little from local drinking water, obtained from shallow wells.[102] Furthermore, trade would have been restricted by water supplies. Whilst the daily output of Bath's main spring was quarter of a million gallons, Thetford's was estimated at 456.[103] This was sufficient for quaffing but could have provided few baths. As the town and its industry developed, the water table would have fallen, further diminishing output. Likewise, urbanisation and industrialisation may have contributed to the closure of Lady-Well Baths, Birmingham. In 1820 it required a new well, and in 1849 Rawlinson reported that recently laid, deep sewers had reduced water yield, formerly 1,000 hogsheads per hour. He identified a full supply as pre-requisite for baths to be established throughout the city.[104]

The primary function of spas was health restoration, and business relied heavily on repute. Spas could become casualties of success, but Crosby considers that lack of notable cures was responsible for Thetford's demise.[105] Although Bailey and Accum published a number of cures, none were spectacular and all occurred prior to its pump-room opening. Hunt (1870) must at least be partly correct in his view that collapse resulted from many patrons expecting an infallible panacea. His opinion seems to be founded on a letter written by Dr Best in 1820, the very year the pump-room opened, suggesting failures were already creating disrepute.[106] The decline of spas was hastened by a series of epidemics which swept the nation. Bath was severely affected. In 1832, it had 74 cases of cholera, with 49 deaths, and more in 1848-1849. The 1837 smallpox epidemic caused a staggering 151 deaths, a statistic only exceeded in Liverpool, whose health record was notorious.[107] There was growing understanding of aetiology, contaminated water was a known source of cholera, and the risk of chronic infection discouraged spa patrons. Critically, with advancing knowledge and analytical techniques, water treatments were increasingly discredited and lost medical support. Hembry states that Gloucester Spa Baths were successful until losing their medical promoter in 1850, and ten years later passed into corporation control.[108]

1.5 Spas' Legacy

The spa trade was highly significant in swimming's development. It linked bathing with health, leading to its acceptance as a rational activity, and constructed the first facilities, which frequently included plunge and swimming pools. Additionally, spas appear to have inspired the development of private establishments in large settlements. During the 1840s spa foundation declined, and by 1850 the nineteenth-century mania was almost spent. This coincided with, and was partly due to, development of municipal facilities, enabled by the Baths and Wash-Houses Act. Its origins were entrenched in public health, with the

primary aim of promoting hygiene amongst the working classes. The poor had previously been helped by many spas, although this philanthropy was somewhat marred by the underlying motives of the middle and upper classes. Disease was indiscriminate and they wished to protect their interests through maintenance of social harmony and a healthy work-force. According to Hembry, the French Revolution quickened remedial measures for Bath's poor between 1790 and 1811.[109] Similarly, political strife, especially during the 1830s, may have accelerated progress, with health measures used to help pacify local communities.

Spa facilities were increasingly, voluntarily or compulsorily, municipalised. In 1860 the proprietors of Gloucester Spa gave it to the city which established a public bath, in conjunction with the local board of health. Hembry considers municipalisation effected the late Victorian spa revival. Following the financial crisis of 1858-1859, long-established resorts had become largely residential, attempting to meet the sea-side challenge. The municipalised facilities offered new treatments and improved amenities, and by 1904 transfer was complete.[110] Consequently, traditional bathing sites, including the spas, often influenced the location of public facilities. Thetford's river bathing station was close to the town's former spa, and when a replacement, enclosed bath was proposed, Spring Meadow was earmarked.

Spas also influenced the services at public baths. They frequently offered hot and cold private baths, plunge baths, swimming pools, and later treatments including Turkish and Russian Baths. Facilities at spas and early baths commonly overlapped. In particular, private establishments often had artificial spa baths. In 1857 Dr Fife suggested Birmingham Baths Committee provide medicinal baths, and in 1860 representatives went to London to inspect Turkish Baths, although these were not installed for another 19 years.[111] Furthermore, spas had established subscription payment, insuring against financial risk by providing an advance, guaranteed income. This method was used to partially fund many new baths, including Birmingham's first establishment and Thetford's

1922 revamped bathing station. Similarly, both introduced season tickets. Perhaps less favourably, spas helped create commercial leisure which greatly influenced public baths' approach to scheduling and charging, a move which did not necessarily benefit the bathers.

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CHAPTER 2:

PUBLIC HEALTH AND EXPANSION OF BATHING AND SWIMMING

2.1 Public Health Agitation and the Sanitary Revolution.

From the early nineteenth century there was growing concern for public health because standards were ubiquitously poor, with the major determinants environmental and socio-economic. Lack of public and personal sanitation, together with expensive yet ineffective medical care, promoted disease and high mortality rates. A large proportion of the population lived in poverty with inadequate housing, sanitation and diet, so disease spread rapidly and throughout the century chilling epidemics swept the nation. The situation was intensified in urban areas, and cholera, which hit London in 1832 with devastating effect, recurred periodically.

The Industrial Revolution transformed the nation from predominantly agrarian to industrialised. By the mid nineteenth century, half, and by 1910, four-fifths, of the population was urban. During the upheaval towns and cities grew rapidly and, with pressure for space and lack of planning, haphazardly. Population growth massively outstripped the building rate, and in Bradford, between 1837 and 1841, the respective increases were 78% and 12%.[1] Industrial housing, especially back-to-backs opening onto courts accessible by a narrow passageway, enabled maximum residential density. Finer coined the term "congregation" to describe the excessive overcrowding, and interactions responsible.[2] The most important elements were demographic explosion, urbanisation and development of the factory system. Building impeded drainage and often obliterated the common water sources on which most settlements relied. As only a minority of houses had water closets, there was widespread dependence on privy-middens, described by B. Thompson as scandalous and filthy receptacles.[3] Water pollution was another growing problem. The shocking living and working conditions created, exacerbated existing social

ills of poverty, disease and crime, debilitating the poor. In 1868, The Times spelt out the health implications:

> The growth of civilisation means the growth of towns and the growth of towns means, at present terrible sacrifice of human life....The fact is that in creating towns, men create the materials for an immense hotbed of disease, and this effect can only be neutralised by extraordinary artificial precautions.[4]

Urban mortality is emphasised by R. Woods, who states life expectancy of males born during 1861 was 57 in Okehampton, rural Devon, but just 26 in Liverpool. Conditions in other large towns, including Birmingham, were little better, with life expectancy below 35. G. Kearns aptly describes this as an "urban penalty" or "urban graveyard effect".[5]

Industrialisation reconstructed society. During the nineteenth century, flourishing capitalism raised the Gross National Product, owing to an eight-fold increase in national income and a four-fold population growth. The middle class expanded with new wealth created at working-class expense, and these groups almost exclusively formed the population of the great manufacturing cities. In middle-class homes standards markedly improved, whereas the working class reaped few benefits, emphasising the wide chasm between poverty and prosperity. In 1842, the average age of death for gentlemen and professionals, tradesman and labourers in Manchester, was 38, 20 and 17 respectively.[6] Combined with increasing residential segregation, this produced marked inter-urban patterns of disease and mortality which, as M.E. and C.G. Pooley state, were a distinctive feature of Victorian towns. From mid century there was considerable internal migration, the middle class moving to healthy suburbs and the working class to cheap, convenient, central areas where disease was rife. Woods and J. Woodward found mortality in 1880's Birmingham higher for all diseases amongst inner-city courts, whereas deaths in suburbia from ailments like measles and scarlet fever were practically non-existent.[7] However, from the 1830s there was growing awareness of society's inequalities. Compelled by a

multiplicity of reasons including fear, guilt, political ideology and humanitarianism, a limited, but dogmatic section of the middle class became determined to draw attention to social issues and the poverty debate began.

Health reform was slow to gain momentum. Campaigners met strenuous opposition from people determined to protect self-interests, and others who either refused to accept reports of prevailing conditions or chose to believe the working class preferred to live in such manner. Many were council members, and as stated by Anthony Wohl, "the corruption, lethargy, innate conservatism, and especially parsimony of local government officials became almost a *cliché* of Victorian public health reformers".[8] Attitudes were compounded by working-class suspicion and seeming resignation. Improvement must have appeared impossible. Living in poverty and struggling to provide necessities, could not have afforded the luxury of time and energy for campaigning, especially under the inherent threat of eviction or rent increases.

Action from above was essential and there were moves towards state protection. The mould of social reform imposed was based on a branch of Benthamite Orthodoxy which propounded the concept of a Tutelary State. This held that the state should guide individuals towards self-help as a means of fulfilment, whilst remaining vigilant to remove impediments. Edwin Chadwick, a dedicated advocate, provided much of the early impetus for health reform. His ideal was negative, seeking to reduce state restrictions and discourage prevalent parsimony, in favour of financing future benefits. He believed national productivity was staunched by the impact of preventable deaths and diseases amongst the work-force, and by the allowance system of Poor Law which made pauperism more profitable than employment. This prevented labour being bought and sold naturally, affecting its cost and availability. A critical factor in Chadwick's success was mounting pressure on the commercial and industrial classes, the expanding middle class, who paid high rates but were severely affected by this "synthetic" labour market,

worker absenteeism, robbery and violence. Health concerns also arose because epidemic disease was not class selective.[9]

A House of Lord's sanitary inquiry was launched in 1839. The following decade saw public health closely scrutinised by parliament and the media. A flood of government reports revealed appalling conditions. Most notable were the Report of the Select Committee on the Health of Towns (1840), Report of the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population (1842), and reports by the Commission for Inquiring into the State of Large Towns and Populous Districts, (1844 and 1845). The 1842 document indicated correlation between lack of sanitation, disease and high mortality, but lacked official authority, whereas the 1845 report made specific recommendations. The realisation that disease and mortality could be influenced brought a new, preventative emphasis to health management, and expansion of the state role. Limited early reform, focused on water supplies and drainage, had resulted from municipal initiative and local acts, so there was distinct need for general legislation to guide provision and enable finance. This began in 1846 with a series of acts including the Baths and Wash-Houses. After years of agitation this first phase of public health culminated in the 1848 Public Health Act, generally considered the foundation of the welfare state.

Public health provision commenced with the sanitary revolution. B. Lucklin succinctly defines this as:

> A long-established and inexplicit term covering large-scale improvements in drainage, water supply and housing, and associated levels of personal hygiene.[10]

Although Chadwick's public career effectively ended in 1854, because he upset too many vested interests, sanitation dominated the health movement until at least 1880. Early action developed urban drainage, and from the 1840s improved water supply was considered the key to public health. Personal hygiene was promoted and, enabled by sanitary infrastructure including public baths and wash-houses, with considerable success.

However, in housing, subject of much debate, progress was limited. Fear encouraged collusion with unscrupulous landlords, and in Leeds construction of back-to-backs continued until the 1920s, despite the 1909 national ban.

Municipalisation of water began in the 1840s. Existing services, provided by private companies, were expensive yet highly inadequate and increasingly strained by urbanisation. Commercial focus on suburban homes discriminated against both populace and industry, despite their concentration in easily suppliable, central areas. Furthermore, the absence of a constant supply was inconvenient and gave poor fire protection. Water quality was deteriorating, and a contaminated supply was known to be the commonest source of cholera, exacerbating ill-health by spreading disease within towns, and downstream. Pollutants were also detrimental to industrial processes. Until the 1860s there was a lack of extra-urban waste disposal or treatment methods, and even then effectiveness was limited and litigation difficult. Water-carriage disposal was an obvious solution but spread pollution to most rivers. In 1849 sewers delivered over nine million cubic feet of sludge into The Thames, of which tides could only scour a small fraction. The Spectator complained that water companies were being paid "£340,000 per annum for a more or less concentrated solution of native guano".[11] River pollution became a major environmental issue, and R. Smith and N. Young consider it the main one of the late nineteenth century. It was first reported in The Times in 1850 and by 1876 a Rivers Pollution Prevention Act was passed. Two years later an international congress was held on the pollution of streams and air. The threat to water supplies and their recreational usage was increasingly recognised.[12]

Several large towns, including Birmingham, developed extensive sewerage schemes and use of distant sources to obtain abundant, pure water. By the 1870s, private companies, unable to complete with such scale and vision, conceded dominance and the 1875 Public Health Act obliged local authorities to take responsibility. According to John Hassan, in 1846 only 10 of approximately 190 had waterworks, but by 1914 of 1,130

boroughs outside London 80% were supplied municipally and only 29 lacked piped water.[13] Establishment of efficient water schemes and replacement of wells by piped supply was a positive move, and this pattern of collectivism was repeated with other public utilities prior to the First World War. However, in rural areas change was slower, and water conservancy limited prior to the 1944 Rural Water Supplies and Sewerage Act. Even in 1975, around 900,000 ratepayers were not on mains drainage.[14]

The economism and entrenchment prevalent in nineteenth-century local government, and amongst ratepayers, is well documented. Despite the growing awareness of societal problems, willingness for action was not manifest, hence intensive investment in urban sanitation seems most uncharacteristic. Liberalism had granted local authorities considerable autonomy, encouraging the laissez-faire approach, so government interference was resented, and although public health strategies indicate strong elements of intervention and regulation, acts were generally permissive and inspection ineffective. Except where mortality was inordinate, the 1848 Public Health Act was permissive and only applied in townships where 10% of ratepayers were in favour. There was no decree for medical officers of health and their positions were tenuous. Wohl notes a vestry chairman's greeting, "Now, doctor, I wish you to understand that the less you do the better we shall like you".[15] Overall, the mid Victorian Boom heralded complacency. As absolute poverty declined, there was a tendency towards decreased concern for the plight of the poor, who were considered a residual problem, and action repeatedly avoided by proclaiming worse conditions elsewhere. Consequently, little was achieved and with cumulating problems public health barely held its own. The 1848 act was a failure and success of the administrative revolution only piecemeal.

Closer inspection reveals self-interests as the catalysts of progress. Whilst sanitary emphasis can be viewed as an appropriate public health response, it is more easily understood as an acceptable choice. Far from being a general initiative, its scope was

limited, and its institution represented a conscious decision not to pursue other aspects. Christopher Hamlin agrees:

> The early Victorians invented one public health among many. Their sanitary movement was not a systematic campaign to eliminate excess mortality. Its concern was with some aspects of the health of some people: working-class men of working age....It tended, moreover, to represent those men in terms of their houses, streets, drains or towns.[16]

Nevertheless, there were immense, inherent benefits for commerce, industry and property owners, in terms of lifestyle and more significantly economics. Hassan suggests water municipalisation was motivated by desire to eliminate the avoidable costs of private ownership, and that deteriorating local supplies led industrialists and others to support local governments in acquiring and expanding waterworks.[17] Efficient waste disposal would also be advantageous. Reform was essential, irrespective of health issues, although these were frequently exploited as justification.

Jorg Vogele claims "economic factors and entrepreneurial interests were the crucial and decisive element behind sanitary reform rather than the medicinal or hygienic reasons given in the official version of events". He challenges historians, including Wohl, who consider health issues, notably cholera, were central to reform. His evidence is strong: the delay between cholera outbreaks and systematic uptake of sanitary measures; that engineers and sanitary boards, rather than medical officers of health, were frequently the driving force; and sewerage works more often resulted from private injunctions than Public Health Acts. Hamlin confirms the latter true of the four towns he studied, including Birmingham.[18] Furthermore, in 1884, Arthur Silverthorne stated:

> The hygienic view is invariably put forward to support schemes which aim at obtaining supplies of magnitude from distant watersheds, in preference to extending and improving original sources; but it may be depended that the real and less apparent object is to obtain soft waters suited to manufacturing interests.[19]

Environmental progress enabled social consciences to be salved whilst ignoring fundamental socio-economic issues. Hamlin argues that sanitary infrastructure "represented a retreat of public medicine from involvement with the great social issues of the industrial revolution".[20] The health impact of class and occupational structures was recognised by contemporary observers, but redistribution of wealth would not favour people with political influence. However, there was concern about social unrest. Chartism resulted from working-class anger at not sharing gains in national prosperity and exclusion from politics. Mindful of the French Revolution, there was need for pacification, and Chadwick developed the notion of sanitation as a political tool. Recognition of sanitary reform's advantages would greatly reduce resistance by ratepayers, who were habitually responsible for impeding public works. In any case, Hamlin suggests opposition arose from the uncertainty of legal and technical complexities and fear of wrong steps, rather than conscious political or economic philosophy, claiming agreement with historians including Wohl and E.P. Hennock.[21] Although rather idealistic, this rationale has sound bases. Civil engineering was an embryo science so many proposed public works were badly planned and underestimated. Overall, likelihood of support probably explains the sanitary emphasis of health campaigners.

Personal sanitation was widely advocated. In the nineteenth century, the philosophy of links between hygiene and morality, oft associated as cleanliness and godliness, became established. Mid-Victorian doctrine held "wholesome and sufficient water for drinking and washing" central to "civilised social life", and there was support from religious organisations for the "sanitary ideal", as epitomised by Reverend Charles Kingsley in The Water Babies.[22] Promotion of sanitary discipline, part of the middle-class move to rationalise working-class lifestyles, met reasonable success, persuading people against keeping livestock in crowded courts and increasing bathing. Apathy to the latter had previously existed at all social levels. Hamlin states sanitation became a social movement and a "profoundly humanitarian" reform.[23] Unfortunately, as indicated by Wohl,

continued emphasis on hygiene exceeded practical values, becoming "a piety, a crusade of puritanical zeal against the sin of dirt". The effect was to widen class divisions, contrary to philanthropic objectives. Cartoons in Punch reinforced prejudices, and portrayed the poor as "untouchables". In 1908 S. Reynolds considered cleanliness "our greatest class symbol", the bathroom "the inmost, the strongest fortress of our English snobbery", and that,

> The greatest and most abusive and pejorative term for the masses was "the great unwashed".[24]

However, there was increasing sympathy and acceptance of pauperism as misfortune, rather than self-induced disgrace.

Sanitary provision accelerated after 1860, pushed forward by the civic gospel which championed citizenship and civic pride, and held that the social and moral duty of those people possessing power and wealth was to provide for the deprived majority. It coincided with strengthening government leadership. Collectivism, the new force in politics, assumed that the state was the best judge of individuals' affairs, whilst accepting their rights to claim from society adequate conditions and opportunities for fulfilment. It represented a shift from negative protectionism, which had failed to attack the roots of society's problems, to positive assistance. Amongst local authorities, the era of municipal socialism introduced a competitive element, encouraging municipalisation of utilities and investment in infrastructure. However, civic prowess promoted trade, so to some extent self-interests again took priority. Hamlin appears to concur, stating that much of Joseph Chamberlain's achievements, in local and central government, can be viewed as business acumen.[25] More specifically, Hassan attributes successful municipalisation of water to realisation of self-interests in supporting municipal endeavour.[26] The 1866 Public Health Act detailed provision for municipal sanitation but the significant breakthrough was the draft legislation in 1872, and subsequent 1875 Act. These consolidated previous

guidance, with mandatory provision and standards, albeit implementation was not necessarily satisfactory. Towards the century's end, sanitary activism was further stimulated by growing awareness of human capital economics. National physical deterioration meant an inefficient work-force, and Kingsley and others argued that reform was the basis of military and imperial strength. Churches were also increasingly prominent in taking positive social action.

Despite limited inroads into public health, the nineteenth century saw marked improvements and, except amongst infants, in its latter decades mortality rapidly reduced. Most decline occurred with regard to tuberculosis, scarlet fever, typhus, typhoid (according to Vogele 78% between 1870s and 1900s), and cholera, the latter three being closely linked with the sanitary revolution. Woods's study of Birmingham places great emphasis on its role, and quotes Brian Dobb's estimate of its responsibility for 25% of mortality decline.[27] By the turn of the century, largely as a result of environmental intervention, standards had ameliorated, drastically reducing the rural-urban health dichotomy. Large towns had the political and financial potential and innovative power to take decisive action and, as stated by Hassan, the largest did so first and developed the most ambitious schemes.[28] Although sanitary reform was undoubtedly beneficial and helped prevent epidemics, other significant factors were changing disease patterns, and improving living conditions and medical care. Socio-economic influences had weakened but progress was not equally shared and in many ways increased divisions, creating a marked two-tier society. Class-specific life expectancy and inter-urban health effects remained evident. Substantial gains did not occur until there were considerable medical advances and structural poverty was broken.

By the early twentieth century, shocking revelations from Boer War recruitment and social surveys including Charles Booth's and Seebohn Rowntree's, together with a more politically organised working class, brought acute pressure for change. It was realised that sanitation was insufficient, and attention focused on infant care and the health of

school children. With the medical profession's support, personal health measures and rational lifestyles were promoted. Solving poverty and its effects was a key concern. The movement culminated with the 1945 establishment of the welfare state, but not until the 1950's polio epidemic was attention paid to the problems of river and sea pollution.

2.2 Bathing for Hygiene and the Baths and Wash-Houses Act

The nineteenth century brought a new preventative emphasis to health care and growing awareness of public health issues. Initially the focus was on personal hygiene, especially for the working classes, which led to the expansion of bathing. The spa trade had popularised the practice, providing facilities, and establishing a firm link with health and acceptance as a rational activity. It also inspired development of private baths, which spread rapidly during the first half of the century. Although spas catered predominantly for the middle and upper classes, there was appreciation that the working class could benefit and charitable provision was often made. Nineteenth-century emphasis was on the promotion of bathing for cleanliness and its growing association with godliness, and hence standards of morality and social behaviour. This formed part of the general attempt to civilise the masses, largely motivated by self-protectionism of middle and upper-class interests.

Industrialisation and consequent congestion created unhealthy, insanitary urban conditions, intensified by widespread domestic poverty and the factory system. Mechanisation and changes in production methods meant operatives worked long hours, often at filthy, dangerous tasks. Bathing became a necessity for comfort, cleanliness, health and recreation, but working-class opportunities were very restricted. Residences lacked piped water and bathrooms did not become commonplace until after the Second World War. In overcrowded, sub-standard tenements, it was almost impossible to bathe decently or launder effectively. Domestic labours were time consuming, and the

additional dampness from the laundry drying indoors was injurious to health. Existing "public baths" were privately owned and even the cheapest usually beyond working-class means. In 1844 "A Journeyman Carpenter" wrote to The Times asserting this as fallacy, and that disposition toward cleanliness was lacking. He attended London's Holborn Road Baths, costing 6d, but others protested his wages, at thirty shillings a week, allowed what for most was prohibitive.[29] The Commission for Inquiring into the State of Large Towns and Populous Districts found almost no public baths which were operated by charities or local government, nor privately owned with rates of less than 6d. Exceptions included Westminster and Leeds. The former had one bath with a 3d rate, and in 1842, the latter a large bath at 2d, but only on one day a week.[30]

Ironically, the Industrial Revolution which created desperate need for bathing, also increased the class divide, leading to withdrawal of already limited facilities. In 1815 Birmingham's Lady-Well establishment offered a cheaper bath, but upgraded it within five years. Worse still, for sake of private property and social propriety, local bye-laws and canal acts frequently prohibited bathing at open-water locations. Penalties were harsh as a deterrent and, in 1825, a Birmingham man was sentenced to a month's imprisonment. Offenders usually had the option of a fine, but were often unable to pay. In 1872 three boys caught in Surrey Canal were jailed because they could not raise the 5/- fines. Sentencing was strongly influenced by the degree of disorder and indecency, and control issues. An engineer, following hospital advice to use plenty of water, received 20/- or 14 days, for exposing wounds and risking infecting others by bathing, and washing his rags, in The Serpentine. In contrast, a gentleman who undressed outside its fence before bathing was merely made to promise not to re-offend, as the judge considered a fine undignified.[31] From 1896 Birmingham completely banned bathing, wading or washing except in designated places.[32] Away from built-up areas bathing was less restricted, possibly because of lack of law enforcement.

Despite constraints, there was rapid expansion in working-class participation. albeit mainly males, at all manner of outdoor amenities. Industries used water for power, processing and transport, so many were located on waterways making free bathing amenities conveniently available to workers. Downstream from Thetford, Two Mile Bottom was a favourite spot. Circa 1850-1950 men from Fison's Chemical Manure Works, sited on the bank, frequently swam outside working hours. In the twentieth century, gangs from Burrell's Engineering Works and later Smedley's Canning Factory walked or cycled there. In his history of Harborne, Birmingham, Tom Presterne describes similar use of the Moor Pool, prior to its 1878 draining:

> Here the youth spent their time during summer, and in the evenings, I have seen quite a troop of men and boys who worked in Birmingham, black as they were from their work, coming to bathe. The water was alive with waders and swimmers....The pool and the canal were the only places for a swim. There were no public baths.[33]

The armed forces also utilised waterways, and during the First World War troops stationed on Barnham Common used Thetford's River Bathing Station for ablutions.

The Industrial Revolution was based on coal. Its heartlands, the north and midlands, had few navigable rivers so an extensive canal network developed. Birmingham Canal Navigations commenced in 1767 with construction of a link with Wednesbury on the South Staffordshire Coalfield. Birmingham was essentially the focus of finished-metal trades with the Black Country its primary supplier. During the next half century, development of this classical industrial structure caused rapid spread of canals. As Birmingham was the hub of the national network, canals which enabled tremendous regional, manufacturing growth were fundamental to its expansion and importance. References in The Times indicate nation-wide use of canals for bathing, and as Birmingham was densely populated and its bathing needs poorly served, it is hardly surprisingly canals were used despite interdiction. The earliest reference found is the 1820

bathing treatise, which highlights the importance of bathing to health, and contribution of local canals in improving the condition of Birmingham's manufacturing population. From this decade onwards, local press reports of courts and coroners indicate increasing participation.

Persistence of working-class bathers demonstrates, contrary to popular opinion, a desire for cleanliness. Consequently, there was considerable sympathy for the cause. Passing sentence on convicted bathers, presiding judges often spoke of the need to provide facilities and promote bathing for health and hygiene. In 1861 a magistrate reluctantly fined youths for bathing naked in Regents Canal. He expressed the need for more bathing places accessible to the poor, saying "it was so necessary for the health and morality boys should bathe, that he would much rather give them a shilling for doing so than fine them".[34] Teenagers, caught in 1869, pleaded ignorance to the ban and, in sympathy for their cleansing efforts, only a small fine was imposed. Occasionally, culprits escaped with warnings. Frequent press reports of court proceedings must have raised awareness of bathing issues, and in 1842, Birmingham Journal published a letter attacking the police for suppressing bathing whilst turning a blind eye to other nuisances. It asked:

> Why police are so actively endeavouring to prevent the poor smoke-dried artisans of this place from washing themselves in the canal, and that too at such a distance of two or three miles from the town? Are we paying this force to deprive the working classes of a necessary and healthful enjoyment? Is it such an evil that there can be no limit beyond which a poor lad may cleanse his sooty skin, without being taken to the police station and threatened that if he is guilty of this enormity a second time, he should be sent to prison?[35]

The writer, a rate-payer, clearly appreciated bathing's necessity, and considered scenes of indecency and public disorder were aggravated by police intervention. He highlighted the need for a safe, discreet bathing place. Five years later, another letter signed "An Ablutionist", stated lack of baths and proper places for the people's recreation and health was a neglect of corporate duty. It suggested a swimming bath in each ward, and that

towels and calico drawers could be cheaply provided.[36] Outdoor bathing became increasingly popular and, even following establishment of public facilities, endured. Police raids on nude canal bathers in Birmingham continued into the 1930s and several correspondents recall being chased.[37] Conflict with authority is a long established feature of youth culture and the prospect of capture merely enhanced the excitement.

The Baths and Wash-Houses movement arose from the need to enable cleansing, by provision of facilities accessible to the working class. It is impossible to determine exactly where, when or by whom it was instigated. Liverpool, one of the nation's unhealthiest cities but a pioneer in public health, is generally credited with this distinction. Its corporation opened the Pier Head Baths in 1828, which by 1896 offered two swimming pools, and two plunge and 14 private baths. A wash-house followed, at Upper Frederick Street in 1842, apparently inspired by "Kitty" Wilkinson. During cholera outbreaks in 1832 and 1834, she opened her kitchen, to poor-quarter neighbours nursing family members, for washing soiled clothing. William Rathborne, an active figure in civic and charitable work, noted the benefits and incited corporate action.[38] Notwithstanding, William Cotton, a key figure in the London movement, who in 1844 professed conception 30 years previously, but delighted in finding support from others claiming this merit.[39] What seems likely is that expansion of private baths was a significant influence. Some opened during the eighteenth century, and 1820-1840 saw establishments founded in at least nine provincial towns. Prior to its 1828 facility, Liverpool Corporation had taken over private baths dating from 1794, and two years after their 1820 closure, purchased land for their replacement. Subsequently, the 1846 Baths and Wash-Houses Act empowered leasing or purchase of existing facilities. This contributed to the decline of spas and other private establishments.[40]

During the 1840s the public health debate, stimulated by a spate of reports starting with the 1839 Sanitary Inquiry, rapidly gained momentum. Hygiene was central to the sanitary revolution which dominated reform throughout the century. As well as health

benefits, sanitation was expected to develop self-respect and motivate self-improvement, elevating domestic and moral standards including church attendance. Ironically, lack of cleanliness could prove an obstacle to many arising opportunities for education, rational recreation and amusement, including entrance to museums, parks, and art galleries. This was admitted by the chairman of the London baths movement in 1846.[41]

Edward Gibson considers the Baths and Wash-Houses movement began in London in 1842, impelled by public health revelations. This assumption appears to be based on a letter to The Times, from an anonymous resident of Mile End Road. It proposed baths be built on land recently granted by the Queen for a new park, between the Regent's and Sir George Duckett's canals, which could provide water.[42] However, without powers for authority provision, Birmingham citizens had already explored the possibility of erecting baths by voluntary effort. Their Public Baths Benefits Society was established on 1st January 1840 for providing:

> Conveniences for the use and instruction and amusement of the people and the improvement of their understandings, morals and health and for promoting their rational enjoyment.[43]

These aims reflect the movement's composite philosophy. A meeting in August addressed fund-raising for construction of the People's Hall of Science, including hot, cold and vapour baths, in Shadewell Street. Although the venture was expected to be sufficiently profitable to satisfy shareholders, no effective steps were taken until 1844.[44] By then evidence was mounting, with the 1840 Report on the Health of Towns, Chadwick's 1842 sanitary findings and powerful propaganda of the 1844 report, including details of Liverpool's baths. The Royal Commission had found very few baths costing less than 6d, no municipally owned wash-houses and that most industrial towns banned bathing in waterways. Its reports vividly described the sanitary difficulties imposed by crowded tenement buildings, and demonstrated the medical profession's conviction that cleanliness

of person and dwellings were essential to working-class health. Consequently, successful campaigns commenced in London, Birmingham and Edinburgh.

The London Association for the Establishment of Baths and Wash-Houses for the Labouring Poor was most influential. It was instigated in October 1844 by prominent church and business personnel who realised the opportunity to ameliorate evils, which parliament had spent five years investigating without legislative remedy. A preliminary meeting held on the 14th, was chaired by Cotton, Governor of the Bank of England and a man with strong social and moral beliefs. He had been liberal with time and funds in providing churches for Bethnal Green's working classes.[45] Two days later a public meeting at Mansion House, chaired by the Lord Mayor, had Charles Blomfield, Bishop of London and instigator of the 1839 Sanitary Inquiry, as keynote speaker. His lengthy address focused on the standard themes of working-class living conditions and their moral effects, voicing the refrain of sanitary reformers, that only clergy and medical men could comprehend the misery and degradation masked by the splendid fronts of London's streets. His evidence included testimony from active campaigner Dr Southwood-Smith (whose 1838 London health report had indicated dire links between water supply and disease), that the natural outcome was "formation of habits of idleness, dishonesty, debauchery, and violence".[46] Blomfield also highlighted the difficulties of domestic laundering, especially frequent use of dirty water and a soap substitute "too disgusting to be named", which just made linen more infectious. Gibson says this allusion is to "wash", which was urine kept in stone bottles until very strong. It was widely used because duty made soap expensive and some people considered it superior. Blomfield believed public provision of baths and wash-houses was the only efficient and cost-effective solution.[47]

Support was widely forthcoming. The meeting attracted a large assembly, including some women and Sir W. Clay, member of parliament for Tower Hamlets and member of the 1841 Select Committee on the Improvement of the Health of Towns. There was extensive coverage by the Morning Chronicle and The Times, which was a strong

advocate. It hailed the contention "poor love dirt" as foul slander, and that the meeting was "evidence of the deep impression made by the revelations in the sanitary report", auguring well for the association because "the city was set for doing and not for mere palaver". Furthermore, in November, the paper claimed to have been first to highlight the scheme, and subscribed 100 guineas. Gibson considers its attitude very significant in a period noted for the foundation of benevolent organisations.[48]

The association aimed to prove the case by example; building model baths and wash-houses and demonstrating that low charges would attract abundant custom, recovering outlay. Based in the capital, there was proximity of wealthy and prominent people, and dire need for provision. A huge public subscription was rapidly raised with contributions from across society. Major benefactors included Queen Victoria, the Queen Dowager, the Archbishop of Canterbury and Prince Albert, who appeared as patron at a grand fancy ball in Manchester. James Simpson, of the Edinburgh campaign, said the Prince's £100 donation had transformed the cause from laughing stock to fashionable.[49] By December 1844 £6,500 had been raised and an ambitious plan for establishing four public baths formulated. However, the "Model Baths" at Goulston Square, Whitechapel, did not open until July 1847, and the building was not completed till 1851. Hence, it was not the first public bath, to open or be purpose built, in London. The intention had been to provide a blueprint of the most efficient, lowest-cost facility, thereby avoiding the mistakes, common in pioneering work, which Hamlin suggests created resistance to public works. Indeed, difficulties excavating and draining cesspools, and with the design and construction, compounded by repeated revision of plans in search of perfection, caused the delays.[50]

By 1845, largely due to the reports on the State of Large Towns and Populous Districts, public attention had been drawn to working-class conditions, especially housing, and meetings were held nation-wide to consider the best course of action. This must have added momentum to the Baths and Wash-Houses movement. In 1845 the

Committee of the Houseless Poor was inspired to make provision at its Eastern Asylum, Glasshouse Yard, in the London Docklands. The asylum soon closed but control of its popular baths passed to the Association for Promoting Cleanliness amongst the Poor, a financially independent, branch organisation. From May this offered free facilities, including soap and washing soda, for the necessitous. During the first year, 67,664 attendances were recorded and, as at Liverpool, experience proved people were willing to pay and travel considerable distances.[51] Glasshouse Yard was the only establishment opened in London prior to parliamentary aid being enlisted, and its success must have provided a basis for supporting arguments. Gibson states a favourable factor was the Marquis of Lansdowne's assertion that no less than 9,000 users had walked three to five miles.[52]

In February 1845 another branch association resulted from a large gathering of clergy and gentry in St Pancras. Following a subscription campaign, work commenced in October, and George Street, Euston Square, opened in August 1846, becoming the first complete and specifically designed public baths and wash-house in the metropolis. It also had the distinction of incipient provision under the new act which became law later that month. Sir Henry Dukinfield, Rector of St Martin's-in-the-Fields, was chairman of the parish association which presented one of the original petitions to parliament, and such a zealous sponsor that the legislation rapidly became known as "Dukinfield's Act".[53] Gibson suggests the George Street project may have arisen from a suggestion to Marylebone Vestry from the parent baths association in November 1844.[54] This is feasible as the subsequent act encouraged co-operation between neighbouring parishes. Provision could be made in one, with expenses and profits shared in agreed proportions.

Despite widespread support and distinct need, the Baths and Wash-Houses movement progressed relatively slowly. To facilitate provision, a legal basis for local authority action was required. In June 1846, the Bishop of London, president of the parent association, petitioned the House of Lords for a bill, presenting five petitions

stressing the evils of overcrowding and benefits of cleanliness. These came from the Committee for Promoting the Establishment of Baths and Wash-houses, London bankers and merchants - signed by heads of 100 plus firms, the chairman and deputy-chairman of London Dock Company (employer of thousands), churchwardens, overseers and guardians of St Martin-in-the-Field's, and 121 of the city's parochial clergy.[55] Sir George Grey introduced the Commons bill to establish Public Baths, Wash-Houses and Open Public Bathing Places, and the act was passed on 28th August 1846.

Polly Bird considers the model wash-house's success, and the urgent need to improve the poor's sanitary conditions, were instrumental in "forcing" legislation.[56] This was not the case. Goulston Square did not open until a year later and only Glasshouse Yard, run by an independent, local organisation, was in operation sufficiently early to provide evidence of the effectiveness of public provision. Working-class plight was recognised but there were more complex, underlying reasons for action, which must be viewed within the context of the sanitary revolution. This has already been shown as an acceptable choice in public health reform, benefiting upper and middle-class interests yet disregarding fundamental problems. The Baths and Wash-Houses campaign attracted particularly widespread support, significantly including clergy to whom its focus on morality and association of cleanliness and godliness was appealing. They were in a position to be fully aware of conditions and exert influence in society. Senior members sat in the House of Lords, the Bishop of London and Rector Dukinfield were key figures in baths provision, and two of the five petitions came from the religious community.

Most importantly, opposition was limited. When the London scheme was launched in 1844, most concerns raised related to whether provision would prove beneficial. This corroborates Hamlin's notion that trepidation, of problems and costly mistakes, was a restraint.[57] The model baths project was intended to counteract such scruples. A central issue was whether poor people would use public facilities, as it was still widely believed they were too degraded and actually liked dirt. In fact, cost, domestic obligations -

especially if the baths were some distance - and the shame of poverty were major barriers. Hence, one of "the really poor", in a letter to The Times, claimed the intended benefits would never reach his social group. Furthermore, the working-classes possessed few clothes, and laundering was a logistical problem, particularly at public wash-houses where machines were considered to accelerate wear. Poverty was the underlying problem and although some objectors felt basic needs should be served first, theirs was not a popular refrain.[58] Failure to directly influence the roots of social ills was a characteristic weakness of early public health reform, and sanitary proposals, even if fully implemented, could not provide a satisfactory solution.

Far from moral improvement, there were fears that baths and wash-houses would have the opposite effect, with subsidised baths robbing the poor of independence and reducing their industry. Luke Hansard, although a financial contributor, was of this ilk. Critically, there was concern that association of virtuous housewives and abandoned women, would lower establishments to what Mr Lawrence described as "gossip-shops" and "sinks of corruption", fostering debauchery and gin consumption. He complained to the Court of the Common Council that "a person would imagine from the impetus manner in which the project was taken up, that there was no possibility of living without it". Whilst accepting in principle the desirability of bathing, he considered providing towels and soap at home more appropriate. Presumably the authority was unconvinced, or felt the benefits outweighed the risks of demoralisation, because a grant, albeit £200 rather than the requested £500, was awarded to the model baths project. Certainly, the Bishop of London had dismissed such notions at the inaugural public meeting.[59]

Generally, protests were weak, and the movement's immediacy was a great advantage. Provision could rapidly be accomplished and prove its worth. Glasshouse Yard was a shining example. In 1844 The Times stated:

> Happily the measure is one which meets with such general approbation that its progress through parliament need not be impeded by any lengthened discussion.[60]

Two years later the baths and wash-houses bill passed without Commons debate, and with minimal remonstrations in the upper house.[61] Working-class support was evident, financial prospects favourable, and upper and middle-class interests satisfied. Bird agrees that the benefits of a healthy, stable working population meant provision was not entirely altruistic.[62] Additionally, powers enabling purchase of private establishments were only to be used where enterprise had failed to meet public needs, and to ensure economic viability baths would not be purely for working classes. The month the bill was presented to parliament, The Times wrote:

> The movement in favour of public baths and wash-houses originated in the conviction that much has to be, and must be, done to better the condition of the working classes; but, at any rate as regards baths, there is no reason why they should not be provided with a view to the benefit of all classes, care being taken that low charges only shall be imposed.[63]

For the first time politicians had a public health measure which raised only feeble protest.

Adoption of the Baths and Wash-Houses Act required written requisition from ten ratepayers to convene a meeting, at which two-thirds of the vestry supported the motion, and finally approval from the Secretary of State. Boroughs could use existing funds, levy a baths specific rate, or like parishes use or borrow against the poor rate. Arrangements could be made for gas and water supplies, free or on favourable terms. As the Act was primarily intended for labouring-class benefit, it made stipulations regarding facilities and pricing policies. At least two-thirds of baths had to be for their use, costing a maximum of 1d or 2d for cold and hot respectively, with towels provided. For twice the price, up to four children under eight could share. Open bathing places cost a half-penny. The term "open" is misleading, it means "places where several persons bathe in the same water" i.e. bathing stations or pools, presumably both swimming and smaller plunge baths. Laundry

facilities cost 1d for an hour or 3d for two. Clothes were detainable in cases of non-payment, and after seven years, the facility could be discontinued or rates reviewed. Amendment acts in 1847, 1878 and 1882 clarified and extended powers. Charges for superior facilities were first capped in 1847, with maximum permissible charge at three times the labouring-class limit. The 1878 amendment was significant for specifically sanctioning "covered" i.e. indoor swimming baths, their closure in winter, and recreational use of the baths hall or other empty rooms. The latter function was rational, with meetings and any healthful pursuit allowed, but not music or dancing. First, second and third-class rates were also introduced. In 1895, baths and wash-houses came under the Public Health Act, a move reflecting their origins and continued health emphasis.[64]

St Pancras was the first parish to adopt the original act, and its thriving George Street establishment certainly proved the case. In just over two years, 281,418 people bathed and 93,430 used the laundry. In spite of low charges, by January 1848 the remaining liability was just £874-11-0. Hull was probably the first borough to embrace the act, and by the end of the decade there were six sets of baths in London and at least one in most large towns.[65] The movement steadily expanded, and B.A. Adams said the number of baths doubled between 1875 and 1890, and annual increases of 8% occurred until 1925. In 1896, Liverpool, Manchester and Bristol were well served, each with at least eight institutions, and Birmingham was close behind with four complete suites, two outdoor baths, two new sites and ambitious proposals.[66] Huge outlay was made on facilities, which were often ornate and lavish. Wohl suggests this was motivated by the "sanitary ideal" having permeated national consciousness. However, despite some criticism, public baths were an icon of civic pride, and Gibson states that by 1912 more than 5,000,000 attendances were recorded annually at British facilities.[67]

Many districts evaded sanitary reform until 1875, but public baths and wash-houses were commonly established. Thousands of people benefited long before other urban problems - sewerage, drainage, water supply and housing - were resolved. Furthermore,

the movement's success was instrumental in the appointment of the Royal Commission into the Sanitary Conditions of Large Towns and Populous Districts. With regard to Liverpool's example, it recommended provision of adequate water supplies, and baths and wash-houses. Birmingham Public Baths, published 1897, states few sanitary reforms in the past half century attracted more interest or had greater importance. Kingsley was more vehement, considering it "the cornerstone of the whole edifice of social reform" and a means of promoting sobriety.[68] In fact, the public baths and wash-houses movement was probably the most successful manifestation of the nineteenth-century health debate, enjoying enduring success.

2.3 Sanitation and Development of Birmingham's Public Baths and Wash-Houses

Industrialisation caused rapid expansion of Birmingham. From 1800 to 1840 its population increased 2.5 times to 183,000. The impact, severe urban blight, was typical. Drainage was poor and impeded by lack of town planning. Open drains and sewers, often discharging into roads and waterways, created squalor and heavy pollution, with the effects compounded by an oppressive smoky atmosphere and ill-built, overcrowded housing. By mid century, two-thirds of the population lived in back-to-backs and fetid courts. In 1850, a letter to the Morning Chronicle described a yard where three to four hundred people shared a pump whose water was "a greenish colour and smelling strongly as if a gas pipe had burst".[69] Under such conditions, it is not surprising that disease was rife and mortality high.

The 1848 Public Health Act was adopted following a ratepayers' petition and recommendation by Dr Rawlinson, a Chadwick devotee. His 1849 report to the General Board of Health revealed Birmingham's insanitary conditions, especially noxious ooze from middens, cesspools, graveyards and pigsties. It identified drainage and water supplies as requiring urgent attention. Consequently the 1851 Birmingham Improvement

Act was passed and remedial work commenced. Although Hennock believes this action reflected growing "sanitary conscience", self-interests were more evident.[70] Progress was limited, with mains sewers and piped water serving a small number of superior dwellings. Implementation costs vastly exceeded estimates, and financial crisis in 1852-1856, enabled economists to block the purchase of Birmingham Waterworks Company and gain control of the corporation. Representing smaller ratepayers, they were concerned about the burden of civic debt and objected to provision of public amenities on the grounds that these were unnecessary luxuries. Conrad Gill describes the faction as "factious in debate, narrow in outlook, mean and reluctant in public service".[71]

In addition to fiscal considerations, sanitary development was prevented by denial and complacency. Wealthy people, who relocated to attractive, spacious suburbs, especially Edgbaston, easily ignored the prevailing conditions of crowded, central wards. The 1849 appeal, by Medical Sanitary Inspector Russell, for legislative interference on behalf of the working class who could not afford to move from infected spots, was to no avail.[72] Alderman Avery, opposed further expenditure on baths in 1867, and when mayor, the following year, refuted shocking eye-witness reports. Inertia was sustained by Birmingham's healthy renown. Dr T.P. Heslop's report on the town's medical aspects, 1865, stated:

> In spite of its irregular construction, smoke-loaded atmosphere, dingy-looking buildings, and dense population, Birmingham has for several years enjoyed the reputation of being one of the healthiest large towns in the kingdom.[73]

He attributed this largely to immunity from cholera, whose ravaging effects were greatly feared and elsewhere helped to stimulate health reform. In 1866, when serious outbreaks occurred nation-wide, Birmingham's Public Works Committee stated sanitary conditions gave no cause for apprehension.[74] This was fallacy, and associated diseases were widespread. These included diarrhoea and dysentery which Heslop reported remarkably

prevalent. In 1873 neighbouring Balsall Heath, which had a consistently lower death rate, suffered a typhoid epidemic, after milkmen diluted their product with water from wells near privies. Dr Ballard's inspection found one where "the water would make excellent manure", and concluded the sewerage system was so inadequate that pollution of all wells was likely.[75]

Nevertheless on the grounds of much publicised and comparatively low death rates, public opinion held that Birmingham was as healthy as a town could be. As stated by Woods, its mortality was almost always lower than the other great manufacturing cities, Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield, and similar to Bristol's.[76] This would be expected, given positive correlation between urbanisation and ill-health, but Birmingham's average compared favourably with similar-sized centres in the Registrar-General's figures. Hennock aptly proclaims this a "mischief" of statistics, hiding terrible reality. The class-residency divide was accentuated by extreme contrasts in death rates. In 1873-1875 Lower Priory, a central ward, it was 62.6, contrasting with the town's mean of 25.97.[77] Circumstances were moderated by the settlement's favourable topography: distanced from sea ports, good natural drainage and its spread unhindered. Unfortunately, as Hennock indicates, this was allowed to substitute for administrative action, rather than being used as a springboard for higher standards of public health. In 1864 Dr Farr complained that Birmingham, one of the healthiest sites in the kingdom, was rendered insalubrious by bad local arrangements.[78] Water provision was strongly opposed in 1808, and the next year a council resolution stated that "erection of water works in this town is wholly unnecessary and productive of great evil". It was 1826 before a very restricted supply was laid on.[79] Four years after the 1845 Health of Towns Commission suggested ample supplies, at an accessible price, would be beneficial, Rawlinson recommended "a proper and complete system of drains and a full and constant water supply" for Birmingham. However, little changed, and mid century there was still heavy reliance on polluted wells and pumps or water carts, whilst the Waterworks Company supplied only one-third of the town, three

days a week. In 1853 the Sanitary Committee insisted on a continuous supply, although coverage remained small, and Birmingham was believed to be the sole town with this amenity, Unfortunately, its source was suspect river water. In evidence to Rawlinson, Medical Sanitary Inspector Hodgson had stated the condition of the river and brooks together with privies, were the town's greatest sanitary evils. The town's location made waste disposal difficult, and although by 1851, the eight miles of mains sewers had an outlet into The Tame, complaints largely halted development by 1855, and by the late 1860s crisis was looming.[80]

In 1868 Dr Hill, borough analyst, presented a paper, "What is the relation of Water Supply in large towns to the Health of the inhabitants?" He concluded there was need for attention but little hope of this, given the present system of dealing with excretion:

> Private cess-pools, and the like in towns will continue to poison the wells, while the scarcely less vicious water closet system will do the same for our rivers, which in many instances are little better than great open sewers.[81]

In 1866 the corporation demanded that Birmingham Water Company reduce extraction of Tame water for domestic use from 1869. The following year its quality was found undesirable; clear with large suspended particles, it became turbid in summer and bright green in August. Sewage contamination varied from 4,244 parts per million in January to zero in September. The climax came in 1870 when two legal actions were brought against the corporation, and a chancery injunction compelled hurried and drastic action. From 1872 use was restricted to emergencies.[82]

Despite Birmingham's reputation for innovation and its motto "Forward", the corporation was neither proactive nor altruistic and lagged as a civic force. Action usually had to be enforced, including the belated appointment of a Medical Officer of Health under the 1872 Public Health Act. According to J.T. Bunce, by this decade Birmingham was loosing its healthy reputation. It had one sanitary inspector per 30,000 people,

compared with 1:13,000, 1:12,000 and 1:8000 in Leeds, Bristol and Manchester respectively.[83] However, advent of positive, state intervention and collectivism was concomitant with the growing ethos of the civic gospel. This thrived in Birmingham, which rapidly became regarded as "the best-governed city in the world". It had an established, non-conformist tradition and, as the term implies, the civic gospel was closely associated with religious idealism. Ministers George Dawson and R.W. Dale were significant campaigners. Success was due to coincidence of the right economic, social and political climate, and Chamberlain's emergence as an outstanding leader. His mayoralty (1873-1876) was a great era of municipalisation and municipal socialism.

Asa Briggs considers sewage gave crusaders of the civic gospel their greatest opportunity.[84] The overawing extent of the problem had been revealed in an extensive, candid report of a special enquiry in 1870, whilst frequent epidemics, and the tide of shared national opinion, established public health as an issue of widespread and urgent interest. The new administration expeditiously demonstrated commitment to sanitary reform. Open middens and ashpits were abolished, sewers extended and water supplies improved. Although, the lack of piped water in many dwellings prevented flush toilet installation, from 1874 the interception system was increasingly used. Privy pans retained a week's accumulation and were taken to a depot for emptying and sterilisation. Chamberlain emphasised the poor's dependence on contaminated wells and justified compulsory purchase of the Water Company in 1875. Finance remained a strong force, and the previous year's referendum for increasing the Birmingham Improvement Rate was overwhelmingly out-voted. However, Chamberlain foresaw the benefits of bringing the basic utilities, gas, electricity and water, so essential to well being, into municipal ownership. As elsewhere, regaining control from monopolies would provide profits to help reduce the rates burden and finance public works. In 1883 when water supplies were being stretched, instead of the cheaper, short-term option of expansion, Birmingham

followed Glasgow, Liverpool and Manchester in seeking purer sources from distant, mountainous districts. Welsh Water was first supplied in 1904.

1875 also saw the establishment of a Health Committee, appointment of additional inspectors who revealed further sanitary nuisances, and Birmingham Improvement Scheme which heralded slum clearance and town centre redevelopment. Consequently, mortality significantly declined, from 24.5 in 1860-1864 to 20.6 by 1880-1884, with greatest impact in health blackspots. According to Gordon Cherry, by 1880 life expectancy had risen to 43.[85] The civic revolution transformed municipal government and citizens' quality of life, in terms of physical condition, and intellectual and cultural opportunities. Chamberlain's vision elevated Birmingham, which in 1889 became a city. As a member of parliament from 1876, and cabinet minister from 1880, he strove to achieve the same improvements nationally. Although Birmingham was the mecca and its urban penalty had been reduced, in many ways it was still backward, with the chief causes of death remaining sanitary related, and high infant mortality. As Briggs stated, no enlightened working-class housing policy existed, despite recommendations dating to the 1840 Health of Towns Report. Dr Hill's 1885 sanitary inspection revealed 45% of dwellings were back-to-backs, and in some wards the percentage was far higher. Change was slow and according to Carl Chinn the last were not demolished until the late 1960s.[86]

Birmingham had long possessed private baths and the issue of public provision arose early, when in 1840 a Public Baths Benefits Society was established to raise money. Its fate is unknown but an 1842 newspaper editorial, replying to a mechanic's letter suggesting establishment of baths and wash-houses, stated a plan had previously been grounded by need for working-class finance, and great difficulties in providing a site and water supply.[87] Such problems certainly impeded many subsequent projects. 1844 saw a nation-wide surge of interest in urban-health reform, especially baths and wash-houses. By August, baths construction was underway in Edinburgh, and during October and November associations were formed in London and Birmingham respectively. Alderman

Cutler appears to have initiated the latter. His letter in Aris's Birmingham Gazette, on 7th October, referred to an earlier resolution to provide recreation and healthful exercise via public walks and baths. He said grants were sometimes awarded by Her Majesty's Treasury, in amounts corresponding to those raised by local subscription. According to Reid, Cutler's primary objective was a park, but he linked his cause with baths to further its progress.[88]

The Birmingham campaign was launched on 19th November and Lord Lyttleton outlined the first general resolution:

> That this meeting considering the great extent, the dense and increasing population of the Borough of Birmingham, and the growing difficulties of obtaining for a large proportion of the population ready access to places for ablution, fresh air and healthy recreation, declares the opinion that the formation of public baths and public walks, or other open spaces for exercise and active sports....would contribute greatly to the health, rational enjoyment, kindly intercourses, and good morals of all classes.[89]

There was strong support for baths, which dominated discussion and subsequent developments. Lyttleton said it was a national move without opposition and everyone was delighted by Birmingham's early action. The Liverpool example was held against any theoretical objections, and James Taylor of Moseley Hall said delay had enabled consultation. Plans for four bathing stations costing approximately £15,000 were unanimously passed, and a fund-raising committee, the Public Baths Association, appointed. At the meeting's conclusion subscriptions already stood at £2,700.[90]

Improved health, and associated moral benefits were undoubtedly the impetus. Although Birmingham was perceived as comparatively healthy its employment structure, focused on grimy metal trades in close manufactories, made bathing a necessity, and Lord Calthorpe stressed the need for cleansing and recreation. As the industrial disease "Grinders' Asthma" was rife, swimming was potentially greatly beneficial. Reverend York moved the subscription proposal. Responsible for a large parish, encompassing two of the

densest, most unhealthy districts, he felt the community's condition, physical as well as spiritual, was his duty.[91] Douglas Reid agrees that baths were primarily provided for health reasons. He suggests they preceded parks in Birmingham, because they were considered cheaper and hence achievement was more likely, imbuing identical moral effects sooner. Additionally, he highlights the influence of contemporary political and social apprehension.[92]

During the late 1830s and early 1840s agitation threatened social order. Birmingham's 1840 baths meeting, although potentially beneficial to the working class, had Chartist intruders, and it was believed they were being paid to interrupt all public assemblies.[93] Reid considers the 1844 Baths and Parks Campaign an early example of social reconciliation through recreation. He observed that over half the main speakers at the launch were strongly concerned with social order, and found addresses by the Honourable Reverend G.M. York, rector of St Philip's, and Reverend John Garbett, rural dean and vicar of St George's, particularly revealing. They welcomed the project as indicative of wealthy and influential people being proactive in their Christian and social duty, and postulated consequent harmonisation would bring permanent national stability. Media reports show, in addition to physical and moral benefits, they believed provision would stimulate employee gratification and community peace including crime reduction. Garbett referred to the French Revolution, further supporting the notion that the Chartist aftermath was a significant, contextual influence. Similarly, promoting the cause in 1845, Simpson remarked on growing favour towards working classes and recognition that these "great bees of society, who produced all the honey...should partake a little of its happiness".[94]

Birmingham's inaugural meeting was well attended by municipal officers, all party leaders and the working-class: The Times claimed such complete amalgamation had never previously been witnessed in the town. Hope was expressed that everyone would now work together, and Mason, a Chartist, said it should herald a general move to probe

society's evils and improve working-class conditions. Donations were cross-community, and within a week funds reached £4,322. Hill said that the subscriptions and exertions of working men showed they valued baths, and whilst this is undoubtedly true 73% was from local gentlemen, in amounts of £50, £100 or £200.[95] Eagerness to contribute large sums probably reflects the tendency of middle and upper-classes to protect their own interests, especially as the initial support was not perpetuated. Although, in January 1845 Birmingham Journal praised the community effort for "true English generosity and brotherly feeling" and being "the people's cause", with subscriptions of £5 and £10 from men in the various manufactories, after 18 months only £1,680 more had been collected.[96]

Working-class support was evident, but organisation and finance from above lacking. Apathy was prevalent despite promotional endeavours including Saturday Night Concerts. In April 1845, by invitation of the Baths Association, Simpson gave two lectures at the town hall, concerning the importance of public health and baths provision. In Edinburgh, his educational work created desire for improvement amongst working men, persuading them of bathing's benefits and relevance, and in 1844 to undertaking successful fund-raising. However Birmingham's lecture attendance was mediocre, and in seconding the vote of thanks, Cutler mentioned he had been asked what occasion there was for baths when canals were available, which further suggests lack of enthusiasm.[97] In June 1846 it was resolved to purchase land and hope building would follow, but new incentives including voting rights and life membership for those subscribing at least 2/6 and £5 respectively, apparently failed. The Birmingham Journal bemoaned the apathy, and neglect of the art of bathing in England, especially Birmingham, and said reliance on voluntary canvassers had brought standstill. It proposed suitable agents be employed to collect monies, and temporarily the safest, most secluded area of Edgbaston Reservoir be enclosed.[98]

Inadequate subscription could not be blamed on ratepayer resistance or government interference, hence Reid considers it shows few people were diverted to baths as a reform choice.[99] However, comparison with Thetford's 1960s pool campaign suggests a more likely explanation, the difficulty maintaining initial impetus and raising a large sum in the face of rising costs. Whilst many people considered it a good cause and willingly contributed, few sustained their interest, especially when nothing was materialising. In mid 1840s Birmingham, such indifference was compounded by growing economic prosperity abating threats to social order. Ultimately, as in Thetford, the fund-raising committee went into abeyance and transferred its assets to the corporation, which built baths.[100] Birmingham Public Baths, an 1897 corporate publication, even claimed the voluntary organisation did not press the matter because of expectations that nation-wide agitation would result in legislation, giving local authorities powers for provision. This is plausible, because as Reid states scheme instigator Alderman Cutler initiated the transfer.[101]

The Baths and Wash-Houses Act became law in August 1846 and was adopted by Birmingham in October. Archibald Sinclair and William Henry list it among the first to do so.[102] The next month saw its Public Baths Association vest its interests in the corporation and control passed to the Gaol Committee. However, it was two years before erection was sanctioned, three for work to commence and five until Kent Street Baths opened. Even then the building was not completed for another year. The site was considered eminently suitable, central and with ample water supplies, but considerable delays were caused by drainage problems and need for further consultation, with information sought from Edinburgh, Liverpool, Manchester and London. The latter's renowned baths were visited: the original Glasshouse Yard, Goulston Square "model baths", George Street, the first purpose-built facility, and the incipient provision under the 1846 act at St Martin's Lane.[103]

Birmingham Corporation made an uncharacteristically rapid response to the Baths and Wash-Houses Act. Unlike progressive municipalities such as Manchester and Liverpool, it was slow to adopt parliamentary measures designed to improve conditions and provide public amenities. Hence, the citizens' fund-raising probably advanced baths provision, and Victor Skipp and Conrad Gill agree it stimulated unusual enterprise.[104] The Public Baths Association assets were significant, because money was a powerful influence in local government, and its Kent Street site was used for the first establishment. However the cost, £23,000, far exceeded subscriptions and the original estimate of £10,000. Finance, despite the bath's immense popularity, spawning plans for expansion and additional sites, prevented further provision until 1860. Whilst the 1846 act might have spurred provision, and Rawlinson's 1849 report valued baths, financial resources severely limited action.[105] The pattern of private finance, superimposed with corporate organisation, occurred repeatedly and, according to Christopher Upton, particularly in respect of parks and gardens. The original Kent Street Baths assumed a special place in local affections. Bathers have fond memories, and the program for the 1933 re-opening after reconstruction said "Kent Street" and "Baths" had been mellowed by constant association for three generations as to become household words. This sharply contrasts with Thetford, where the committee and many subscribers felt usurped by the corporation.[106]

Three phases can be identified in the spread of Birmingham Public Baths; development prior to the First World War; inter-war; and post-war. During the Victorian-Edwardian era, Birmingham provided ten indoor and three open-air establishments, and four cottage baths; in keeping with the findings of Chris Gratton and Peter Taylor that the period 1870-1914 saw an investment boom in large urban areas nation-wide, resulting in 500 public baths.[107] However, Birmingham's provision was significantly advanced. In 1865, when it possessed three complete suites, Hennock says many large towns still lacked facilities. By 1897, numerous national and international enquiries were being

received, prompting the Baths Department to publish a comprehensive handbook, including statistics demonstrating its eminence. A second phase of proactive provision occurred inter-war, resulting in an additional seven indoor and four cottage baths, and reconstruction of the oldest establishments at Kent Street and Woodcock Street. The third phase, post-war, was one of stagnation and decline. From 1946 to 1959 only two establishments were built nation-wide and, although conditions eased in the 1960s, Birmingham built few facilities, neither public nor school-based, and its older venues increasingly faced closure.[108]

When Birmingham's first public baths, opened in 1851, they were controlled by the Gaol and Buildings Committee, but a Baths and Wash-Houses Committee was soon formed. Six years later it was amalgamated to become Baths and Parks, but in 1911 reverted to Baths Committee, which ruled until the 1970s local government reorganisation. Management bye-laws were first proposed in 1877 but not implemented until July 1885.[109]

The original Kent Street premises offered first and second-class private baths, both warm and cold, a first-class plunge, swimming bath with supplement for use of dressing rooms, and wash-house. The latter was unsuccessful and replaced in 1879 with the Turkish Baths, first proposed in 1860. Upton says these were introduced to England by soldiers returning from the Crimean War, and Birmingham's first opened at the Argent Works in the Jewellery Quarter in 1864. Popularity of Turkish Baths led to their inclusion, both first and second-class, at several establishments. Hence the Birmingham Baths Department offered everything Sinclair and Henry considered typical, except wash-houses.[110]

Other health and medical services were periodically offered. Douche baths, safe, hygienic and conservative of water but usually only at hydropathic institutions, were provided in both classes in 1851, and Jewish orthodox baths, another measure of community hygiene, 20 years later. Twentieth-century options included Russian Baths,

the forerunners of saunas, from at least 1912, paraffin wax treatments at Kent Street, and Erdington's 1955 aeratone bath, purportedly beneficial to circulatory and rheumatic disorders. Particular interest and development occurred inter-war, when many towns had modern medicinal baths. Birmingham debated providing sun beds and converting Cannon Hill open-air bath into a brine lido.[111] Post-war, various hot-air treatments flourished.

Soap, towels and costumes were generally available at public baths. Although Thetford hired them until the 1970s, Birmingham apparently ceased to do so during shortages in 1942.[112] Its baths department also contributed to public health by supplying water. In 1854 the Waterworks Company benefited. 1860s recipients included Smithfield Market and Duke Street Police Station, and consideration was given to supplying homes and the General Hospital. Local streets were watered until 1869 when the Waterworks Company brought a restraining bill. Later, the departmental supply was only used in emergencies, particularly the Second World War.[113]

Birmingham Baths Department actively promoted public health and hygiene, providing facilities in accordance with local needs and encouraging attendance. In the early twentieth century there was strong support for welfare. The 1908 cottage baths at Coventry Street followed deputations including the Health Committee's 1904 report on infant mortality. This backed the Medical Officer of Health's proposals for cottage baths in slum districts, and discretionary powers allowing health visitors to issue free tickets. Restrictions on capital expenditure had prevented earlier provision but, especially in converted buildings, cottage baths were relatively cheap. Private baths were available at most establishments, and strenuous efforts made to maintain wartime services. Demand was consistently high, with influxes during the 1920's and 1950's fuel shortages.[114] After the Second World War, loan sanction was restricted to essential wash-houses or slipper baths, but Birmingham's bids were successful. The situation in Winson Green (1950) was typical: over 4,400 dwellings lacking baths, and a further 2,200 without bathrooms.[115] Nevertheless, hygiene was not a key factor in expansion. In 1902 Charles Vince noted

there had been no remarkable successes in promoting cleanliness and swimming to motivate further council expenditure, and Kent Street's wash-house had been short-lived because of limited working-class usage, and unnecessary, uneconomic subsidy of wealthier households. In 1923 it was resolved that five working-class districts would benefit from modern facilities, but the only one which materialised lasted just three years (1928-1931). From 1954 the Baths Committee noted the function of private baths was declining, and as the 1960s saw more than 50% reduction in users, rationalisation rather than expansion was appropriate.[116]

Nevertheless, demand was the overwhelming impetus in the spread of public baths. Community needs and requests which drove expansion gained additional momentum from issues of decency, safety and civic pride. Early establishments achieved instant popularity, proving their case and economic viability, so corporations were willing to consider additional investment. Within two months of opening, Kent Street accommodated 42,600 bathers and turned many away: the immense need was expressed in its visitors book. Four months after opening expansion commenced, closely followed by serious consideration of additional sites. Three months later, the first business item of the new Baths and Wash-Houses Committee was minute 868 of its predecessor, stating "the Bath Sub Committee be requested to enquire for and examine and recommend sites for additional baths, and report". In September 1852 the council was recommended to purchase land on Woodcock Street, but economist control prevented construction until 1858.[117] The new establishment opened in 1860, followed two years later by Northwood Street Baths.

Community requests were highly significant. In the month prior to recommending the Woodcock Street site, the Baths and Wash-Houses Committee reported it had been repeated solicited for additional and extended facilities. Likewise, Northwood Street originated in memorials from inhabitants of northern districts; J. Moth dates the first to 1853. Provision was advised in 1857, a week after the committee minutes mention further pressure, because the genuine need of this largely working-class, densely populated and

deprived quarter, was recognised. Campaigning influenced seven more establishments: Monument Road, Green Lane, Nechells, Kings Heath, Harborne, Erdington and Sparkhill, spanning the period until the Second World War. Committee minutes clearly indicate the centrality of bather demand and public entreaty. In 1886, following periodic appeals and a deputation to the mayor, the council was convinced of the Bordesley area's exigency.[118] The fact that financial straits delayed Green Lane Baths, Small Heath, until 1902 does not detract value from people power.

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries participation, and hence public demands, grew. Annual visits to Birmingham's baths were around 100,000 during 1851-1860, rapidly doubling from 1861-1875. A much slower rise to 300-400,000 occurred between 1875 and 1905, followed by massive spurts to 500,000, 1905-1910, and 1,000,000, 1911-1913. Except for slight decline during the Second World War, expansion continued.[119] Undoubtedly, local authority promotion of facilities and services had paramount importance. Birmingham experimented with offers including books of tickets, season tickets and free admission periods at open-air baths. Additionally, media publicity created interest and awareness of the participatory benefits. During the second half of the nineteenth century, swimming was greatly boosted by developments in rational recreation, education and clubs - all promoting participation and instruction.

In the twentieth century, welfare became influential, progressing from sanitation, it advocated all-round personal health and hygiene. Particularly significant was the focus on infant care, leading attention to school welfare and physical education. Closely associated was industrial welfare. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the necessity of a fit, healthy working class was recognised by progressive employers. Reid states that in the 1860s many Birmingham manufacturers presented their employees with books of second-class tickets valid for the corporation's warm, private baths. Local, industrial paternalism included welfare arrangements such as washing facilities and sick clubs, and educational and recreational opportunities.[120] After the nation's desperate state was highlighted by

Boer War recruitment returns, there was major expansion of working-class opportunities for sport and recreation, particularly during the First World War and inter-war period. Birmingham Civic Recreation League, formed for war workers, became a key provider. In swimming, women's participation considerably expanded, as did Sunday and mixed bathing. Working-class clubs were formed, abetting the general growth of instruction, and Birmingham Baths Department had to concede their registration at second-class baths. It also undertook extensive facility development. Similarly, David Bowker found that during the inter-war period, working-class demand considerably increased facilities in Ashton-under-Lyne.[121] In the thirties, many government initiatives resulted from the prospect of rearmament, and when war came Birmingham's Baths Department endeavoured to maintain health and recreation services. It assumed control of Cadbury's Rowheath Lido, in the city's safer outskirts, and held morale boosting events. Post-war, leisure dominated usage and facilities were increasingly open all-year-round, improving accessibility and public proficiency.

From the early stages, groups called for facilities and programmed usage suiting their needs. Birmingham Baths Department was pestered for class-related improvements, including from 1855 extended Saturday hours, accessible to working-men, and extra first-class accommodation in 1862. The Jewish Community's request for orthodox baths, first tendered in 1860, was met 11 years later.[122] Expanding participation exerted growing pressure, particularly from clubs, schools and women, but facility congestion was compounded by bigotry regarding the working class and women. There was unwillingness to risk inconveniencing adult, male clientele, particularly in first-class accommodation. Pleas for extra time for girls' schools and a separate female establishment proposed by the Education Department were rejected, but extending Kent Street was finally sanctioned in 1911.[123] Thereafter, women's opportunities expanded, aided by the introduction of mixed bathing, but friction between the clubs and Baths Department was ongoing. Clubs were impeded by lack of pool reservations, never granted before the

1880s, and regulations which severely restricted time, activities, and users. Until after the Second World War, many baths closed in winter and mixed clubs were prohibited, creating further adversity, especially as clubs held inflated opinions of their importance to bather statistics and hence income.

Nevertheless, sporting needs did influence provision. John Bale theorises that enclosure into specialised "sportscapes" from the nineteenth century, was consequent of a broad trend towards modernisation, driven primarily by the demands for objectivity and standardisation of organised, competitive sport. He considers "sportised" swimming responsible for the transition into standardised pools, ignoring spas which introduced the modern enclosure and regulation subsequently developed by private and public baths. However, his view that proponents exerted significant pressure from around the turn of the century, is true for Birmingham. Denis Molyneux's study of the area (1871-1892) indicates the Baths Department's changing attitude to the "special needs of swimmers" for regular physical recreation, and that consequent concessions aided club development.[124]

By 1900 the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) was firmly established as the national governing body and, as Cecil Colwin states, stimulating facility construction was a key objective.[125] Naturally, its advice would be orientated towards competitive requirements, especially as many baths were unsuitable. Expansion of the competitive movement created more clubs, local leagues and organisations, all demanding additional and improved facilities. Inter-war Birmingham had a thriving club tradition which strongly influenced the re-construction of Woodcock Street. Although, in 1922, the superintendent and ASA disputed Aston Swimming Club's claim that inadequate facilities were losing the city's repute for swimming and water polo, they recognised the urgency of a gala bath and plans were made. In 1929 consultation was sought with Birmingham Association of Swimming Clubs, which pressed for an extensive spectator area. The Midland District ASA offered the enticement of hosting major events, and a compromise was reached.[126] Post-war, Birmingham became very supportive to sport and new baths

included Stechford (1962), which is still considered a very fast pool. Reorganisation resulted in fewer, larger clubs which seized opportunities for extensive, annual training. The city development squad rose to pre-eminence in the 1980s, but continued success has been affected by failure to provide an olympic-sized pool.

Interlinked with demand for baths is their spatial relationship with housing. The working classes required cheap accommodation near work, so frequently congregated in older, central areas. Public Baths, intended for their benefit, were located within these communities, despite superior, suburban water supplies. Although the philanthropy was somewhat marred by the attraction of cheaper land, baths were provided in accordance with local needs. Critical housing conditions were an early revelation of the public health debate, and by the twentieth century council estates were increasingly established. Joseph Jones states these emphasised Birmingham's need for baths, especially as outgrowth distanced new housing from existing facilities. Inter-war, provision became integral to community planning. Newly developed Northfield opened baths in 1937, for its growing population, and employees from numerous factories and workshops. Similar motives underpinned Kingstanding's 1938 provision. This area saw phenomenal growth, and to minimise rents some houses were built without baths, so co-operation was sought from the Baths Department.[127] The same year brought plans for Acocks Green and Stechford, and although the war prevented their implementation, planning for peacetime focused on community units, including ambitious baths proposals. Few materialised because, for several decades, shortages limited loan sanctions and necessity had to be proved. In 1966 the Baths Committee felt, correctly, that its Aston Newtown project would succeed if linked with school and community needs, but overall, existing provision was largely adequate. Birmingham has comparatively few school baths, probably because in 1961 the Chief Education Officer reported that whilst three might be built, sufficient facilities were available.[128]

Decency issues influenced provision demands. Urban-industrial development caused disputes over recreational use of space, and Hugh Cunningham says these had harshest impact on everyday activities like swimming.[129] Free and widely available at natural amenities, providing cleansing and recreation, it was increasingly popular, but propriety was high on the social agenda, and complaints of public disorder and indecency caused introduction of bathing bye-laws. As early as 1815 a Thames Bathing Bill was proposed following indecent bathing in the Southwark area. In 1846, a Birmingham brass candlestick-maker and glass-blower were warned that "the feelings of respectable females must not be enraged by such improper proceedings" and next time they would face a month's hard labour. Three teenagers, convicted of swimming naked in the late 1890s, were fined 5/- each. One father refused to pay, declaring birching appropriate and, when the sisters raised the money, beat his son about the head with a steel rule. However, the practice remained widespread and prosecution comparatively rare. In 1930s Birmingham, youths from Summer Lane regularly swam in the canal[130]:

> Boys whose fathers had a job wore a swimming costume, some wore woolly underpants and the "Jack the Lad" contingent revealed all![131]

Potential capture merely added excitement. They posted a look-out and used planned routes to abscond, clutching their clothes. It seems likely, as with illegal betting, a blind eye was often turned.

Correspondence in The Times, concurrent to the emerging health debate, indicates the bathing problem was growing. An 1829 letter depicted disgusting nuisances wherever water existed, and subsequent missives called for controlled bathing places or public baths, for which London's New River Company offered free water. Similarly, in the early 1870s, a writer to Birmingham Daily Post urged additional provision to prevent the frequent "disgusting exhibitions" of "manner and language" that the police seem powerless to restrain. He said facilities were inconvenient and expensive for working-

class youths and men.[132] Boating and promenading, popular middle and upper-class pursuits, were spoilt by nude bathers, and Hugh Cunningham says canal bathing was banned in Birmingham in 1833 because ladies walking the towpath found it offensive. R. Davis, C. Bull, J. and D. Roscoe agree that respectable citizens were upset, and that this gave rise to bathing stations. Local historian, David Osborne attributed Thetford's 1890 provision to nude bathing near the fashionable Water Meadows and, although it was actually instigated for safety, decency probably influenced its establishment and remote location.[133] Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries decency issues effectively excluded women from swimming as participants or spectators.

Safety concerns were another impelling factor. As bathing increased so did deaths or near drownings, and newspapers raised public awareness. In 1838 The Times stated:

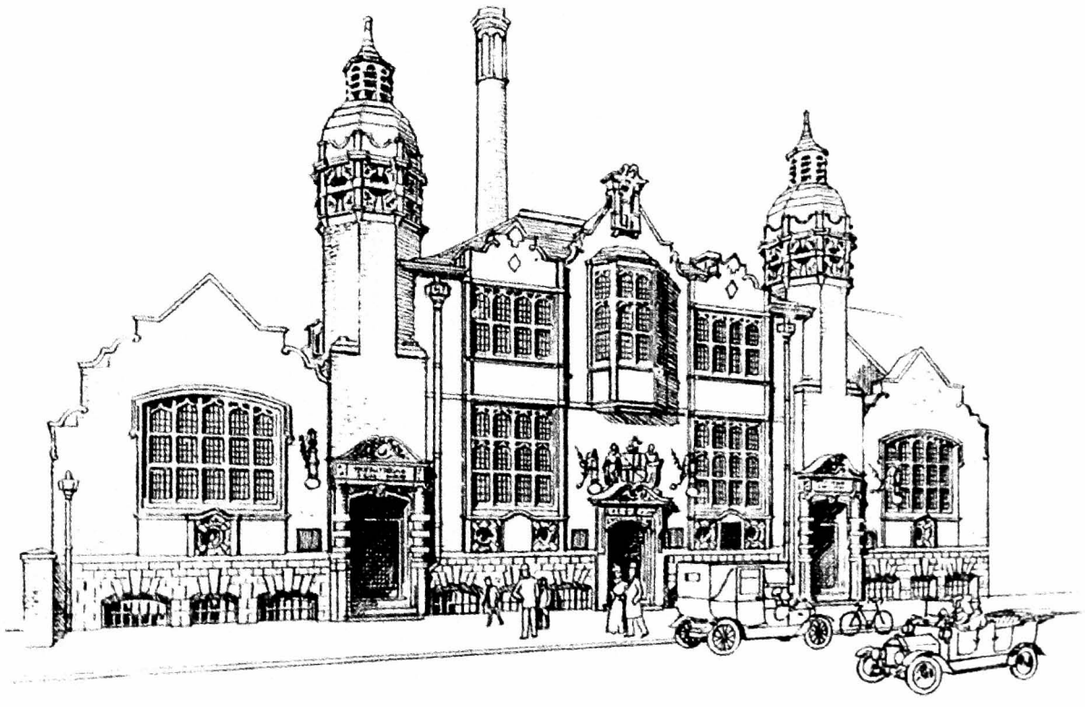
> From want of the noble art of swimming thousands are annually sacrificed and every fresh victim calls more strongly upon....those who have the power to draw the attention of such personages as may be likely to require this art.[134]

Widely used waterways were hazardous. Perils included sudden depth changes, strong currents, submerged objects, misperception of swimming ability and horseplay. An Aston man, born 1915, recalls the wharf was a favourite playground - diving from and swimming underneath barges.[135] In 1873 Charles Steedman said that drowning was the primary cause of accidental death in England and Wales, claiming six victims daily. Seafaring death rates were a national scandal, with 2,077 in 1860. The 1893 court-martial of the battleship *Victoria's* survivors, stressed the unnecessary loss of life and need for swimming instruction.[136] Pressure was also exerted by the ASA and Life Saving Association. Community tragedies had great impact, and at private schools and small towns often incited provision. A drowning directly resulted in Thetford's bathing station.

Molyneux found that Birmingham drownings often brought demands for additional facilities, so all could become proficient swimmers. In July 1872, following a dual fatality

in a canal, Birmingham Daily Post printed a letter suggesting free tuition. The writer claimed to know men, barely able to float, who would risk their lives trying to save others. Nine years later, a leader "The Drowning Season" in the Birmingham Daily Mail begged action, especially in schools. The Honourable Secretary of the School Board Physical Exercises Committee agreed, but said implementation required more facilities and many more teachers.[137] Unfortunately, safety was not a baths department priority, and the minutes rarely raise issues. Increasing income largely motivated promotional initiatives, including permitting instructors to practice and organise galas, supporting clubs and schools, offering prizes and discount schemes. Although from the early twentieth century the department ran an increasingly comprehensive and professional instruction service, not until post Second World War, when growing litigation forced greater responsibilities, was safety emphasised. In 1955 lessons were advertised, in order to reduce fatalities, and teaching children was the justification for provision of Stechford Baths.[138]

Municipal amenities embodied civic pride. Particularly during the Victorian-Edwardian period they were symbols of prosperity and a progressive outlook. Reid found greater willingness to countenance projects came in the 1860s, from realisation that Birmingham was lagging as a civic force. Subsequent development of the civic gospel brought extensive investment, with public baths and libraries key beneficiaries.[139] Many grand facilities arose from fierce competition, and Hennock states London's borough councils vied such, that their baths rivalled provincial town halls in size and magnificence. Birmingham lacked internal or serious regional contention, so provision was appropriately sized. Nevertheless, baths' opening speeches and brochures boast details of the costs and elaborate architecture and decoration. Moseley Road has been compared to "swimming in Siena Cathedral". (See illustrations overleaf). Although Hennock attributes expenditure to sanitary consciousness, lavish provision also aided business interests.[140]



Top: Frontage of Nechells Baths (1910). (Sarah Batstone, Photograph, June 1995.)

Bottom: Frontage of Moseley Road Baths (1907). (Moth, Birmingham Baths, p.19)

Costs are an invariable influence in facility provision, and Sinclair and Henry stated it was nearly always the deciding factor in location. Birmingham's fourth establishment was Monument Road, because the earmarked site, Sheepcote Street, proved uneconomic. Likewise, finding sufficiently cheap land lengthened the delay in providing for Bordesley, and monetary concerns repeatedly impeded expansion. Birmingham's second establishment was on hold nearly a decade, and late nineteenth-century provision was prohibited by recession and civic debt. Molyneux considers a heavy rates burden, consequent of the civic gospel era, was paramount. Certainly, Nechells' establishment was postponed due to existing financial commitments.[141] Furthermore, public baths had generally proved loss-making. According to Vince, for most of its first 14 years, Birmingham Baths Department showed a small profit, ignoring interest on capital outlay. However, by the 1890s, fees had long ceased covering maintenance, and annual losses exceeded £3,500. With ratepayers subsidising each ticket by two-pence farthing, there was reluctance regarding further expenditure.[142] During the twentieth century, difficulties obtaining loan sanction and local authority cut backs were additional restraints.

An important means of finance was dual provision of baths and libraries. This was considered for Woodcock Street, but in 1856 the money was raised by selling spare land. Joint projects did enable the delayed Green Lane Baths (1902), and Moseley Road (1907). The latter was part of Balsall Heath's annexation deal, and the Greater Birmingham Scheme, given royal assent in June 1911, brought four more baths into departmental control.[143] Gifts and grants were vital to developments, and Cunningham states philanthropists increased the tempo. Birmingham particularly benefited from Louisa Ryland. She donated land, and approved baths for Cannon Hill and Victoria Parks, giving £4,000 towards laying out the latter. Renowned progressive employer, Cadbury's, proposed Stirchley Baths, later Bournville Lane, providing the land and overseeing plans.[144] During the inter-war period, funding was increasingly available through government schemes. Most 1920s facilities involved unemployment relief, and 1930s

recognition of the benefits of sport and recreation brought several significant initiatives. In 1938, when closure of Birmingham's open-air baths was forced, it was anticipated that public outcry would provide a splendid opportunity to seek a grant under the Physical Fitness Scheme.[145]

2.4 At Your Own Risk - The Dangers of Public Baths.

Promotion of health and safety benefits successfully developed swimming and bathing in terms of provision and participation. Axiomatically this made a positive contribution to public health and safety, effects furthered by growth of physical education, welfare programs, and swimming and life-saving lessons. Ironically, participants were exposed to considerable risks. Until the late twentieth century, bath water quality was variable and often potentially injurious. Safety standards were arguably worse, with inadequate staff, lack of bather control and facility hazards. Conditions were compounded by primacy of financial concerns, and authority complacency and inertia.

Until at least the 1930s, bath water was generally highly undesirable. Polluted sources were a major problem, even for enclosed baths. These used bore-holes, wells or mains supply, which frequently introduced sewage. In 1861 water from Woodcock Street Baths, analysed by Drs Hill and Wills, had high nitrate levels. Hill reported presence of organisms, some visible with the naked eye, in the mains supply, but maintained it was relatively pure chemically and almost sewage free. He blamed seepage of surface water, contaminated by decomposing matter. The reddish discoloration was attributed to suspended iron from pipe-work and sand. A deeper well and replacement enamel pipes were recommended but cost delayed action. In 1888 water in private baths was discoloured by pipe corrosion and poor circulation and, in 1905, defective drainage was revealed at Kent Street after a schoolboy became seriously ill.[146]

For many years the main treatment method was fill-and-empty, involving periodic water changes. According to Bunce, in 1885 Birmingham's baths were sometimes emptied thrice weekly, according to season and bather numbers.[147] Tanks were scrubbed before refilling, so staff worked late and stokers often remained overnight. The lengthy process was disruptive, and took several days at Small Heath Park's large open-air bath. This had hardly opened, in 1883, when more than 14,000 bathers took advantage of promotional free sessions, severely discolouring the water and forcing closure. Frequent draining was impractical, and a former bather says it was only cleaned on Sundays, so by Saturday "the water was like a peat pit". In 1899 even Woodcock Street's new super-efficient bore-hole, producing 10,000 gallons an hour, took 7.5 hours refilling, albeit a vast improvement on the 17-18 hours previously required.[148] Wastage of water and fuel made the fill-and-empty method expensive, and yet the real benefits lasted only hours. Harry Hyde, a baths service employee for 50 years, says single bath establishments charged first-class rates only on refilling days.[149] Pollution increased with users, and in 1852 bathers complained about the water in Birmingham's first-class bath which, because of disruption to the mains, had been used by 3,500. Popularity in hot weather created particularly insalubrious conditions, but in Birmingham an 1854 complaint was dismissed on the grounds of the situation's rarity.[150] Second-class baths, popular with workmen and children, were badly affected. Consequently, in 1862, Birmingham introduced pre-swim cleansing baths and these were compulsory for children from 1915, following inspection of Manchester's facilities. Other bather related pollutants included unstable costume dye and hair. In 1914, the former caused complaints at Birmingham's women's bath. Floating hair was unpleasant and clogged filters, so from 1918 wearing of hats by schoolgirls, and from 1928 all women, was compulsory. They were also recommended for men because fashionable, greasy hair preparations made the water surface objectionable and fed bacteria.[151]

Increasingly, dilution was used to mediate water quality. By 1905 a third of Kent Street Bath's water was replaced daily, but it was still turbid with noticeable ammonia at the thrice-weekly complete changes.[152] Combining fill-and-empty with filtration, aeration and chemical methods achieved better results. Sand filters strained suspended matter including most bacteria, and replacing dissolved air improved water appearance and odour, but hand dosing with chemicals only masked deterioration. Subsequently, mechanical pool plants dominated. Adams says the first was installed at Bury in 1905, although 30 years previously the Thames Floating Bath had possessed apparatus performing these functions.[153] By 1910 many authorities had installed plants. Jones correctly identifies Kings Norton and Northfield District Council as amongst the first. In 1906 its Bournville Lane Baths included a plant identical to one viewed in Leeds. Such installations enabled maintenance of water for longer periods, and Liverpool, renowned bathing pioneer, adopted it for new baths in 1909, enabling the same salt water to be used all summer. The following year, having inspected facilities including Bournville Lane, Hastings and Tunbridge Wells, Birmingham converted Moseley Road Baths, albeit primarily to rectify discoloration.[154] This was a common problem for baths with mains supply, especially in Birmingham with its brackish Welsh Water. In 1915 baths proposals for Kings Heath included a mechanical plant, despite four years previously the superintendent engineer concluding these were not cost effective. In fact the opposite proved true. In 1922 the Birmingham Post reported plants at the Kings Heath and Harborne Baths, currently under construction, would make huge savings. Comparison of projected water usage with Bunce's 1885 figures suggests a phenomenal 98% reduction. Hence, it is hardly surprising that in 1933 filtration was said to promote fuel economy.[155]

Inter-war, there was growing interest in water purity. Although small, the Baths Service formed in 1918 was a major pressure group. In 1923, following publication of "Water in Public Baths", copies of which were sent to every superintendent in England and Wales, it presented an account to the Ministry of Health requesting the principles of

purification and filtration be generally adopted. The ministry responded in 1925 with a report, and three years later formed an exploratory committee. In 1929 three categories of bath pollution were defined: not bather-derived, bather-derived and bacterial, and constant monitoring was recommended. According to Ian Wright, General Manager at Newcastle upon Tyne (1971), the Baths Service was greatly involved in the ministry's 1937 report, "Purification of Water in Swimming Baths", and its persistent campaigning resulted in the 1970s high standards. In the 1930s major impetus came from an intensive media campaign led by the Daily Mail, which revealed Westminster scientists' findings including: lack of official standards; high level faecal contamination where disinfection was lacking; difficulties maintaining chlorine concentration; and the futility of trying to eliminate specific disease organisms. Additionally, the potential of towels for spreading catarrhal organisms and meningococci, especially when used by young children, was identified.[156]

In March 1934 the first edition of Baths and Bath Engineering, Journal of the National Association of Baths Superintendents, primarily addressed water treatment. An article by Adams, detailed the options for all types of bathing amenities: natural i.e. uncontrolled, pseudo-natural, i.e. bathing stations, and artificial baths. Still water locations, such as lakes, required sufficient area and volume for vegetative processes to effect purification, whereas the constant flow method applied to running water. For artificial baths, Adams considered continuous purification with chemical and related methods, including ultra-violet light and catadyne-silver, paramount. He said pool water was generally drained from the deep end, filtered, aerated and chlorinated, and pumped back into the shallow end. Chlorination eventually became almost universal, probably due to the breakpoint method introduced immediately after the Second World War, enabling bath water to be class one potable.[157] Nevertheless, maintaining appropriate levels required extreme care and frequent testing. During busy periods this became almost impossible. Chlorine fluctuations had unpleasant implications, low levels endangering

health and high levels affecting bathers' eyes and lungs - problems which remained into the 1990s.

The inter-war focus on bath-water purity caused rapid spread of pool plants. New and reconstructed baths had them and, particularly in the 1930s, older facilities were upgraded. However, some retained the fill-and-empty system until after the Second World War. Hyde considers the ministry's 1925 report was highly significant in promoting conversion. Whereas previously most baths were fill-and-empty, it led to many installations including 17 in Liverpool during the period 1931-1936.[158] Civic pride and rivalry were also important. According to Bowker, in 1932 Ashton-under-Lyne's Recreation Grounds Committee Chairman boasted that their filtration system was "second to none and there are no cleaner baths in the whole of England".[159] In contemporary Birmingham, nine establishments, including all new ones, were similarly equipped, and considered infinitely superior by both public and council. Consequently, loans were authorised the following year for converting most others, including an open-air bath.[160] In 1934, modern ultra-violet and electrical plants were investigated for new baths at Kingstanding. The systems considered would presumably have included the electro-katadyn, proclaimed by Baths and Baths Engineering as the greatest advance since advent of continuous purification. Simple and efficient, its greatest advantage was being virtually unaffected by bather load.[161] Ultimately, progress was consequent of the 1936 Public Health Act. Section 233 required new authority bye-laws ensuring water purity, adequate clean accommodation and linen, prevention of accidents and bather conduct.

In 1935 Birmingham had decided the necessary sampling of bath water was too expensive, and instead embarked on a monthly program to satisfy the Public Health Department.[162] Previously, testing was mainly instigated by complaints. Reports show that contamination fluctuated with seasonal usage but no pattern emerges regarding the individual establishments. Accuracy of results is questionable and distortion, according to

the timing of testing, is likely. In February 1938, Green Lane Baths was found to have 23,300 bacteria/100ml, which could indicate the next water change was imminent. However, this establishment and some others, were repeatedly unsatisfactory and had reviews suggested by the Public Health Department.[163] From 1937 blackspots were rationalised. That summer, extreme bacterial levels were found on two occasions, and several baths had B.coli, with one particularly badly infected. The problems were attributed to "offensive habits of bathers", and it was said that otherwise facilities were as good as can be expected in summer. Similarly, local infection was considered the cause of the high bacterial count at Northwood Street Baths in May. Staff inadequacies were frequently blamed. In April 1937 stokers at Tiverton Baths failed to follow instructions and, the next month, Cannon Hill's attendant was held responsible for B.coli problems. By 1938 the Public Health Act had raised standards but occasional outbreaks still resulted from inadequate chlorination caused by plant failure or human error. In March 1939 both of Green Lane's pools had high bacteria and B.coli counts due to chlorinator break-down, and similar problems transpired at Tiverton in August, because the attendants were unaccustomed to its new plant. In spite of the new legislation, severely affected baths remained open, and in April 1938, when Northwood Street had 240 B.coli/ml, considered dangerous, the Baths Committee dismissively said problems would cease when the chlorinator was installed.[164]

In the early 1940s contamination, albeit at low levels, was commonplace, and there were intermittent, severe outbreaks, such as September 1941, when Victoria Road Baths, Aston, ran out of chlorine and had 33,100 bacteria/100ml. There was no official explanation for this decline in standards, but the war was adversely affecting community hygiene; baths staff and supplies were short; and water sources were subject to disruption and pollution. Intensive bombing around Kent Street Baths was thought to have affected its well.[165] Another possibility is distortion resulting from improved testing procedures, a view supported by the apparent reduction in standards after the polio epidemic began.

This augmented the importance of water reports, as expressed by the Baths Committee in 1951. It is noticeable that during 1948-1951 baths were often reported "unsatisfactory" or with "uncountable bacteria". Fortunately, few had B.coli or other faecal coliforms which could transmit the disease. Although, in March 1951, Grove Lane Baths had 10,800 bacteria/100ml, it was said that "bathers can enjoy swimming in reasonable safety", because of the lack of B.coli, and that perfection was an impossible aim. The polio scare increased water testing, especially in summer, but failed to instigate a systematic program. Between July and September 1958, 765 samples were taken, yet only 58 in a similar period in 1960.[166] It is probable that sample size correlated with usage.

From the early 1950s problems were rare, with bather load and chlorine concentration recognised as key determinants of water quality. However, in 1969 the medical officer of health was concerned that bathing caused ear infections, skin complaints and possibly such diseases as hepatitis, and suggested that chlorine levels be maintained in accordance with the 1936 legislation. 1970 brought major breakthrough. With acceptance that chlorine shortage endangers health, came closure of pools following very unsatisfactory test results. The presence of faecal coliforms had caused closure of Thetford's river pool on a number of occasions from the 1950s. Water quality improved rapidly as procedures became increasingly regulated, and Wright claimed that 1970s British pools were amongst the most hygienic world-wide.[167] Given post-war findings, early bath water was evidently extremely insalubrious. This raises the question as to just how bad conditions were at the George Street and Lady-Well private baths. Walter Showell claims that in 1878 the former were filled in by order of the local board of health, and Bunce says the latter, which had closed by 1885, became disused due to insanitary, disreputable surroundings.[168]

Purity issues closed Birmingham's three open-air baths. Drainage particularly affected such facilities, especially if insanitary arrangements prevailed locally. Leaf, insect and animal-faecal contamination rendered water unsightly and potentially aetiological.[169] Part

of the disused reservoir at Brookvale Park was used for bathing until 1922 when the baths' superintendent insisted it was "practically a stagnant pool", contaminated by run-off from sluicing the promenade, giving any infected bather a strong case for compensation. Three years later sewage was found, and the medical officer of health discovered 7,000 bacteriological organisms/ml at the inlet. Although, men continued using the main reservoir, ladies were banned because of the "dangerous" depth. Filtration, chlorination and, or, complete enclosure were considered prohibitively expensive, and the work would involve lowering water levels, to the detriment of fishing and boating. Consequently, removal of the bathing sheds was suggested in 1928 and occurred the following year.[170]

Baths in Cannon Hill and Small Heath (Victoria) Parks closed for similar reasons in 1939. The previous December, Birmingham's new bathing bye-laws, as required under the 1936 Public Health Act, came into force. Water had to equal public supply purity, be chlorinated at two parts per million, changed four to six hourly, and baths emptied annually for cleaning, making treatment plants essential.[171] Whereas water quality at indoor establishments was generally acceptable, both open-air baths were highly contaminated. In June 1928, that at Victoria Park had 50,000 bacteria/100ml and 38.4 B.coli. Both pools were drained and greater attention promised, but this proved insufficient to ensure health.[172] During 1931-1936, six Liverpool open-air baths were upgraded but this course of action was considered impractical in Birmingham. Considerable outlay on improvements had been made in the early 1920s and attendances, greatly affected by weather and increasing competition from modern lidos, did not justify additional expenditure. Furthermore, in 1934, use of Cannon Hill as a lido was rejected due to contamination by leaves and insects from the surrounding trees.[173] Nevertheless, the inter-war period saw a surge of interest in outdoor recreation, and in 1925 Birmingham Baths' superintendent considered open-air facilities "exceedingly important and a much better proposition than public swimming baths, however nice the appearance of the latter might be compared with the others". This supports the statements of Gratton

and Taylor, that the fashion was reflected by contemporary provision, and that 1930s outdoor baths accounted for half the 250 built nation-wide. Lido construction continued after the Second World War, including one at Stechford, opened in 1964. In this decade, Thetford citizens were raising money for a new pool, envisaging a grandiose lido.[174]

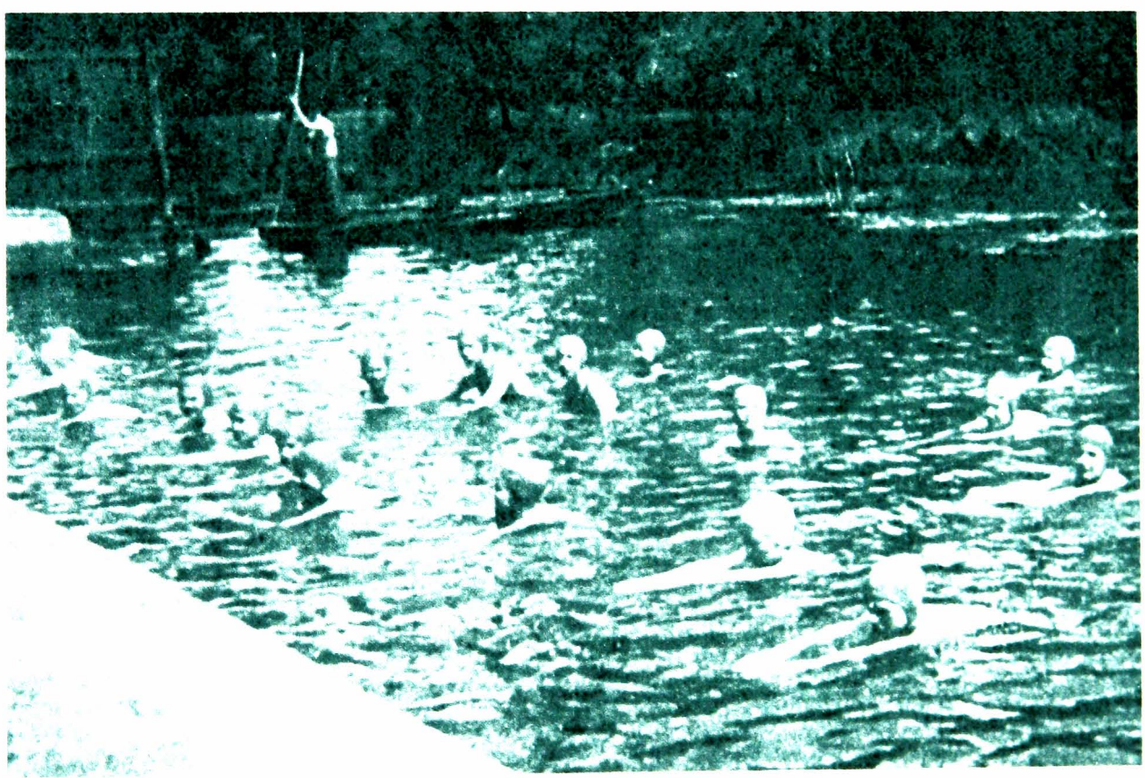
Thetford's bathing station was open to the river:

The upstream, deep end of the pool. (Sarah Batstone, Photograph, October 1993.)

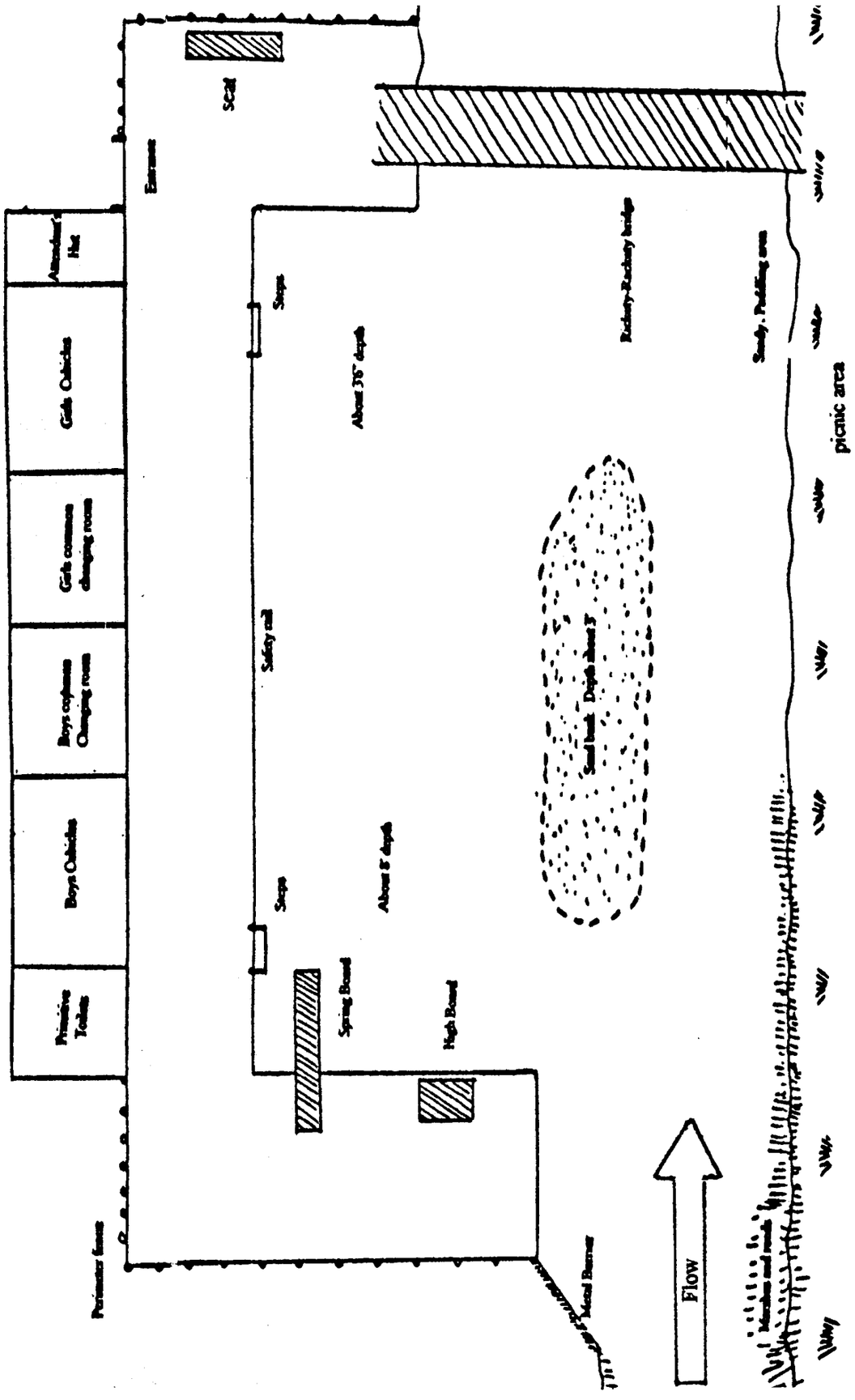
(See also pool plan, p.119). All manner of debris, including silt, a dead coypu and, according to rumour, a cow's carcass flowed in. Each spring the borough surveyor's men cut weeds, and used long poles to agitate the winter's accumulation for removal by the current. During the season, fresh sand was periodically dumped on the bed, and the attendant, on a punt, maintained the pool by raking with a chrome, a long-handled, hooked fork.[175] The effects were short-lived and bathers could emerge superficially dirtier. This description, from a lady bathing from the late 1940s, is typical:

> It was very weedy, and very, very muddy. The mud was sinky, you'd sink right down and you'd think you were on the bottom , then squelch, you'd go down another six inches. Many times I'd come home, up to my knees at least, caked in mud. You'd walk home and have to have a bath when you got there.[176]

However, a thirties bather considered it beautifully kept, much better than Lakenham, Norwich, "a real muddy place", and for years the nearest alternative.[177] Sometimes the river board dredged at Thetford, but responsibility was contentious. In 1948 the council carried out experimental cleaning with the British Gas Light Company fire pump, and formed a sub-committee to consider trimming trees and repairing the diving stand.[178]



Pool maintenance during a 1937 Swimming Lesson. (Thetford Grammar School Archive, Photograph)



Plan of Thetford's river pool. (Non-scalar plan based on sketches by Mr D. Osborne and Mr & Mrs M. Knights and personal observation).

Surprisingly, the bath remained operational until 1972, when it became obsolete. Anti-pollution treatment was impossible and, probably influenced by the 1936 Public Health Act, in 1937 Thetford Council consulted the river board about constructing a new one. However, in 1934, Adams stated water purity at pseudo-natural facilities was usually ignored because there were practically no rivers free of objectionable contamination, and Birmingham's 1938 bye-laws give the convenient interpretation that baths in natural lakes, rivers and streams are exempt from purity regulations.[179] As Wright says, the 1936 legislation was still governing service in the 1970s, and this loop-hole would explain Thetford's survival. Moreover, classification as controlled river bathing, might explain why it is not recorded in White's or Kelly's Directories, nor indicated on the map of water-based facilities produced by Eastern Region Sports Council in 1967.[180]

The bath's upstream location made it relatively safe. Well into the twentieth century, water below town was heavily polluted, as industries discharged waste directly into the river. Until the 1920s this included vile tannery effluent, and in the 1950s, that from Smedley's Canneries reputedly turned the river "bright green like pea soup with peas and beans, bright red when it was beetroot". Although enjoyed by fish and "vicious" swans, together with dangerous sunken barges, it caused bathing to decline in the nearby water meadows.[181] Furthermore, inadequate sanitation was not resolved until the sewerage farm was constructed. Ironically, many of Thetford's most popular bathing spots were downstream, including the First Staunch initially suggested as a position for the 1890 bathing station. Contemporary awareness of river pollution probably influenced the site selected, because health-wise it was far superior, although less convenient. Upriver was only farmland and scattered hamlets, and the popularity of fishing with large catches indicates reasonable water purity. The somewhat exaggerated descriptions by Accum (1819) and Hunt (1870), who wrote of "narrow, crystalline and shallow [rivers]...with sandy or gravel beds", suggest suitability for bathing, although water clarity, largely dependant on bed materials, is not necessarily indicative of purity.

Thetford's council first expressed concern about pollution in 1909 but sampling before 1938 was scant. That year widespread drought caused closure of similar pools because rivers were considered "full of germs". The town clerk received a letter concerning newspaper reports on the testing of many pools and suggesting Thetford's should be sampled, but after the Rivers Thet and Little Ouse were declared safe it remained open.[182] From 1950 there was increasing concern and more frequent sampling. There was always some faecal and bacterial contamination, and intermittently, when B.coli (type 1) exceeded safe levels, the bath temporarily closed. In June 1954, when a sample contained 35 faecal coli per 100ml, warning notices were posted.[183] Closure might have been permanent but the Great Ouse River Board, having sampled eight locations reported:

> The river is as safe as any river is likely to be for bathing, indeed it is considered one of the cleanest rivers in this part of the country.

This non-committal statement indicates lack of official confidence but, for 30/-, the council's insurers extended the third-party limited liability policy in respect of claims connected with bath pollution. Indemnity was limited to £25,000 and subject to prominent disclaimer notices.[184] Cattle grazing upstream were usually blamed for pollution, but sewage was also problematic. The pool's urinal drained into a tributary immediately upstream and in 1963, presence of effluent from RAF Barnham Sewerage Works was suspected, though the river board declared the water was clean with only threshold B.coli.[185] However, six years later reports of crude sewage sparked a Ministry of Health investigation. Bath closure was advised until the source had been identified and normal conditions restored. Initially, the farmer responsible refused to act, as the costs would exceed the fine, but following enforced emptying of his overflowing septic tanks, the B.coli level fell dramatically.[186]

Although most years the pool was considered safe, analysis was limited and standards were not exacting. In 1960 when the sanitary officer, concerned about the pool and Barnham Common bathing spot upstream, ordered routine sampling over two months, the undesirable results were not considered injurious. In 1968 the public analyst even declared local river water suitable for drinking.[187] However, water quality and safety were now high on baths' management agenda, and attention was increasingly drawn to the bathing station's sub-standard nature. In addition to health scares and growing public expectations, town expansion was underway with an influx of London overspill. Some of the new residents used the pool, but most, accustomed to far superior facilities, regarded Thetfordian bathers as "hillbillies". Similarly, it was little used by a former Birmingham club swimmer who moved to the area in 1939, because it was so different.[188]

In 1960, growing realisation of the replacement need, to enable bathing to be enjoyed in safe, hygienic conditions, led the local branch of the Transport and General Workers Union to suggest the town raise money for this purpose. The town clerk and borough surveyor reported the implications to the council: it could provide a bath; maintain one built by public subscription; or a voluntary body could raise the money and run it. In February 1961 a public meeting was called at which the town clerk said a small town could only afford an outdoor pool. This would cost £22,500 but, provided the public financed building, the council considered its predicted annual losses of £1,355 were an acceptable rates burden. Thetford Swimming Pool Fund was inaugurated and extensive fund-raising commenced, including a well-subscribed, weekly tote.[189] The council had long been aware of the need, because in 1947 it had plans for an enclosed, open-air bath, in Spring Meadow, just downstream of the existing facility, on land donated by Sir William Gentle for a children's playground. Finance was a major limiting factor for this, and the citizen's plans. Ultimately, their contribution, together with town expansion, enabled the council to make provision within a modern sports complex, opened in 1971.

Four years previously, the secondary modern school had acquired a heated, indoor pool. The headmaster, who considered the bathing station very unhygenic, pressed for it instead of a second gymnasium. It achieved instant popularity, and all school swimming lessons transferred from the river facility. Children still use it, but many citizens are adamant they would no longer enjoy the river. One said, "I would most certainly not venture to dip my toes in it now, much less the entire body".[190] Pollution, assumed previously non-existent is blamed, whereas modern sewage treatment and waste disposal regulations have generally improved river conditions. The fallacy stems from the water's murky and uninviting appearance, past ignorance, and lack of confidence created by media publicity of environmental issues.

Despite ubiquitous and often considerable purity problems, pool water was rarely linked with illness. Like domestic water, it must have contributed to epidemics including cholera and typhoid, some of which persisted until the Second World War. Adams agrees, and attributes the lack of definite links to dilution reducing frequency of infection. However, in 1908, R.J. Reece's local government report cited the example of Walmer Royal Marine Depot where of 32 typhoid cases, 22 seemed to have been bathing-induced. Its bath was filled twice weekly with sea water, via an intake pipe located within 500 yards of two outfalls discharging untreated sewage, and its appearance was compared to "storm water in a London street".[191] By the late 1920s there was growing awareness of the potential health defects, and in 1934 the Daily Mirror reported substantial increases in skin diseases, sinus and mastoid infections consequent of swimming's popularity.[192]

In 1947 the prevalence of polio was directly linked with swimming, and the connection highlighted by the death of renowned swimmer, forces sweetheart and media hero, Nancy Riach, at the European championships.[193] Participation severely declined, by 50-80% in London, and many baths closed. Birmingham was less affected and the Baths Committee suggested good weather was responsible, but more likely is public confidence in its reassurance and precautionary measures; close contact with the Public Health

Department; increased chlorination; thorough cleansing and disinfection of pool surrounds; and the promise of a warning statement in local press, if appropriate. However, one woman never learnt to swim, having been banned by her mother for fear of catching polio. Similar prohibition applied to children of a family which moved to Thetford in 1950.[194] Generally, impact here was temporary and minimal, but public health and safety consciousness was raised and water testing became more frequent. By 1959 vaccination was proving effective, with 50 cases weekly compared with 160 four years previously.[195] In the 1980s Weil's disease, contracted from the urine of river-bank rats, was publicised, and in 1987, after the issue was sensationalised in Thetford's press, river bathing virtually ceased, only reviving in 1994 when fire destroyed the sports centre facility, leaving the town destitute in a hot summer.

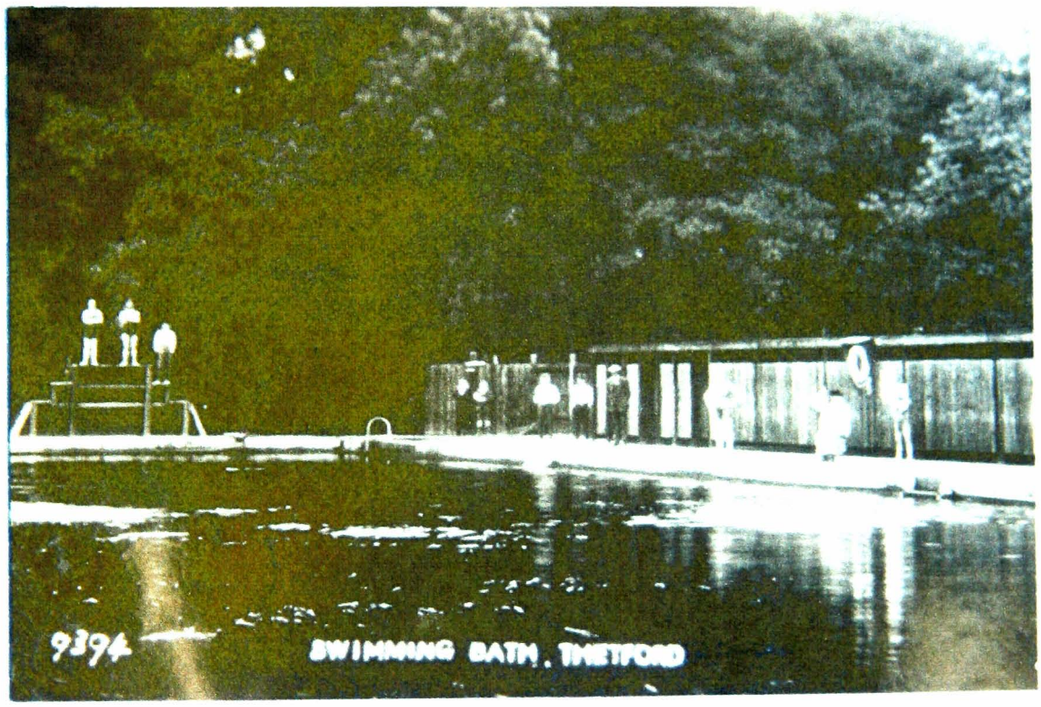
As identified by Bale, pollution influenced the enclosure of swimming, first enabled by the Baths and Wash-Houses Act. Once water treatment became effective, this represented improvement, and use of natural amenities decreased as formal provision became increasingly sterile. In 1964 a survey of recreational use of West Midland waters stated:

> Swimming features prominently in discussions of pollution - swimmers dislike swimming in polluted water and swimming itself, in the case of drinking water, may be a potential source of pollution.

Five years later the British Waterworks Association found swimming in only four of 420 reservoirs, and by 1973, when the Sports Council raised the possibility of typhoid contamination, it had been banned.[196] Lido popularity also declined as bathers became softened by the luxury of heated, indoor facilities, but interestingly, as Bale says, since the 1980s the trend has been for waterworlds, simulating the natural environment.[197]

Like water quality, and despite the 1846 Baths and Wash-Houses Act requiring bye-laws ensuring bather security, until the 1980s inadequate supervision constituted a serious threat. For most of the period, attendants were not primarily life-guards. In 1897

Birmingham's staff regulations listed extensive operational duties including cleaning, but made no reference to life-saving. However, twenty years earlier, the secretary of the local government board had stipulated provision of rescue equipment and that the baths superintendent should be ready and fit to use it.[198] Selection was apparently character-based with appointments often made from existing corporation employees. Complexes had several staff headed by the residential superintendent, whose wife oversaw the women's department and maintained towels and costumes. From 1881 a police officer patrolled at peak times, but public order and decency rather than safety was the overriding concern. Although in 1889 constabulary control was also suggested for the proposed Thetford Bathing Station, it was managed by one man, whose spouse was responsible for the linen. (Below, the 1928 attendant sits mid-way along the pool-side).



Thetford Swimming Bath (1928). (Postcard donated by David Osborne.)

Originally, the role was described as "curator", and the 1922 mayor used "caretaker".[199] His responsibilities were collecting entrance fees, hiring costumes and towels, selling refreshments, cleaning, recording water temperature and bather control. The probability is that the attendant was too busy to do the last effectively. Presumably, he performed rescues but his attire was not conducive. The 1928 photograph on the previous page shows him wearing a long coat and hat. Mr Foreman, the late 1950s attendant, wore a trilby, shirt and trousers, with belt and braces.[200] Furthermore, the man was usually an elderly, existing council employee, allocated lighter tasks, and although providing informal instruction, many bathers doubted his swimming ability. A former Grammar School master said "you couldn't imagine him swimming in any circumstance".[201] Indeed, Foreman had to be rescued after naughty boys threw him in.

Prior to the inter-war period, staff rarely required relevant experience or qualifications, their competency was highly questionable, and appalling standards were tolerated. Indeed, other bathers were often the life-savers. In Birmingham, in 1926, when a non-swimmer jumped in and sank, the female attendant merely shouted for help forcing Constable Brockhurst to contravene decency regulations by coming onto pool-side. She was excused on grounds of being new and panicking, and because she could easily have performed the rescue using the bamboo pole and large hook provided.[202] Twenty-one years later, when a 12 year old drowned in the deep end at Harborne Baths, unnoticed by the duty female, additional life-buoys were provided and department staff reminded of the necessity of utmost supervision. About this time, Margaret Jarvis detailed various bathing accidents caused by lack of observation, including a fatality where the attendant had pushed a RLSS Bronze Medallion holder aside.[203] Female staff were particularly poor, probably due to gendered opportunities. In 1938 safety was a key area of development under the new bathing regulations, which required safety markings, sufficient life-buoys and a proficient attendant. Birmingham surveyed its staff competence, and of 91 men, only 89%, 73% and 64% assessed in swimming, life-saving and artificial respiration

respectively, were felt adequate, and horrifyingly just 33%, 13% and 53% of the 60 women.[204] Attracting even unqualified staff was difficult, so in 1947 Birmingham decided to pay extra for RLSS qualifications, and encourage attendants to train as instructors. From 1954, staff were also required to keep life-saving techniques up-to-date.[205]

Nevertheless, unqualified appointments continued. A more qualified person was finally appointed to Thetford in 1961, after complaints about his predecessor's life-saving skills.[206] Yet, six years later, Birmingham's employment of a non-swimmer was scandalised in the local press, following a fatality. Contrary to public opinion, the department maintained service was not conditional on swimming ability. Another loophole of the 1936 and 1938 legislation was that only one skilled person was needed, and Birmingham Baths always had someone available who was capable of giving artificial respiration. The chief attendant was thoroughly trained, and others instructed in the use of life-saving equipment. At least one staff member was on pool-side for club sessions, and two during public swimming - a male and female at the deep and shallow ends respectively. Furthermore, the department claimed that despite 3,000,000 annual bathers, the 1967 tragedy was the first accidental death for 20 years. Its complacency was short lived, as another boy, despite being rescued by friends, died at Small Heath, and three years later a drowning occurred at Stechford.[207]

During the nineteenth century, the importance of learning to swim was highlighted, creating a new profession. Lessons were first offered in Birmingham in 1857. Although instructors tendered for licences, enabling a degree of quality control, formal qualifications were not available until 1899 when, attempting to raise teaching standards, the ASA launched its Professional Certificate. This was awarded on application to the district ASA but in the first ten years only 293 were issued. In 1919, to enable a greater range of qualified instructors, certificates were available to amateurs and professionals, at elementary and advanced levels. Nevertheless, by 1925 just 579 awards had been made. Hence, it is hardly surprising that in 1924, whilst most of the 14 applicants to teach in

Birmingham baths had relevant experience, only six were either ASA or RLSS qualified.[208] In 1944 realisation that limited facilities prevented many learning to swim until age 13, provoked the department into employing teachers and providing a better service. The first appointment was made the following year from twenty applicants; ten well qualified and experienced men, and ten ladies of whom only two had relevant backgrounds.[209] At Thetford, formal instruction was not available until the 1960s, but attendants, including Mr Drake (1926-1935), supported learners from the pool-side, in a webbing loop suspended from a pole. Many people learnt by trial and error or with help from friends and family, often at natural bathing spots rather than public baths.

Pool staff vigilance was questionable. In the nineteenth century, Birmingham had repeated problems, often related to drunkenness. Following many complaints, Superintendent Stonely and his wife were finally dismissed from Kent Street in 1857 because he was intoxicated on duty. Two years previously he had admitted a Weslyan Minister's allegations of frequent absences from his position, and it is likely he was the attendant reported to be alcoholic. There were similar discharges in 1860 and 1862.[210] Even for the sober, manifold duties prevented adequate control. In 1881, there was outcry because men, some drunk and incapable, entered baths without paying, whilst the attendant took towels to the wash-house.[211] Efficiency was further reduced by excessive shifts. During the 1870 Liverpool season, attendants worked 101 hours per week with snatched meals. 1891 brought substantial reduction, but the hours were still around 72. At this time, Birmingham Baths were open 82 a week, with additional staff duties outside hours. In 1906 the Evening Despatch reported council criticism of the Baths and Parks Committee, some of whose employees "come on duty at six in the morning, and do not get away, except for brief meal times, until nine o'clock at night" - a working week of 80-90 hours. By the inter-war period a more acceptable 45-50 hours was common.[212] Exhaustion must have inhibited control, and children frequently sneaked into open-air baths without paying. At Victoria Park, they hid in the bushes and joined the next session,

and Thetford children crossed the river to a sandy bar midway, waiting for an opportune moment. Later, the bank opposite was fenced so they swam from downstream.[213] Similarly, trespassers used the pool after hours.

Dangerous horseplay was common-place. In 1907 a Birmingham schoolboy was injured when friends tried forcing him down the steps and, in her autobiography of working-class life in Birmingham, Kathleen Dayus (born 1903) recalls as a non-swimmer she was pushed in at the deep end.[214] Thetford Baths were the haunt of rougher boys, whose wilful behaviour and vandalism was largely unchecked. In 1893 there were complaints that their conduct made The Shed quite unsuitable for decent boys. When PC Self caught two 12 year olds dancing on the corrugated-iron roof, causing more than 6d damage, they were prosecuted, along with two others. The boys were reminded that the facility was "erected for their comfort and must be used in a proper manner", and warned that further offences would be severely punished. This apparently proved little deterrent, and in 1897 a bill was posted warning anyone committing a nuisance or damage would be prosecuted. In 1909 a committee for dealing with complaints and regulating hours was proposed, and in 1921 it was commented that The Shed was used mainly as a playground and "boys play the very devil with it".[215] Interestingly of Birmingham's 1938 bathing bye-laws, those relating to conduct focus on pollution avoidance.[216]

Prevailing supervision inflated the considerable facility hazards, and until the inter-war period few safety measures existed. In 1857 chains were fixed around the deep end of Kent Street Baths and its ladders rearranged to prevent accidents. Two years later pool-side barriers were erected to protect gala spectators, but before the 1936 Public Health Act life-saving equipment was sparse.[217] Despite the Thetford pool's rather isolated location, there was never a telephone, just a life-belt and first-aid box. In 1858 a Birmingham attendant was severely reprimanded for charging for life-buoy use.[218] Not surprisingly, compensation claims were received. In 1866 Birmingham awarded Ruth Parry 10/- for loss of her son's services after hospital treatment was necessary for back

injuries caused by glass falling from a pool roof. Others received larger sums; in 1865, £3/10/4 for Mr Gray, hurt at Woodcock, and Mrs Rowbotham, £10 plus costs, for injury whilst Turkish bathing in 1887.[219] Provision of a trapeze over the bath, hand swings and rope ladders at Kent Street in 1888, seems very dubious. Smooth steps and promenades, slippery when wet, were a common hazard from which several claims, usually for broken wrists, arose annually in 1920s Birmingham.[220] However, the popularity of jumping and diving presented the highest risks. In 1933 a man died of a broken neck at Northwood Street, and two months later a 19 year old lad jumped from Kent Street high board, knocking a lady unconscious. The superintendent blamed reckless divers for disregarding attendants, and sensibly suggested separate swimming and diving areas. Action may have been spurred as the injured party was Mrs Foster, nee Doris Molesworth, a renowned local swimmer. Two years later, Birmingham Amateur Diving Club was granted free use after hours to avoid inconvenience and risk to public, and from 1938 high boards were closed at busy times.[221]

Insufficient depth was the biggest problem. By 1948 Birmingham was unable to tender for the national championships because its deepest bath was 10'2", and in 1969 when sued by a diver who broke an arm and wrist, hitting the bottom at Woodcock Street, shocking revelations were made. For 35 years the recommended depth for 5m platforms had been 9' and, by 1962, 8'1" was not considered reasonably safe, especially for the inexperienced, and the diving club discontinued usage. Furthermore, shortly after the accident, the ASA regulation depth was increased to 12'6", only met at the new Stechford Baths. The offending boards were removed, and the claimant received compensation, albeit reduced because of his diving expertise.[222] Thetford's boards were staged up to 8', into similar depth of water, making the lack of incidents amazing.

Prior to filtration, pool water clarity rapidly diminished. Hyde states the rule of thumb for emptying the second-class plunge was whether the bottom of the deep end was visible, and if next day's weather turned finer, and hence the pool busier than expected, an

extra attendant was positioned to check bathers re-surfaced. He recalls once finding a corpse when a pool was drained, and believes similar incidents elsewhere may have influenced the ministry's 1925 report. Certainly, Birmingham's brackish Welsh water was problematic, and in 1934 it was reported to be practically impossible to see a bather on the bottom at Cannon Hill.[223] Although the water at Thetford's bath was relatively clear, natural hazards included floating weed, sinking mud, the current and cold.

Overall, surprisingly few incidents occurred. However, the frequency in Birmingham increased from the 1920s. This may reflect distortion by earlier denial of responsibility or expansion in participation. In 1882 the inquest into a fatal seizure, the first of a spate in bath tubs, recommended that all have bells, but not until the Secretary of State's involvement, three years later, was this grudgingly implemented. The town clerk argued that to-date 6,000,000 had bathed safely, and a death had occurred in a bath so fitted.[224] Nevertheless, bath-tub deaths declined. In 1903 the corporation rejected a £100 suit for ribs broken whilst being shampooed in the Turkish Baths. It considered the claimant, aged 72, probably had brittle bones, and offered a token amount.[225] Four years later a school boy reputedly fell, gashing his leg on an iron projection. The department refused liability, claiming it could have happened anywhere and no similar incidents had occurred, that the boy was mistaken where he fell, and if the graze resulted at the baths it was due to group misbehaviour.[226]

During the inter-war period, there was growing awareness of health and safety issues. Significant indications in Birmingham baths include the 1922 remodelling of Victoria's sloping sides, 1927 refusal to provide boards at Kings Heath, and 1934 prohibition of clubs serving alcohol at galas, previously given to participants as well as guests.[227] In 1926 the Parks Committee agreed to bathing in park pools, subject to the Baths Department taking responsibility for safety by providing an attendant, boat and water-testing, and constructing dressing shelters.[228] From the early 1940s public liability issues had influence at Thetford. In 1942 the town clerk decreed school season tickets be

stamped Norfolk Education Committee, indicating issuers responsibility for use out of school hours.[229] Three years later, this was considered to end with the summer term, a questionable arrangement, as was a subsequent scheme where 2/- was paid to cover school lessons, and the holder could pay 6d for extended use. Later Norfolk resumed full payment, on condition that the attendant confiscated the tickets of trouble-makers.[230]

Notes - Chapter 2: Public Health and Expansion of Bathing and Swimming

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CHAPTER 3: SCHOOL SWIMMING AND WELFARE POLICY

3.1 Towards Welfare

From the late 1830s the impact of advanced industrialisation brought realisation of associated social problems. Additionally, there was need to protect national interests in the face of growing competition from foreign markets and international discord. Initial authoritarian response was curative, and largely failed to tackle the root causes or provide positive intervention. The hygiene debate was a notable exception. Action included the 1846 Baths and Wash-Houses Act, and consequent provision gave great impetus to swimming nation-wide. From mid century there was growing awareness of issues of public health and safety, supported by exposure in the developing media and advances in medical knowledge. Reformers advocated radical action but legislation was weak and progress limited until late in the century when issues of national security highlighted the nation's poor condition. Preventative measures, including physical training, were introduced, and emphasis was transferred from the environment to individual welfare. However, initiatives enabled manipulation of other aspects of economic and social life, so were not necessarily altruistic.

Welfare is a state of well-being, physically and mentally. Physical welfare equates to health and safety, encompassing issues of hygiene and fitness. Mental welfare incorporates personality and hence concepts of social behaviour and morality. This was the focus of much welfare work in the nineteenth century because of conviction in the link between a healthy mind and body. Holistically, welfare promotes fulfilling lifestyles and longevity. The development of physical education, from military roots at the start of the nineteenth century, is embedded in welfare. In 1907 this relationship was formalised, as physical training became the responsibility of the new School Medical Service, and the approach of modern physical education reflects its welfare roots. It is a structured

learning process executed in a physical context, educating young people in and through use of the body, and its movement. Sport makes a valuable contribution but physical education is child rather than activity centred. The program is designed to maximise educational potential and, as well as direct physical benefits, it promotes personal and social values. School swimming shares the military origins and welfare emphasis of physical education. Development in public schools, during the first half of the nineteenth century, was followed by diffusion to state education, but less significantly and more rapidly than in other sports. From mid century school swimming promoted welfare, especially safety, and spearheaded early developments in state physical education. It benefited reciprocally and continued progress has been influenced by public opinion, and availability of facilities and finance.

Physical welfare was the main function of school swimming. Although health promotion including hygiene was important, the key issue was safety. Inevitably bathing caused deaths, and as the activity expanded during the nineteenth century, reports of casualties were increasingly frequent. Open-water locations were especially hazardous, but remained popular even after the 1846 Baths and Wash-Houses Act was widely implemented. From the 1790s The Times reported about one bathing incident per decade. In the 1820s this rose to three, and the 1830s saw a large increase with at least 18 accounts, but the 1840s expansion of bathing brought an alarming rise, with more than 50 nation-wide accidents being reported, the majority of which involved fatalities.[1] A favoured, but notoriously dangerous spot was The Serpentine in Hyde Park, where in the first week of July 1846, 226,183 bathed, of whom two were drowned and 18 rescued.[2] School magazines and novels of the period, such as Hughes', Tom Brown's Schooldays, based on life at Rugby, reflect this growing problem, by sensationalising daring rescues.

Public schoolboys imported and informally organised their own physical culture long before activities were directly advocated and promoted. Swimming was widespread and Brailsford records evidence of Etonions bathing during unsupervised play in the mid

eighteenth century.[3] Earlier still, Thetford Grammar School pupils bathed in the local river. Roger North, eminent music theorist in Charles II reign, attended the school in 1663 and the popularity of bathing is evident from his autobiography:

> There was a navigable river.....This made us all expert boatmen, swimmers and fishers. We used to pass whole days naked. Once when going down to a Sandy place to swim a frolic carried us to Brandon, where....I got drunk, and in the return must needs go swim again, but at first step fell over all into the water, being not in a condition to stand. The cold of the water made us all instantly sober, and after our pastime we returned home in good order.[4]

The boys must have been strong swimmers because Brandon is nine miles downstream, with the return journey against the current. North's brother also attended the school, and in 1837 an article in The Times, quoted extensively from his biography, Life of Sir Dudley North, revealing love of and prowess in swimming and diving[5]

Bathing in rivers, canals and pools was common in the Birmingham area. Boys from King Edward's Grammar School did so in the first half of the nineteenth century, and the prevalence of bathing is indicated by the Old Edwardian Association, formed in 1883, having a swimming section.[6] Because swimming was not a character-building team sport, the extent of schools' participation varied. Poignantly, regulation and promotion commonly occurred in response to accidents, and there is strong positive correlation between emphasis on school swimming and local experience of tragedy.

Although there were no potentially dangerous waterways near Uppingham School, in 1875 it appointed a professional swimming master. Eight years later, after opening an indoor pool, swimming lessons were compulsory unless a pupil was medically exempted, and life-saving was also taught. Malcolm Tozer attributes the school's policy to a number of drownings during the 1880s and previous decades.[7] At Eton boating caused fatalities and, following one in 1839, watermen were engaged to teach at bathing places, and it was ruled participants must pass a swimming test. In 1866 this was 100 yards in good style

whilst fully clothed. Other schools, including Radley, followed suit. By 1893 Sinclair and Henry reported Eton's annual pass rate was averaging 200, and only one death had occurred since the test's introduction. They credited the high number of new pupils passing the test to quality swimming teaching at preparatory schools.[8] This reflects the growing recognition of need for provision and instruction. Similarly, Terret considers that growth of swimming facilities was closely connected with the emergence of swimming specialists, and that both helped develop school swimming.[9] Many schools trained pupils in life-saving, and in 1891 Royal Humane Society Awards were made to a number including Eton, Harrow, Rugby and Winchester, military colleges and naval ships.[10] The same year, the Life Saving Society (LSS), later the Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS), broke away from the ASA, due to the latter's focus on competition, and assumed an important educational role, promoting school instruction in swimming and life-saving.

In 1889 a youth drowned in the River Ouse, at the first staunch, not far from Thetford Grammar School. The inquest jury requested the council be alerted to the need for precautions at this dangerous place and subsequently a life-buoy was installed. The tragedy incited Headmaster Benjamin Reed to approach the mayor expressing his concern, and the necessity of a good, safe bathing place for boys and adults. He wrote, "I have a number of young gentlemen in my care whom I should like to see all good swimmers", and enclosed a detailed proposal. This involved levelling three, 20 yard lengths of river bed, each with steps and their respective depths of three, four and five feet clearly marked. A dressing shed, 30 by 10 feet, was to be constructed and controlled by a policeman or curator. Reed also provided plans of the Cambridge Baths for council inspection and information on Abingdon Bathing Place.[11]

To be able to supply so much material within a week suggests that even prior to the drowning he had contemplated facilities for the school. This view is supported by the requirement for the headmaster to be a graduate of Oxford, Cambridge, Durham or London, which probably explains Reed's knowledge of the Cambridge and Abingdon

bathing stations. During his education and academic career, he would undoubtedly have been influenced by the athleticism and Muscular Christianity movements, and probably swam as a student. Furthermore, Thetford Grammar had close links with Rochester Mathematical School, and the former's archives include an 1890 Rochester prospectus which emphasises its provision of swimming, with certificates and annual sports. Perhaps the projected cost had proved prohibitive or land ownership problematic because Reed stressed procuration was a council matter, affecting constituents' health and safety, and that as the council was legal custodian of the river, nothing could be done without its consent. In view of the corporation's renown for being corrupt and having tight purse-strings, the mayor acted uncharacteristically quickly. Within the year a public bathing station was established near Nuns Bridge, just upstream from town on the Little Ouse.[12] However, he would have appreciated the urgency, because a younger brother had drowned in childhood.

The derivation of physical education is the military, for whom swimming was a necessity. During the Napoleonic Wars (1793-1815) the concept of physical training to make men "fighting fit" was established, and development instigated. Athletic exercise was included in light infantry training from 1800, gymnastics in military schools and colleges from 1820, and by 1849 sports were utilised for moral and military purposes. Many public and grammar school pupils assumed a military career, for which they were prepared by the emergent physical culture, and establishment of volunteer corps and drill. The latter became commonplace, especially following 1860s army reform, and the drill sergeant, austere with swagger stick or baton underarm, was caricatured in contemporary novels. Rudyard Kipling's Stalky and Co went to great lengths to avoid him.

Lt Col. the Hon. William Stewart, who devised the Regulations for the Rifle Corps in 1800, considered all troops should be able to swim and recommended bathing whenever possible. There were some good swimmers and in 1805 a soldier swam eight miles through rough seas, from Deal Barracks to Ramsgate.[13] Swimming was permitted at

Sandhurst and Woolwich, and in 1815 the latter college had a bathing pool. The appointment of Captain Clias, a Dutch-American in the Swiss Army, as superintendent of physical training in 1822, suggests increasing emphasis on swimming. He was accredited with the invention, in 1809, of breaststroke, which became universal in Britain, and had transformed instruction on the continent, where numerous schools were using his methods. There was a dearth of useful instruction manuals, and in 1828 he produced, A New and Complete Treatise on the Art of Swimming.[14] The army continued to progress in swimming and by 1869 it was taught at Aldershot, where pickets of expert swimmers patrolled the local canal, in accordance with Queen's Regulations.[15]

Ironically, swimming was less prevalent in the Royal, and Merchant, Navies. In 1865 there was parliamentary debate regarding provision and reassurances made that opportunities were available. Yet in 1869 a survey of six ships and 3,063 men found 11.5% of officers and 59.3% of mariners unable to swim. *Sir Fraser*, a long-standing member of the Royal Humane Society, also highlighted this fact and the consequent numerous tragedies. Nevertheless, by 1875, proficiency remained largely dependent on stationing.[16] The 1893 court-martial relating to the battleship *Victoria* found many stokers and mariners were non-swimmers. The Earl of Meath said the government had a duty to ensure every army and navy man could swim, and expressed hope that in future instruction would also be given in board schools.[17] From 1871 drill was introduced to state education and other aspects of physical training, including swimming, followed. Hence, military needs had a profound formative influence on developments in physical education and promoted school swimming.

Safety was undoubtedly the main reason for provision of school swimming, but it was also a healthy recreation. Spa mania had brought acceptance of the values of bathing, and throughout the nineteenth century increasing concern for public health instigated numerous reports and acts, including the 1846 Baths and Wash-Houses Act. This gave great impetus to swimming, but was primarily concerned with promoting working-class

cleanliness. Improved hygiene and environmental conditions were regarded as the solution to endemic disease. Specific facilities including bathing tubs and laundries were available at public baths, but swimming itself was considered cleansing due to immersion. It was even necessary for Birmingham's 1885 Bathing Bye-Laws to prohibit use of soap in swimming pools. Tozer states that Uppingham School recorded 4,000 "washings" in the first ten weeks of its indoor pool, and 13,240 by the year's end.[18] It is likely that hygiene was an important factor in provision of school swimming, particularly the state sector. Children from poor backgrounds, living in crowded sub-standard housing, with inadequate water supplies and washing facilities, would greatly benefit.

The first recorded incidence of a Birmingham School using the corporation baths was in August 1853. The Blue Coat Charity School wrote to the Baths and Wash-Houses Committee when its 200 pupils were deprived of their weekly bath because some buildings were demolished due to the new railway:

> One of the most essential necessaries to health, which in the present crowded state of the institution until the new baths and buildings are complete, might at this season of the year prove very serious.[19]

It requested weekly use of second-class baths at free or at reduced rates, because full price was too expensive and epidemics spread rapidly in the harsh boarding environment. The committee agreed admittance, Thursdays 11AM-4PM at 1d, but the following year, when the school was rife with fever, refused it use of the corporation laundry, as infected linen would be detrimental to public interests.[20]

Health was an important aspect of a school's reputation, and swimming and bathing were considered beneficial. Thetford Grammar had few fee-paying boarders, but many schools needed large sanatoriums. Deaths from diseases such as tuberculosis and meningitis were not uncommon. In the first decade of the twentieth century, the youngest son of the Honing Cubitt family, Norfolk landed-gentry, was educated at Charterhouse, instead of following his four brothers to Repton because the last had died at school.

Reginald absconded from Charterhouse Sanatorium when, during a massive epidemic, the next bed's occupant died.[21] In "Health at School" (1887), Dr Dukes, physician to Rugby School and a senior staff member at the local hospital, states:

> I lay special stress also upon the value of the swimming bath and bathing. Every school that can manage it should have a place in which the boys can learn and practice swimming.[22]

This strong recommendation was apparently heeded nation-wide and many schools made it compulsory. In the 1930s when Thetford Boys Council School introduced lessons at the river pool, participation was compulsory whatever the weather. According to a former pupil:

> No-one was excused unless their mother wrote a stern letter to the school forbidding her dear child to be included in this ceremony of washing all over in river water.[23]

Some parents would have excused their offspring for fear they would catch a chill or even pneumonia. However, participation could present more serious risks to health and safety.

Pool-water treatment was a twentieth-century innovation, but outbreaks of contamination continued until the 1970s. In 1905 the Headmaster of King Edward's Grammar School, New Street, wrote to the Lord Mayor of Birmingham complaining of persistent foul air and dirty water at the Kent Street first-class bath. Allegedly, a pupil narrowly escaped developing diphtheria, and the doctor had pronounced his symptoms unquestionably due to something encountered at the baths. An investigation detected slight sewage pollution and the medical officer of health recommended reconstruction of the defective drainage system. However, the Baths and Parks Committee claimed no other complaints had been received and that expensive remedial action was completely unnecessary, yet it opted not to disclose the report. It considered that the complaint arose from hysteria induced by the borough analyst's previous years' disclosures - that all wells supplying bathing institutions were impregnated with matter, making their water

unsuitable for drinking or domestic use. The committee also maintained that the school's pupils stayed in the water for two hours, which was far too long.[24]

Physical fitness is integral to health, enabling the body to function efficiently and meet lifestyle demands. It is acquired through regular exercise and, in children and young people, promotes growth and development. This important benefit of physical education, together with acquisition of skills and knowledge, helps people lead longer, more fulfilling and active lives. School swimming was achieving these aims, well before its recognition. In 1869 the superintendent of Gem Street Industrial School, Birmingham, requested permission for his boys to bathe weekly at Woodcock Street, supervised by their teachers. He felt that "considering the few opportunities our lads have of bathing it would be a grand treat and prove a lasting benefit in after years".[25] The Baths and Parks Committee obviously agreed as it recommended council authorisation, and that this should include any similar schools.

Access to recreation was as significant as improved health and safety. Swimmers could safely enjoy the baths and local waterways, and join clubs which offered opportunities to compete and win prizes, often of material value. From the late nineteenth century, Birmingham children who passed a proficiency test, were given a free baths' pass. By the early twentieth century these were renewable for up to two years after leaving school which, as Charles Jenkins, M. Shoebridge and Patricia Van Zyl state, was intended to reduce youth drop-out rates and promote exercise for life.[26] Passes were also awarded to good competitive swimmers and holders of life-saving awards. The scheme was replicated in neighbouring districts, Smethwick and Aston Manor. The latter had offered cheap school tickets for both sexes since at least 1899. From 1909 it awarded scholars passes to council school boys and girls, who could swim 100 and 80 yards respectively in under two minutes, and to winners of school swimming and life-saving shields.[27]

3.2 Welfare for Whom?

School swimming and physical education have undeniable benefits for recipients. However, early motives for provision, particularly in the state sector, were to secure future labour forces, and national and imperial defences, rather than being benevolent. The use of "fit" to describe a state of active health originated in the army, and during the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, repeated threats to national security emphasised its importance. Data relating to the rejection of army recruits and state of workhouse residents was considered in writing the 1870 Education Act, which proved a watershed. Previously, education was neither compulsory nor considered a governmental province, so most children received little or none. The act required construction of board schools in areas badly served by voluntary provision, intensified inspection, and increased concern for welfare. Although physical education was not included, the act paved the way for the Code of Regulations (1871), which for the first time permitted grant aid, albeit only for military drill. Provision was sparse, strictly utilitarian and initially only for boys. Schools could have a maximum of two hours training for twenty weeks per year, under a competent instructor. Accordingly, the Education Department made arrangements with the War Office for drill sergeants. Some schools managed to provide additional activities including swimming, but until 1890 none were officially recognised, so could not be incorporated into school hours or receive finance. Progress was limited until 1899 when Boer War recruiting returns exposed the shocking physical state of the nation, inciting debate on the national agenda.

At this time understanding of the factors influencing health was growing, and the predisposition of public health policy shifting from improving the environment and controlling disease, towards its prevention. Physical training had clear potential, especially swimming with its established links with health and hygiene. The Royal Commission on Physical Training (Scotland, 1903) and Inter-Department Committee on Physical

Deteriorations (1904), recommended inclusion of a school physical education system to promote all-round development. Stricter enforcement of existing codes and a charter of children's rights was demanded. Health became the focus of provision and expansion was aided by the 1907 Education Act. This made attention to the health and physical condition of elementary school pupils obligatory, and established the School Medical Service with responsibility for welfare including physical education. Subsequent acts extended these duties and gave strengthened powers.

B. Harris considers the evolution of the School Medical Service represented a radical redefinition of authorities' role in education and public welfare. He concentrates on the impact of inspection and treatment of school children, and admits having little to say about the "special services" administered.[28] This is probably due to lack of positive action in these areas. P.C. McIntosh, J.G. Dixon, A.D. Munrow and R.F. Willetts state that owing to shortage of playgrounds and more pressing welfare problems, diffusion and development of physical education was slow until the mid 1930s, when once again the nation needed to prepare for war.[29] Furthermore, as many fundamental sources of ill health had been contained inter-war, greater attention could be paid to the physical curriculum. Tangible commitment was demonstrated by a series of publications including The Health of the School Child (1935), the Physical Training and Recreation Act (1937), and initiatives such as specialist teacher training and appointment of full-time organisers by local authorities. In September 1937 a female physical training advisor from Norfolk Education Committee visited Thetford Girls Council School, and on several occasions during 1949-1950 advisors tested pupils for county swimming proficiency certificates. A Miss Seggar gave a demonstration lesson of land drill for swimming, and instruction at the pool.[30] In the years prior to the war, physical education and sport made major advances, with recognition of physical recreation's importance and the emergence of physical culture in its own right. Post-war, this concept dominated and shaped modern physical education.

Improving national fitness was also a fiscal affair. Michael Sanderson states that, following the 1870 Act, the aim of working-class education shifted from a public policy response to the social problems created by industrialisation, to providing a system which would sustain the economy in the face of competition from rising powers including the United States.[31] A healthy population would provide a labour force which could work harder for longer. Drill developed discipline, benefiting schools and training pupils for a subordinate destiny, following orders in a military, commercial, industrial or domestic role. The notion of this as general educational philosophy is supported by the benefits of athleticism being deemed unnecessary for the working class. State schools were denied games until 1900, and subsequently received paltry encouragement. Meanwhile, private education was highly insular with pupils returning from university as teachers and sports' coaches, perpetuating established traditions. James Mangan describes this as circular causality. He states that it ensured substantial conservatism, and made games symbolic of the disparate dispensation of national resources between social classes.[32]

During the early nineteenth century industrialisation, and fears raised by the French Revolution, caused the ruling classes to redefine their image. Genteel pursuits, effeminate manners and irresponsible behaviour were replaced with a new representation, combining physical prowess with moral qualities. This became the icon of British character, and the standard to be upheld by officers and gentlemen. Consequently, it permeated boys' upbringing, mainly via the public school system. This had succumbed to widespread disarray, and progressive headmasters counteracted problems by introducing self-government and sports' programs. Athleticism was deemed to be character building, fostering all desirable qualities, especially loyalty, self-control, perseverance, fairness and courage. It was believed that positive transfer would create excellent leaders on the battlefield, as well as in social, political and economic spheres. The cult was allied with notions of Muscular Christianity, championed by Herbert Spencer and Kingsley, which emphasised sports' participation, especially in team games, as imbuing moral virtues

including patriotism, and hence acting as an antidote to vice. According to Gerald Redmond, the games-build-character theory was convenient, seductive and timely, and was adopted by a range of groups struggling to meet the unique social challenges of the new society.[33] Furthermore, exposition of the scientific doctrine of evolution generated re-assessment of many aspects of life including attitudes towards exercise and health. Colin Crunden states Charles Darwin's postulation of the struggle for existence was considered to parody the turbulence of industrialised society. Spencer's extended interpretation, "the survival of the fittest", caught public imagination, and a healthy body was perceived as essential for withstanding social and commercial aggression.[34] Sport became a panacea and was exported to the empire. The contemporary philosophy underpinned the ideal of amateurism, and had long-term implications for sport. Although, towards the end of the nineteenth century, there was opposition to the extent of sport in public schools, tradition has persisted.

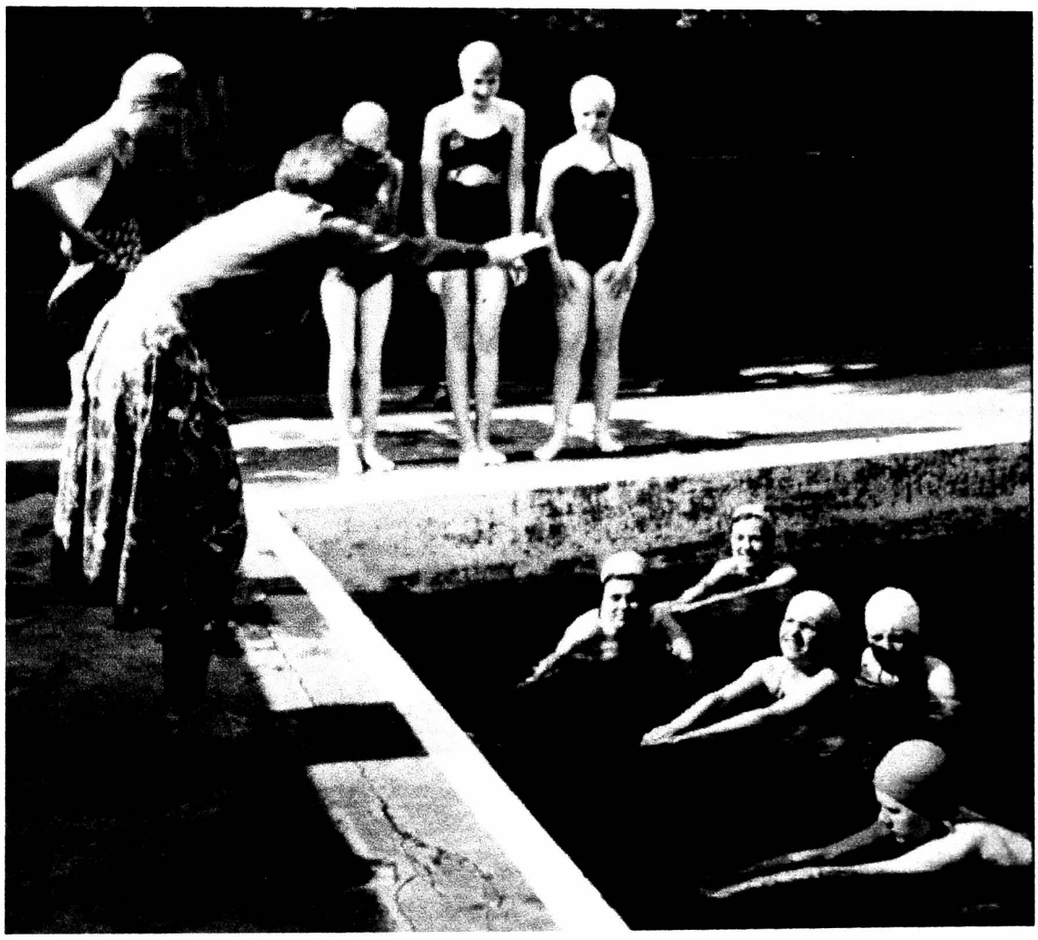
Derek Birley states that swimming lacked status in public schools, and implies it was considered unmanly.[35] This is very questionable, because despite not being a character-building team sport, it was enjoyed and encouraged at most. In 1865 The Times reported on the high numbers entering races, and esteem for swimming, at Eton.[36] Such a traditional, prestigious school would be unlikely to promote a low-status activity. Furthermore, there was strong belief in the moral value of cold baths, and reciprocity of mind and body activity. In 1881 the Duke of Edinburgh and Sir Charles Reed, addressing the prize-giving of London Schools Swimming Club, stated public schools found that those boys good at sport were academically ahead, and this was true of swimming.[37] From the mid nineteenth century swimming and diving became popular at universities. Cambridge held competitions in 1857, and by the 1870s its club had several hundred members including "principle disciples" of Muscular Christianity. Girton women's college had an open-air pool in 1900, and from 1907 raced against Newnham, with a combined

team to face Oxford. Cambridge was proud of its prowess over the latter, which did not have a club until 1891.[38]

Prosperity created an expanding middle class with high aspirations and demand for education. Social mobility was a common philosophy, and pursuit of gentility and status sought by differential absorption and association, through similar opportunities. Grammar schools, which mainly served the lower middle class, largely emulated the thriving public school system. From 1860 Thetford Grammar charged fees and new regulations were introduced to raise the school's character, including a requirement for the headmaster be a member of the Church of England and graduate of Oxford, Cambridge, Durham or London.[39] Under Reed's leadership (1884-1909) there were marked curricula developments and role numbers increased. It is likely that in common with many contemporary headmasters, gaining public school status was his aspiration. Certainly, the school possessed many of the trappings, including a Latin motto "loyalte me oblige", school magazine and song. Evidence of pre-conquest foundation, an old chapel, and renowned former pupils such as Roger North would have helped create a desirable image. In the grammar schools, sport was prioritised and investment made despite continuous financial problems, at the expense of other facilities in an age of massive technological revolution. Mangan identifies three factors for this seemingly extraordinary approach: social engineering for cohesion and control, adherence to fashionable concepts, and class distancing and emulating. Sports facilities acted as social and cultural capital, and symbolised social and moral superiority.[40] This implies the ability to offer swimming would be a decided bonus in attracting fee-paying pupils. In 1922, when Thetford's bathing station opened after refurbishment, Mayor Brown suggested the grammar schools could use the town's good facilities to attract pupils.[41] It is not known to what extent they used the original bathing station but, at the re-opening ceremony, boy boarders won the relay.[42] Furthermore, in 1961, an old boy of 1892-1894 (Reed's era)

presented a novice cup for water confidence, presumably motivated by his own opportunities.[43]

Education for girls was boosted in 1860 and 1881 by the foundation of the Girls' Public Day School Trust and Endowed Grammar Schools Act respectively. According to David Seymour, the most significant development during Reed's term was the Thetford Grammar School Foundation's establishment of a girls' school on an adjacent site in 1888. Neither schools' archives suggest emphasis on physical education, but many of the new girls' schools adopted the games ethos. Cheltenham Ladies College, under Miss Beale, was participating in swimming and other activities by 1868, and by the first decade of the twentieth century the values of organised games were widely recognised.[44]



A 1952 Swimming Lesson. (Thetford Grammar School Archives, Photograph.)

Thetford Girls' Grammar probably swam from the early days, and certainly by the 1920s took swimming seriously. In 1922, a month before the refurbished bathing station opened, 100 subscriptions of 2/6 were received from the grammar schools, representing a large proportion of their pupils.[45] The girls held well-supported, annual galas most years from the early 1920s, and in 1925 a former teacher wrote saying it seemed a long time since she left and wondering whether the girls still enjoyed the open-air bath. Former pupils have fond memories of formal lessons which were safety orientated. A late 1920s old girl recalls that instruction by Miss Crowe, the games mistress, concentrated on water safety and the enjoyment of bathing rather than expertise. A 1930s prospectus states participation in physical training including swimming was compulsory, and there was increasing pressure on the council to allocate more pool time, especially for life-saving.[46] In 1937 one girl received an award for rescuing a child from the February floods, and in 1945 15 pupils trained for their bronze life-saving award. The girls also achieved well in Norfolk County Proficiency and ASA Personal Survival Awards.[47]

Mental health was considered necessary for the working class and underlined the rational recreation movement. Physical activity stimulated similar traits to athleticism including loyalty, pride in achievements and feeling of well-being. Its promotion was rather autocratic, designed to temper social behaviour and benefit national interests. In 1881 George Dixon, a keen athlete and first chairman of Birmingham School Board, told his colleagues that exercise would encourage attendance, and several years later, Lord Beresford, president of the National Physical Recreation Society formed in 1887, stated that it encouraged care and self-denial including sobriety. At the opening of the BAI in 1892 Sir Richard Webster, Attorney General, said the commingling of classes in sport alleviated ill will in society.[48] Such views were widely held and implemented with superficial philanthropy.

3.3 Swimming in the Progress of State Physical Education

Although swimming conforms to the classic pattern of development in public schools followed by downward diffusion, it was a minority sport and provision was only slightly advanced. In contrast, swimming developed early in the education of working-class children, and spearheaded development of their physical education. Despite lack of recognition and funding, with the help of enthusiastic staff, several local boards managed to advance provision, offering extra-curricular activities including gymnastics and especially swimming. Birmingham was at the forefront, and as early as July 1859 pupils were admitted to first-class baths at half price, subject to a minimum number of twelve, accompanied by a teacher.[49] It is not known how widely or rapidly this offer was taken up, but by the late 1870s school swimming was well established. This decade also saw major progress in London, and swimming became the only extra-curricular activity generally available in Nottingham.

The benefits of swimming were widely accepted in society and motivated pioneers. In 1871, London School Board unanimously agreed the need to provide facilities to promote health, decency and safety, and to form a committee to investigate potential partnerships.[50] Four years later London School Board Swimming Club was inaugurated to promote knowledge amongst teachers, and provide instruction for them and their pupils, of both sexes. Significantly, the Ladies Sanitary Association and National Health Society were involved with fund-raising and promotion.[51] The club was so successful that offering swimming in all London's board schools was considered. Birmingham Baths and Parks Committee was receptive to school use of facilities, and this was encouraged by the Education and School Management Committee which considered bathing "very desirable". In the late 1870s introduction of half-price entry to second-class baths boosted attendance such that reserved pool times were acceded on Friday mornings.[52] Progress of school swimming was greatly affected by availability of local facilities, and David Wardle

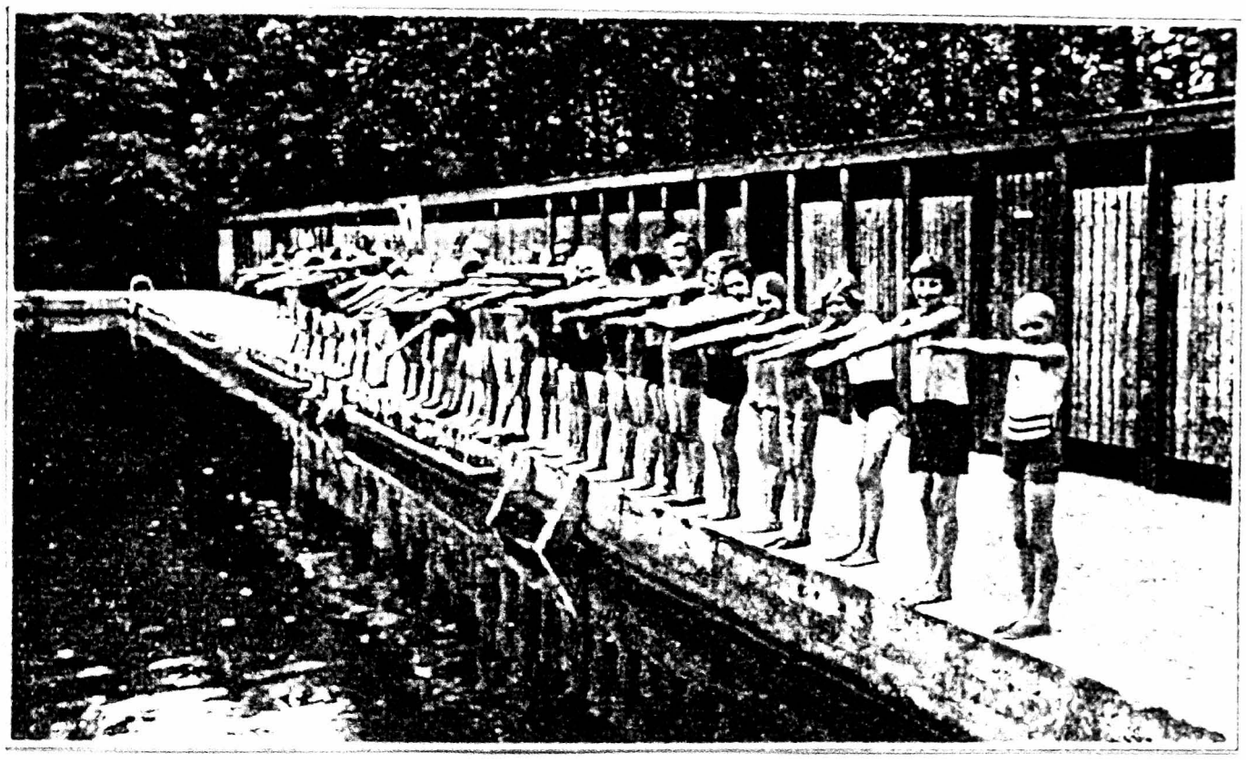
attributes its early development in Nottingham, compared with other physical activities, to the town being unusually well provided with baths.[53] Without grant aid, funding was vital, and this was forthcoming in London and Birmingham. The latter's school board reports (1871-1881) state that activities were paid through a fund and by Birmingham Athletic Club. Formed in 1866, it led the country in promotion of physical exercise and teacher training, and was the forerunner of the BAI. This placed physical education and health promotion high on the national agenda, and founded Birmingham's first swimming club at Kent Street.[54] However, in 1877 The Times, reporting on the annual meeting of London Schools Swimming Association, stated that the capital was urged to follow Birmingham's example and raise contributions towards instruction from rates.[55] It is difficult to see how this was possible given restrictions on school expenditure, and no mention is made in committee minutes. In any case, London was not accommodating, and even in the 1890s when swimming could be financed, its school board refused. Just 3% of children from 29% of schools were receiving instruction in 1894, so London Schools Swimming Association appealed for funds to establish clubs in all elementary schools. Teachers were voluntary but money was needed for medals and prizes.[56]

The early development and achievements of school swimming helped promote the general expansion of physical exercises. In 1879 Dixon pressed for physical training and recreation on Birmingham's elementary school curriculum. He stated that 15,000 baths had been taken and some instruction given, and suggested if swimming proved successful other physical recreations would follow. Two years later he reported considerable advances: 25,000 baths taken and 3-4,000 boys had learnt to swim. Concurrently, school sports clubs were emerging; cricket in 22, and football in 16 schools. The following year it was announced that if success was sustained a girls' program would be devised. In 1883 Dixon formed the Physical Exercises Committee, and within three years it advocated daily exercise in elementary schools and appointed an instructor to train teachers. The scheme was approved by Her Majesty's Inspectorate and copied in Sheffield, Leeds and

Leicester.[57] Developments culminated in the 1890s with official endorsement. The Code of Regulations recognised "suitable physical exercises" for grant aid, including gymnastics, Swedish Drill and swimming, and in 1891 the latter was accepted by the Board of Education as a school subject, eligible for expenditure. Colin Hardy identifies six factors as responsible for recognition: lobby by the Swimming Association (later ASA) which highlighted the "annual drain of over two thousand valuable lives by drowning"; pressure exerted by the LSS; enthusiastic teachers; authors of swimming manuals; support from Her Majesty's Inspectorate; and the increase of facilities during the second half of the nineteenth century.[58] All played a part, but the impact of the ASA and LSS is debatable. The former was not firmly established until 1886, and the latter only started in 1891. Furthermore, ASA recommendations that swimming be made compulsory were not implemented. Colin Hardy omits the significance of public opinion which was strongly in favour. No evidence has been found of resistance to provision, and parents and pupils were generally amenable to taking part. Additionally, swimming benefited reciprocally from developments in physical education. In 1914 a joint deputation from the ASA and National Union of Teachers did manage to acquire inclusion of swimming on the list of approved physical exercises, countable towards curricular hours.

Facilities and finance were critical factors in the continued expansion of school swimming. Even after recognition as a grant-aided, curricular subject, many pupils had to pay. Although most local authorities offered concessionary rates, and Birmingham had done so since 1859, inability to pay must have been a restraint. In 1892, Nottingham had a more benevolent approach. Like Birmingham, children were admitted to a corporation bath at half price, but anyone certified by the teacher as unable to pay could enter free.[59] When, in 1936, Norfolk Education Authority authorised weekly swimming lessons it ruled children could not be excluded due to inability to pay.[60] Restricted numbers of season tickets were issued to schools on a first-served basis. Thetford Girls' Council

School acted quickly, resulting in greater numbers swimming, so cost must previously have prevented some from attending lessons. Thetford was severely depressed, and this photograph of the girls shows many lacked proper bathing costumes.



Thetford Council School Girls (1937). (Thetford Town Guide (1938) p.41).

Birmingham appears to have paid for swimming from 1925 when an education department grant of £1,500 per annum was found to be available. Previously, swimming and other voluntary activities in elementary schools, were managed by the BAI. This Institute of Higher Physical Education was closely associated with the education department, and assumed responsibility for the Physical Exercises Committee on 1st January 1891.[61]

The season tickets provided by Norfolk Education Committee, valid outside school hours, were well used. Similarly, Birmingham children benefited from scholars' passes and special holiday rates. Such subsidies were highly significant in giving young people a safe, healthy and affordable activity, and may have helped reduced petty crime and vandalism. Public baths were a regular haunt for groups of boys and girls, and once mixed bathing was commonplace, a number of contacts claimed swimming was an opportunity for flirting and courting. In the 1950s a Birmingham lad used his free pass to go swimming with his first girlfriend, and remembers sharing a stick of barley sugar afterwards.[62] Sadly, since the 1970s, local authority cut backs, rising costs and the changing social and recreative climate have led to decline of youth use.

Statistics relating to the usage of Birmingham's free passes tend to be contradictory due to independent management of physical education by the BAI. It apparently instigated the scheme, although Jenkins et al state it was Dixon who argued for its introduction. The scheme is first mentioned in Baths and Parks Committee Minutes of 1893, when 405 were awarded.[63] They may have been introduced to counter the decline of school swimming in the 1890s, a period when charges had increased and the School Management Committee seemed disinterested. In 1884 more than 60,000 board school children swam but less than 32,000 in 1890. Over the next few years, the Baths and Parks Committee tried unsuccessfully to persuade the school board to popularise swimming. Eventually, it decided to award free passes at the next annual schools gala without the board's confirmation.[64]

For several years a falling pass rate reflected the state of school swimming but from 1896, when only 282 applicants were successful, there was steady growth, indicating the scheme's success in halting decay and raising standards. Expansion levelled off in 1905 at just under 2,000 passes, then another spurt in 1909-1911 brought an 86% increase. By 1913 a perpetual challenge shield was awarded to the school achieving most passes, including renewals.

School swimming certificate awarded by BAI (1925). (Copy from recipient, L. Barron.)

Success was aided by contemporary developments in physical education and the prospect of war. Perhaps the scheme appeased the school board because there is no evidence of its reticence or resistance to swimming in Baths and Parks Minutes after 1894, and in 1901 facilities for elementary girls on the same terms as boys were requested. However, free passes do not appear to have been extended to the girls until 1908.[65]

Initially pupils had to achieve one length of a large bath, and the scheme, which provided great incentive to learning, was an outstanding success. In 1918 there was marked decline and only 157 out of 441 eligible schools entered. This was blamed on teachers, who lost interest once a pupil had sufficient expertise to pass. There were safety concerns because without reinforcement holders' skills deteriorated, and passes were lent to other bathers who were not necessarily competent. Furthermore, this reduced income. The scheme was disbanded and replaced by free school lessons. In the 1920s various local and national initiatives sought to raise standards of swimming, and in 1925 Birmingham launched a new, improved scheme with ASA involvement. Designed to encourage continued progress, the passes included club membership, and large, attractive certificates were awarded. (See example on previous page). Nevertheless, standards of school swimming remained poor, affected by economic depression, strikes and fuel shortages, which caused repeated bath closure, restricting the already limited pool time. The new test was found overly rigorous, and within a few years the National Union of Teachers proposed a return to the original. It is unlikely this was implemented because the scheme relapsed in the 1930s, and post-war had progressive standards set according to age and sex.[66] Overall, except during the Second World War, school swimming experienced sustained progress until rising costs and cutbacks began in the 1970s.

The standard of school swimming was largely governed by the quality of provision. Despite limited time availability and often impractical distance of baths from schools, by the inter-war period demand was exceeding supply. Classes were large, inhibiting instruction and progress, and many schools could only offer lessons to non-

swimmers. Thetford's schools all had reservations from the 1930s, but as there were only four pressure was less. However, by the 1940s, the repeated requests from the Girls' Grammar for additional time were usually denied. Limited facilities encouraged use of land drill for teaching swimming, and in 1937 the Board of Education recommended it for all ability groups, in the gymnasium and on pool side. Ten years later, when post-war shortages severely curtailed use of Birmingham's baths, department staff visited schools to give land drill and lectures.[67]

The 1918 Education Act empowered local authorities to establish school swimming baths, and provision became mandatory in 1944. They were not built in Birmingham until the 1960s, and even then rarely, because of the availability of public baths. In 1961 the Chief Education Officer reported on provision of swimming and concluded that if the national experiment of providing a bath in lieu of a gymnasium at large secondary schools was successful, two would be built in Birmingham.[68] This scheme was presumably accountable for the numerous school pools constructed that decade. At this time, Thetford was experiencing rapid town expansion and in 1967 a pool was built at its new secondary modern school. The headmaster persuaded the authorities to provide this instead of the second gymnasium to which the fast growing school was entitled. His success is surprising because two years later Birmingham Baths Committee reported substitution was only allowed where three to four gyms were provided.[69] A compromise was presumably reached because a second gymnasium was built above the pool, but equally a case may have been made for the Thetford's special circumstances and great need. The pool was the town's first indoor facility, and the only enclosed or heated one, so it achieved instant demand. Norwich Road County Primary School, formerly separate Boys' and Girls' Council Schools, transferred from the river pool, and the new estates' schools also requested lessons, forcing prioritisation of usage. However, a variety of youth services and organisations were allocated evening sessions, and an important

community function was the introduction of adult education classes, which gave many people their first opportunity to learn to swim.[70]

School swimming instruction was not commonplace until the mid 1930s. It was often minimal and the standard subject to the interest and experience of accompanying staff. Unfortunately, shared use of pools and inadequate supervision often led to horseplay, jeopardising safety. In 1907 a father sought compensation for his son, aged seven, who was injured during his first visit to the baths with St Albans Church School, Birmingham. Because he was too frightened to enter the water, others attempted to force him down the steps. He struggled and fell, "severely tore his left leg open through a projecting piece of metal", and required hospital treatment. The officer in charge and baths engineer denied responsibility and their report stated the boy was one of 130-150 accompanied by two teachers. This suggests gross overcrowding and, especially with no lifeguard, the supervision ratio was treacherous. Under such circumstances, it is surprising accidents were not numerous.

From 1892 Nottingham had an innovative and commercial approach to teaching swimming. School teachers were paid a bonus for offering instruction, and received 1/- for each boy and girl who learnt to swim, a length or width respectively. This was extremely successful, and within a year 20,000 boys and 750 girls swam. An annual gala was held, and from 1895 a schools swimming association organised competitions and classes leading to Life Saving Society awards. In 1900 234 candidates were examined, which according to local school board minutes was 129 more than any other borough.[71] Even in 1938 only six Birmingham schools participated.[72] However, from the 1920s considerable efforts had been made to promote swimming, including training school teachers, with free pool use offered to specialist providers. These included the Midland District ASA and Anstey Physical Training College, who gave lectures and demonstrations. Nevertheless, responsibility was frequently passed to baths' staff, who were more likely to have qualifications. In 1944 a survey of school bathing in seven

midland authorities found an almost even split between instruction given by school teachers and specialists.[73] Similar arrangements still exist.

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73 Birmingham, Baths Committee, 13/3/1944.

CHAPTER 4: OVERVIEW OF PART I

ıe spa movement established curative bathing and flourished from 1800-1850. Medical ·actitioners played a key role in commercialisation of spas as health resorts, with ıackery, corruption and collusion endemic. Although complex, treatments lacked ·ientific basis, and mineral waters were considered a panacea. Nevertheless, holistic and ng-term prescriptions frequently proved beneficial, and modern research has proven ›me genuine benefits. Spa centres developed as fashionable resorts, with leisure central › the experience, but growing competition, combined with dwindling repute and medical ıpport in the face of advancing scientific knowledge, caused decline from mid century. lismanagement and greed compounded matters, and development of public baths was the ·cisive factor, although the legacy of the spa movement was highly significant. It ;tablished the concept of bathing for health and made incipient provision, including ·cilities for the poor. Private baths establishments were inspired and subsequent public ·ovision was strongly influenced, especially in terms of location and services. Spas ·troduced subscription payment which assisted public baths provision, but some of the ·her commercial aspects were detrimental.

From the early nineteenth century there was growing concern for the condition of ıe working class. Industrialisation and consequent urbanisation created shocking ›nditions, exacerbating existing social ills, particularly poverty and disease. Nevertheless, ·alth reform met strenuous opposition based on denial, complacency and parsimony, ·acerbated by lack of working-class activism. Limited early development focused on ater supplies and drainage, and the sanitary revolution dominated progress throughout ıe century. Reform accelerated in the 1840s and, with growing awareness of preventative ›tential, the state role expanded, accompanied by a spate of legislation, albeit largely ·rmissive. Resistance continued, but sanitary developments succeeded because they

served rather than threatened the interests of the middle and upper-classes, to whom health was justification for investment. Stimulus was provided by the threat of civil unrest, and environmental progress was a means of class reconciliation whilst salving social consciences.

Promotion of cleanliness increased bathing, particularly at outdoor locations because working-class opportunities were minimal. The widening social divide had caused withdrawal of already limited facilities, and nude, male bathing which upset respectable citizens was outlawed. Offenders faced fines or even gaol with hard labour. Working-class persistence in the face of such harsh punishments, together with growing sympathy for the poor, stimulated considerable support and calls for provision. The Baths and Wash-Houses movement cannot be exactly dated, but private establishments spread in the first half of the nineteenth century and the first public bath was provided at Liverpool in 1828. Birmingham had a bath campaign in 1840, but significant impetus came in 1844. This year, the Health of Towns report published powerful propaganda and proactive campaigns were launched in Birmingham, Edinburgh and London, with the latter most influential. Its association aimed to prove the case by example and provide a blueprint, avoiding the costly mistakes common in public works, although its model establishment was not ultimately the metropolis's first public facility. Agitation continued until 1846 when Bishop Blomfield and Rector Dukinfield, the key personnel, were instrumental in the Baths and Wash-Houses Act. Intended to facilitate local-authority provision and primarily for working-class benefit, it attracted support from employers, clergy and all sectors of the general public, with minimal opposition. The act was rapidly adopted nation-wide, and numerous baths were established before other reforms were much implemented. As the century progressed, there was growing competition in provision of public amenities, as icons of municipal prowess and benevolence, and the era of municipal socialism accelerated baths development. Undoubtedly, baths and wash-houses were among the first and most successful manifestations of the health-debate.

Birmingham's experience was typical in terms of ill-health and prevalent parsimony, denial and complacency. Nevertheless, there was widespread support for baths as it was believed provision would imbue the working-class with health and morals, and aid class reconciliation. The town had an early campaign to which all sectors of the community subscribed. In spite of apathy when nothing materialised, it almost certainly advanced corporation provision. Kent Street Baths (1851), were built partially with the funds raised and on the site purchased by the baths association. Birmingham's public baths developed in three phases: pre First World War, inter-war and post Second World War. The first two were proactive, but the last brought stagnation and closure of older facilities. The services provided were typical, although laundries proved unsuccessful. Occasionally baths assisted public health in other ways, such as supplying emergency water. Their expansion was driven by community needs and requests, with safety an important factor, as accidents instigated demands. Decency and civic issues also gave stimulus, and increasingly sports organisations made entreaties and exerted influence, especially during the twentieth century. Costs greatly affected provision, and philanthropy, dual provision with libraries, annexation and government grants were important.

Prior to the inter-war period, conditions at public baths were highly undesirable. Water was polluted at source and by bathers, although introduction of pre-cleansing and wearing of caps helped. The effectiveness of the fill-and-empty method of water treatment was very short-term. Inter-war, water purity became a major issue, with persistent campaigning by the Baths Service forcing Ministry of Health action. Continuous purification plants were installed, particularly after the 1936 Public Health Act, which enforced regulations, but some pools closed due to the initial costs. Nevertheless, the problems, often attributed to bather habits, staff or chlorination inadequacies, continued. Post war, especially as a result of the polio scare, public expectations grew rapidly. From the 1950s and 1970s pools in Thetford and Birmingham respectively were temporarily closed when found to be very unsatisfactory. Pollution was significant in the enclosure of

swimming, and in Thetford, awareness of the river pool's replacement need stimulated the citizen's 1960s fund-raising efforts. Litigation was also increasing and instigating improved safety standards, whereas previously denial of responsibility had been commonplace. Despite bather safety being an issue in the 1846 Act, it was not a serious concern until the 1980s, with hazards including insufficient water depth, especially for diving, lack of water clarity, bather behaviour and poor staff. Initially baths were supervised by police or attendants who, even in the twentieth century, were frequently unqualified or incompetent, especially the women. Poor vigilance and lack of control, due to drunkenness, long working hours and the multi-task nature of appointments, were problematic. Similarly, swimming instruction was often lacking, or of poor quality.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the urban-rural health dichotomy had substantially decreased, but distinct class patterns persisted. Concerns for the nation's economic, military and imperial strength, highlighted by Boer War recruitment returns, prompted intervention and a new, more holistic welfare approach emerged from the sanitary emphasis. Welfare issues were responsible for school swimming development, with safety issues particularly important. During the nineteenth century, greater participation in water-based activities, bathing and boating, increased accidents, and public awareness of health and safety was growing, encouraged by social reformers and newspapers. Military and naval disasters helped highlight the need for everyone to learn to swim, and school provision often directly resulted from drownings. The aim was to improve pupils' water safety, and lessons often included life-saving. Towards the end of the century, there was greater understanding of the causes of ill health and the focus was on physical condition as a preventative measure. The concept of fitness had developed in the military during the Napoleonic Wars, and the widespread need for improvement was thrust onto the national agenda by Boer War recruiting returns, and maintained there by repeated needs for rearmament. Swimming was promoted as a healthy, hygienic and rational activity and, although not a character-building team sport, was considered to

promote mind-body unity, and hence morality. Participation imbued well-being and social harmony, by inhibiting vice and fostering community relations. However, social reform and welfare, in the context of physical education and swimming, were largely motivated by national interests of security and economy, rather than philanthropy.

Developments in swimming and physical education are intimately connected. They have common military roots, both are associated with welfare, and progress in one reciprocally benefits the other. Most significant is the role of swimming in state physical education. It was one of the first activities offered, and during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, led expansion in provision and content. The key factors enabling progress were availability of facilities and instruction, and finance and public support. Growth was aided by the spread of public baths, and much later school pools. There is positive correlation between the level of involvement and availability of facilities, with blips reflecting changing conditions such as the effects of depression, fuel shortages and war. Similarly, attainment is largely governed by quantity and quality of teaching. Organised instruction was limited until the mid 1930s, with standards dependent on staff interests and qualifications. Finance was critical, as school physical activities could not be underwritten until 1890, and even then funding was not certain. Fortunately, there was strong public support, and swimming's early development was often supported by the voluntary sector and fund-raising. Subsequently, central and local government initiatives were paramount. A comprehensive and long-lasting scheme was Birmingham's free passes issued to scholars, and subsequently other swimmers, who demonstrated the required degree of competence. Lack of resistance to swimming across the class spectrum meant public school provision was little advanced compared with state schools.

PART II

COMMUNITY FUNCTIONS OF PUBLIC BATHS

II.1 Synopsis

Part II investigates the importance of public baths to the community, and identifies diverse functions. Although health and hygiene were fundamental, recreation rapidly dominated provision. Baths were sometimes built in conjunction with libraries, and often converted to halls for winter recreation. During major crises, inter-war depression and two World Wars, baths performed vital functions, supporting the community and alleviating the effects. Baths halls were requisitioned in war-time, and used as rest rooms for the unemployed. In the 1920s baths' schemes in Thetford and Birmingham were approved for unemployment relief. The relationship between providers and participants is studied and its impact evaluated. Rational philosophy had persistent, but generally positive, influence.

II.2 Introduction

Community is a difficult concept with many meanings, but membership is dependent on a common factor. Here it is primarily used to describe the geographical localities and aggregate citizens served by public baths establishments. The significance of community lies in the sense of collective identity or ownership derived from social interaction between individuals and sub-groups. Social institutions, such as educational establishments, work-places, sports and social clubs, all function as sub-communities, and their members demonstrate what Gordon Cherry describes as "pronounced activity relationships".[1] Erving Goffman's theory of roles enlightens the impact of membership. Setting alone is insufficient to generate a sense of belonging, which requires emotional input from shared experience. Within each social frame, individuals assume a role, which may interact with that of other encounters and gives a three-dimensional aspect to social behaviour, showing community as complex with multi-layering and intersections. Communities continually change with internal and external social forces, and hence, acceptance of a free-flow model enables a "total historical" approach.[2] Interaction, of sub-communities, and internally between individuals, forms the basis of power and authority structures. However, as A. Metcalfe explains, recognition is essential to efficacy, and not everyone views a community, sub-community or their individual members, in the same way, nor are they equally valued.[3] Community is political, and in this context people and providers can be scrutinised, especially the relationship between the former's needs and latter's perception of these. Hence, their policies, together with other influences affecting the sense of connectedness, can be evaluated. The notion of participation involves consensus of individuals, who benefit the community by operating as effective citizens. Consequently, community usually implies a positive social relationship, with solidarity providing a support structure, especially vital in times of

instability. However, negative factors may be imposed by the impossibility of simultaneously meeting the diverse demands of cultural life, particularly where the values and priorities of one sector dominate. Hence, municipal organisation exerts critical influence.

Previous chapters have explored the nineteenth-century origins of public baths as a health measure, targeting the working class. The importance of baths as a major amenity and symbol of civic pride, motivating both authority action and public subscription efforts, has been highlighted. By evaluating the functions of public baths, in terms of usage and consequences, for individual consumers and the community as a whole, a stronger, more diverse role is revealed. The areas investigated are: the most pervading function of baths as a source of community recreation, and their use during the major crises of World Wars, and inter-war depression and associated unemployment. By focusing on policies and rationale of facility providers, in relation to actual use or abuse of public baths, whether provision for socially approved or desired ends is a positive or negative influence, and baths' total importance to communities is established.

Notes - Part II: Introduction

1 Gordon Cherry, "Leisure and the Community: Research and Planning" in J.T. Haworth, and A.J. Veal (Eds) Leisure and the Community. (Birmingham 1976), p.3.2.

2 Erving Goffman, Encounters: two studies in the sociology of interaction. (London 1972).
M. Drake, (Ed), Time, Family and Community - Perspectives on Family and Community History, (Oxford 1994), p.286.

3 A. Metcalfe, "Sport and Space: A case-study of the growth of recreational facilities in East Northumberland, 1850-1914", International Journal of the History of Sport. 7:3, (December 1990), p.362.

CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY FUNCTIONS OF PUBLIC BATHS

5.1 Rational Recreation to Leisure

Industrialisation and consequent urbanisation brought curtailment of traditional popular recreations. During the nineteenth century a moral tide rapidly advanced, with increasing disapproval of many working-class leisure activities. The middle and upper classes considered that leisure could foster idleness, threatening social law and order. However, contemporary conditions created recreation needs, so from the 1840s some popular forms were replaced by rational ones and wholesome alternatives promoted. This was part of a diverse mission, stemming from growing concern for the working class, and the need to maintain social stability and economic prosperity, including developments in public health. Rational recreation, cultivated by the middle class, was "designed to civilise people and give their lives a wholesome and uplifting foundation".[1] It sought changes in working-class lifestyle and leisure habits, because they were perceived unable to judge either their own or society's needs. In particular, counter attractions were deemed necessary to wean them from drinking, gambling and immoral behaviour. Health, discipline and self-improvement were the underlying themes.

Rationalised pursuits included cultural, educational and physical activities, thus improving ability to work, and social and community interactions. Christian Socialists played an increasingly important role as rational recreation joined forces with muscular christianity. R.J. Davis, C.R. Bull, J.V. and D.A. Roscoe consider public school athleticism was most influential and describe rational recreation as:

> A formal, morally based presentation of contents, individual activities, games and outdoor pursuits, by respectable members of the community, in a form which no longer contained the excesses evident in popular recreation.[2]

The rationalisation of bathing saw establishment of river bathing stations and public baths. Uncontrolled use of natural amenities was potentially dangerous, and the prevalent nudity considered indecent. Provision of recreational facilities was critical, and from the 1830s the need, especially in winter-time, was identified by Parliamentary Select Committee Reports including those on Public Walks (1833) and Drunkenness (1834). The result was a spate of acts: Museums (1845), Baths and Wash-Houses (1846) and Libraries (1850), enabling local authority provision. However, legislation was only permissive, so the voluntary sector was largely responsible for provision of early opportunities and pressurising authorities for major amenities.

Contrary to the motives of rational recreationalists, leisure was the common outcome and it rapidly became the dominant force for participation. By the turn of the twentieth century, authority responsibility and control were increasing. Fred Coalter, Jonathan Long and Brian Duffield state broad elements of public leisure policy, based in welfare and social integration, were becoming evident.[3] Although the rational recreation movement was superseded, its influence was pervading. Authority provision, and expanding factory schemes, steeped in rational philosophy, became the key sources of working-class recreation. In Birmingham, at least, a rational approach persisted until the Second World War. J. Richards agrees, stating the desire to impose the kind of leisure deemed good for the masses was still very strong and active in the 1930s.[4] Wartime social freedom and urgency to enjoy life for the moment, vanquished pretences of rational recreation, but the post-war conception of recreation as welfare reflected rational origins.

Leisure and recreation are closely allied, ambiguous concepts. Historical legacy tends to imbue their respective interpretations with negative, social and restorative elements. However, this text considers them synonymous; a fundamental human need and positive force which in a collective social setting can be perceived as an institution. Precise definitions are difficult but leisure is generally perceived to encompass elements of time, activity and mental attitude. It can be literally interpreted as free time, but this broad

definition does not distinguish between time spare and that expended on life necessities. The issue is further complicated by how an individual discerns work and leisure, as these may be closely linked. Joffre Dumazedier coined the term "semi-leisure" to describe activities which although obligatory create satisfaction. Charles Brightbill's approach is useful in resolving these dilemmas. He divides time into existence, subsistence and discretionary, the latter being "time to be used according to our own judgement and choice". Hence, leisure is discretionary time.[5] The issue of individual judgement regarding use of leisure is significant, because freedom is relative to social constraints and cultural values.

The conception of leisure as activity is more widespread, but it can only be experienced by involvement, because of the intangibility with dual inseparability of production and participation. Nash viewed use of leisure for specific activities at four levels of involvement, passive, emotional, active and creative, illustrating progressive use of leisure time, and George Torkildsen equates this model to Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. This psychological theory of personality identifies five categories of basic need: physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualisation. Lower-order needs relate to physical circumstances, and must be satisfied before the higher-order, psychological needs.[6] These are "growth needs", critical for social development and promoting health and longevity. Leisure is involved with satisfying these needs, and hence unfulfilled free time is anti-leisure. In summary, leisure is activity chosen with relative freedom and undertaken in discretionary time. More significantly, its philosophy is constructed according to daily reality of culture and circumstance. Consequently, its connotation differs historically, individually and collectively, within societal and community structures. Additionally, leisure experience is greatly influenced by antecedent legacy and contemporary external influences.

Despite rational recreation being imposed by the middle classes, the working class experienced leisure. During the second half of the nineteenth century, expansion of

opportunities and facilities, together with reduced working hours and increased real earnings, raised awareness of leisure needs and desires. Failure of rational recreation was fundamentally caused by the differences between providers and consumers. Rather than responding to demand, provision prescribed civilisation, imposing middle-class cultural values, and hence rules and regulations indicating expectations of usage. Coalter et al describes working-class participation as "calculative", exploiting philanthropy. Rational ideology was resisted and participants imbued activities with their meanings and values. Metcalfe found this true of East Northumberland mining communities, where facilities were provided by the authorities, representing dominant power groups which held distinct views concerning usage. The latter were ignored by the miners who satisfied their own ends.[7]

Increasingly the working class directed the nature of provision. To attract participants, rational recreationalists were forced to offer amusements, a conflict which intensified with growing competition from commercial leisure. Capitalism had no moral compunctions and offered activities without an improvement agenda, tapping and developing market tastes. Investment empowered the commercial sector, whereas rational recreation was hampered by limited facilities and reliance on voluntary efforts, especially in the face of permissive legislation, laissez-faire attitude of authorities, and resistance to capital expenditure by ratepayers. Sensitivity to their interests dominated municipal politics until the 1860s, and in Birmingham delayed a second baths establishment. Proposed in 1853, it was not authorised until 1858, and finally opened in 1860. Similarly, John Walton states parsimony in Blackpool was sufficient to delay and considerably limit the town hall.[8] According to John Golby and William Purdue, reformers blamed the commercial sector for their failure but were unable to accept its provision reflected popular demand.[9]

Rational recreation was also adversely affected by inability to reach large numbers of the working class. General agreement is that cost was a key factor. Furthermore, as stated

by Peter Bailey, reformers sought fraternity not equality.[10] Continued privatisation of leisure reinforced existing class barriers, and antagonism was created by the presumptuous dictation of "suitable" activities, and hypocritical nature of leisure participation by the middle and upper classes. From the 1870s greater freedom of leisure was sought and patronage severed as soon as possible. J. Heeley states that the moral objectives of rational recreation were seldom achieved, with many people unaffected and unimpressed, and vast numbers never reached.[11] Nevertheless, reformers successfully pressurised authorities, accelerating provision of public amenities. Hugh Cunningham considers the rapid spread of public baths was the greatest achievement of rational recreationalists.[12]

Although health and hygiene were the raison-d'être of public baths, swimming was widely accepted as a rational activity. The British Swimming Society, formed in 1841, aimed to promote "health, cleanliness and preservation of life", and in 1843 its chairman said swimming was "a gymnastic exercise of the noblest character, promoting health, morality and intellectual vigour", and stressed the need for community-wide instruction.[13] The following year, Lord Lyttleton, introducing the motion for establishing public baths in Birmingham, said baths and parks were important for sanitation and healthful recreation, and other supporters mentioned the prospects of social order. Newspapers raised awareness of the need for swimming and bathing, and the outcry regarding indecency and inappropriate behaviour at open-water locations. The latter accelerated provision of facilities because enclosure enabled control. Birmingham's 1885 bathing bye-laws contained extensive prohibitions including loitering, interfering with others, smoking, drinking, and offensive language and behaviour. Offences incurred a large fine, 40/-, representing two weeks wages for many men. Furthermore, police patrolled baths during peak working-class periods, summer weekends and when admission was free. This may have been necessary, as in 1906 complaints were said to be more numerous since

free baths had been offered, but it could equally operate as a self-fulfilling prophecy.[14] Similarly, the 1889 proposals for Thetford's bathing station included police supervision.[15]

Although authorities emphasised the utilitarian, health and safety benefits of swimming, they accepted it as rational recreation. This is suggested by installation of diving boards with purely sportive function, council minutes often neglecting to distinguish between attendances for washing and swimming, and support for club development. Denis Molyneux considers Birmingham's early clubs, particularly Leander, were responsible for the Baths and Parks Committee recognising swimming as recreation, as well as a useful skill. Certainly, by 1880, the mayor had accepted "some sort of recreation was absolutely necessary" and life should not be entirely a struggle for existence or knowledge. Five years later, J.T. Bunce described the leisure services including baths as "means of pleasant recreation and healthful physical refreshment".[16] The amenable position of baths within the Sunday recreation debate also indicates official acceptance. The 1780 Lord's Day Observance Act was strictly observed until the late nineteenth century. Despite evidence linking Sunday drinking with lack of alternative activities, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery was closed on Sunday afternoons until 1896, and the prohibiton on games in parks was only lifted in 1930 because of the influence of developments in other cities. Ten years previously, Birmingham Corporation overruled the authorisation given by its Parks Committee, which the Daily Telegraph. had praised as progressive.[17] However, from an early stage, and despite controversy, baths opened nation-wide on Sunday mornings. By 1927-1928 all of Birmingham's baths opened 7-10AM, offering segregated and mixed sessions. The Baths Committee's 1931 refusal to allow clubs, which used the baths halls during the winter, to operate on Sundays, proves swimming was regarded as a rational activity.[18]

In 1844 a letter to The Times attacked the "repulsive" Sunday Observance Obsession, and status quo whose domestic and economic affairs prevented the working-class bathing at other times. The writer disbelieved that baths opening for two hours

would prevent church attendance, instead subscribing to its promotion through the physical and moral benefits of bathing.[19] Largely due to the association of cleanliness and godliness, religious and secular groups had participated in passing the Baths and Wash-Houses Act. There was growing recognition of the need to develop partnerships with rational recreation and, by the century's end, acceptance of sport as a legitimate and successful means of fostering church-lay relations and religious observance. Christian Socialists urged clergy to make their message relevant and introduce God into all aspects of common life, and some began to support Sunday recreation. Sabbatarian's successfully limited activities, but their attempts to ban bathing were strongly resisted. From 1922 Thetford Bathing Station opened Sundays until 11AM. When, three years later, clergy proposed earlier closure because young people were not attending morning service, their reception was hostile. One councillor declared they had shown little interest in matters of unemployment, sanitation and housing, and needed to exercise concern for people's bodies as well as souls, whilst another hoped the reverend gentlemen would soon agree to other amusements for young people.[20] Except for the relatively safe option of bathing, Sunday recreation remained restricted until the Second World War. Denis Brailsford states Hanley Corporation Baths were the sole source of sporting pleasure for local, working-class children on Sundays. The recreational need in Birmingham is evident from the predominantly working-class audience when Birmingham sanctioned Sunday cinema in 1933.[21]

Brailsford says swimming, rather than cleanliness, soon became the main attraction of public baths.[22] His assertion appears correct but is difficult to prove. Most nineteenth-century evidence comes from providers, so there is scarce mention of consumer motivations and outcomes. Cunningham agrees that baths were a source of recreation, and found hints to this effect in 1840s parliamentary investigations, including a statement from Sowton, proprietor of private baths in Westminster Road,

> I am mortified to find that, instead of being used as matters of health, they have merely been used as matters of pleasure in very great degree.[23]

The strongest proof is rapid growth in participation, and the instant popularity of swimming far exceeding that of washing baths, but unfortunately bather returns often fail to make the distinction. However, in Birmingham, between 1867 and 1869, an average of 26,200 people bathed and 41,400 swam annually. Whereas equal numbers bathed in first and second class, 13,000 or 64% more swam second class, suggesting popularity with the working-classes. A similar relationship appears in the weekly reports for September 1856.[24] Reid agrees and further theorises seasonal variations in attendances as significant. He found immense concentration during the spring-summer period, which saw 82-87% of annual totals in 1865-1868, and concluded it was unlikely to be purely a "hygienic phenomenon". Although Molyneux found recreation the prime reason for increased participation, he commented on a similar correlation with weather. Cold summers such as 1897 saw falling attendances, but conversely the "extraordinary hot weather" of 1893 brought remarkable increases. Similar effects occurred at Thetford's river pool. Attendance figures for 1928 to 1943 show a marked peak in 1942 of 4,644, but this was small compared with 14,783 in the unusually warm 1959 season, when 534 attended on 7th July.[25]

Expanding participation was accompanied by public pressure for new facilities. Many Birmingham baths, including Harborne, originated in this way. The Swimming Baths for Harborne Committee, formed in 1910, petitioned successfully and land purchased the following year, made construction possible post-war.[26] Working-class resistance to health and hygiene philosophy provides a further dimension. Derek Birley suggests stigma resulted from provision under the 1846 act, especially use of the term "baths" rather than "swimming pools".[27] Although apparently successful elsewhere, failure of Birmingham's laundries further suggests hygiene was not high on the public agenda.

Developing facility usage implies strong recreational influence, and the growth of instruction shows the extent of public desire to learn swimming. Motives undoubtedly included health and safety, but access to recreation was an outcome, whether or not consciously acquired. Swimming instruction was initiated, and perpetuated by, development of clubs. In Birmingham instruction was available from 1857 and clubs started in 1860s. Although these had a competitive role, they primarily offered a sociable, learning environment. The description given of an Irish Swimming Club by Hanley Kidd, Irish ASA President, is classic:

> The activities of the club were very much *laissez-faire*. A bit of everything that could be connected with a swimming pond.....One swam a few lengths as best one could, with others jumping in around you; perhaps a length or two using a home made kicking board. Some would be practising diving on the old antiquated boards, always a dangerous business with so many others using the pond. A few individuals would be endeavouring on a one to one basis, to teach the rudiments of swimming to an equally few beginners. Then around quarter to ten we were allowed to get the ball in, for a bit of polo practice. Even some life-saving instruction was squeezed in.....Club life was also a social thing.[28]

Swimming club activities included social events and outings. Galas and displays were marketed as entertainments and became popular community events attracting many spectators, especially participants' families and friends. During, and to a lesser extent after, the Second World War, events were promoted by Birmingham Baths Department indicating commitment to public recreation.

Welfare concerns enabled the development of school swimming, but until after the Second World War instruction was limited and pupils largely left to their own devices. As school life was stark, it is hardly surprising most enjoyed swimming lessons. R.K. Moore describes his class in the 1920s, "on a signal GO we were off like greyhounds".[29] The baths also provided recreation outside school. Molyneux states that from 1875, large numbers of Birmingham schoolboys availed themselves of cheap admission periods for

this purpose.[30] The desirability of gaining a scholar's free pass also suggests recreation as motivation, because these were normally only valid for the swimming baths. From the 1930s, Thetford Council School children made good use of season tickets provided by the education authority. The town had few amenities, and in 1922 the refurbished bath had been heralded as "a New Municipal Entertainment".[31]

The popularity of mixed bathing also indicates expanding public recreation as it lacked rational advantages. The initial guise of "family bathing" had a recreational function because it improved accessibility for women and children. These groups were conventionally excluded from public houses, the hub of working-class recreation, and there was resistance to providing them with additional swimming facilities at the expense of male clientele. Strict regulations applied to mixed sessions and Birmingham's, which were typical, included screened changing boxes and decent swim-wear, with drawers underneath for men, and women covered to three inches above the knee.[32] Despite controls, mixed bathing provided important opportunities for participation with the opposite sex. Cunningham claims sexual encounter is a function of leisure in almost every society, and Birley states P.G. Wodehouse's short stories show "ability to swim was a useful accomplishment for both men and women seeking either a mild flirtation or a soul mate at a fashionable watering-place".[33]

Whether use of public baths endowed rational recreation or leisure is an individual bather outcome, and difficult to determine. Oral evidence relating to twentieth-century Thetford and Birmingham shows swimming as a primarily leisure activity. However, it was an acceptable means of cleansing for some working-class people, and authorities. In 1929, a Birmingham hygiene teacher complained that cottage baths were too distant, and swimming baths too expensive for her poor children.[34] Conversely, use of washing baths could incorporate an element of leisure, with unaccustomed luxuries including total privacy, sole use, warm water, soap and clean towels. Likewise, bathers would be attracted to services such as Turkish Baths. Nevertheless, Reid is probably correct that

whilst enjoying themselves, many patrons failed to think about their opportunities. and hence debate continued over their heads.[35]

Further clues are gleaned by considering the main beneficiaries of public baths. Birley assumes most adult users were "working-class urbanites". However, as Walton states, facilities provided with perceived working-class needs were often disproportionately enjoyed by the higher classes. The numerous applications, which caused Birmingham in 1853 to introduce bathing season tickets, could not have been from poor, working-class people.[36] Similarly, their exclusion was ensured from early clubs, because these met in first-class baths, with members holding season tickets. Furthermore, there was resistance to working-class clubs forming until the First World War. Cost was a major determining factor in participation, as subsistence needs took priority. Although Cunningham considers baths provided "relatively cheap recreation", in the 1870s Birmingham's charges had risen rapidly and were proving prohibitive.[37] In the following decade, need for economy and financially viable baths, defeated efforts to reduce prices and bring swimming to more people, but by the turn of the century, more cheap and free facilities became available. In 1901 the Baths and Parks Committee attributed declining second-class swimming to 73,142 free attendances at open-air baths. Similar observations were recorded in subsequent years, and indicate the significance of cost barriers. Birmingham's wash-house was disbanded because it failed to attract the working class. Ironically users of the replacement, Turkish Baths, were mainly middle-class men: initially there were about twice as many first-class patrons, and the gap gradually increased.[38] It is likely that bathers of the middle class, champions of rational recreation, believed it the ubiquitous outcome. In 1842 Shimmons was delighted by the numbers attending public baths rather than dog races, presumably associating the latter with disorderly behaviour and gambling. Similarly, in 1936, Seebohn Rowntree found participation in alternative recreations including swimming, had caused drinking to decline since 1899.[39]

In addition to direct recreative functions, public baths had extensive peripheral usage, as libraries and later with widespread conversion of baths halls for winter indoor activities. Major development of libraries followed the 1850 Public Libraries Act, and self-improvement was manipulated by offering a controlled selection of books. Baths were also allied with rational recreation, and joint provision was not uncommon. It was encouraged by economic restraints, including ratepayer resistance to expenditure. Libraries were particularly affected by rate-capping, a half-penny in the pound until 1855 then 1d to 1919, which according to Alistair Black was not applied to other services.[40] In Birmingham, much amenity provision resulted from the efforts of George Dawson, a prominent rational recreationalist and key figure in the civic gospel, which similarly used libraries, baths and parks for individual fulfilment and social control.

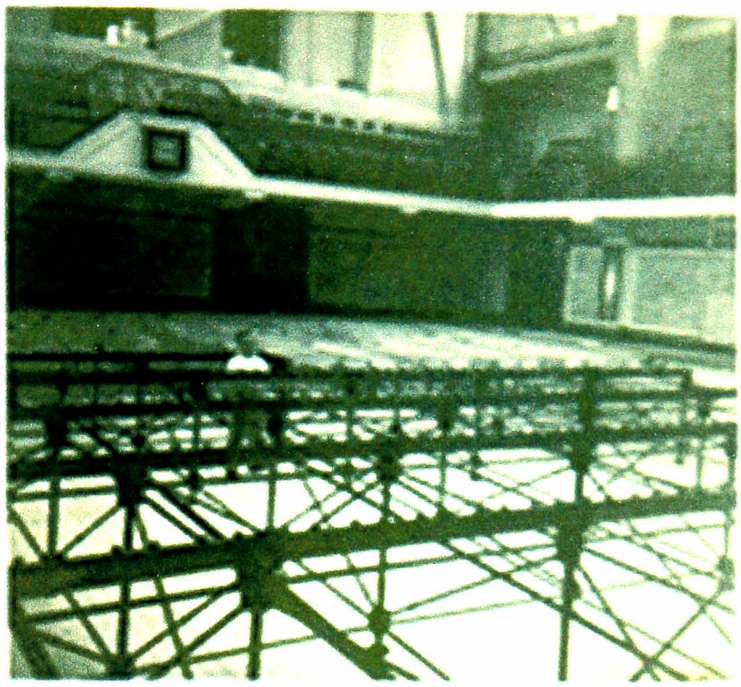
In 1860, nine years before Birmingham adopted the libraries act, a second baths establishment was being constructed, and there was consideration to either including a room for a district lending library or adapting one at the Kent Street Baths. Winter use of the first-class bath hall at Northwood Street for a reading room and library was granted to the Free Libraries Committee in 1882, and two baths were eventually established in conjunction with libraries: Green Lane (1902), and Moseley Road (1907).[41] Without co-operation, their construction could not have been approved, as the early 1890s trade depression was compounded by already severely strained borough finances. According to Val Hart, the Moseley Road facilities were bait for securing the annexation of Balsall Heath, and although much appreciated by the community, caused Birmingham corporation regret. Ongoing problems delayed completion and inflated costs to £33,000.[42] Subsequent provision was independent of libraries, but they continued to advertise the baths.

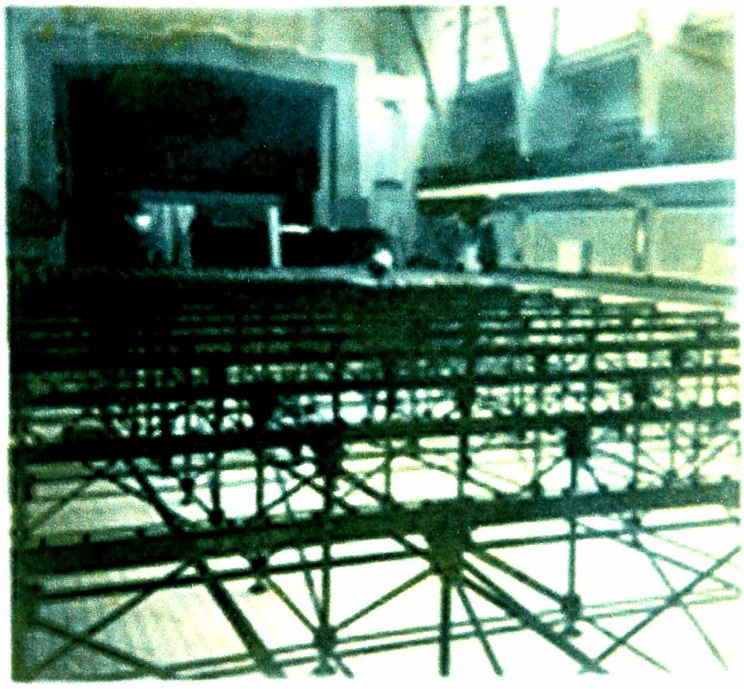
The English climate makes indoor recreation facilities necessary. Short summers and changeable conditions are not conducive to bathing, and council minutes often evaluate attendances against prevailing weather. In winter, indoor baths suffered limited demand

and heating was uneconomic, and Birley agrees that until after the Second World War most closed. He considers the low demand was caused by fear of catching a cold.[43] Although Birmingham's first public baths (1851), were an immediate success, demand for winter bathing was low. Whereas 166,123 attended between May and September 1852, there were just 3,228 bathers from November to March 1853. Subsequent winters saw dramatic decline and after that of 1854-1855, when only 784 bathed entailing losses exceeding £63, provision was discontinued and the period used for maintenance.[44] From 1864 there were renewed efforts to promote winter swimming, including the 1885 extension to women, and 1892 half-price entrance on Mondays. However, response remained poor, with warm private and Turkish Baths more popular.[45]

Idle swimming baths, easily convertible to public halls by laying a floor over the tank, offered an ideal solution to the winter recreation problem. Baths establishments were provided for the working class, and hence familiar and accessibly located. It is unclear when or where conversion began, but under the 1878 Baths and Wash-Houses Amendment Act, baths could close for up to five months from November, during which the provision of a gymnasium or other suitable means of healthful recreation, and parochial use of buildings, was allowed. When Aston Baths opened in 1892, they offered a winter gymnasium. Councils were empowered to form bye-laws, appoint staff and charge for admission, but until 1896 music and dancing were prohibited. A wide range of rational activities, sports and public entertainments were held, and according to Polly Bird, baths halls became "major sporting and social centres".[46] Towards the end of the nineteenth century, baths were specifically designed for conversion. Like Smethick's Thimblemill Baths, Greenwich has a proscenial arch stage at one end of the main pool. In March 1904, when planning Moseley Road, Birmingham Baths Committee inspected recent London baths and found nearly all had been constructed with a view to letting large halls for public events. The principle was adopted and also applied to Tiverton Road (1906), Grove Lane (1907) and Bournville Lane (1911). Tiverton had a balcony, and

Bournville's changing boxes could be swung back or removed to create extra space for events such as boxing and dancing.[47]





Laying the floor at Thimblemill Baths, Smethwick, (early 1960s). (photographs donated by workman, David Starkey.)

Birmingham's baths halls program resulted from a public meeting in September 1903. Dr Paton of Nottingham lectured on "Leisure of the People", and the discussion engendered, highlighted the necessity of increased winter, recreation resources. Although there were free libraries and an art gallery, the utility of the numerous parks and playgrounds was seasonally reduced. Birmingham and District Social Clubs Union, later the Social Institutes Committee, was inaugurated:

> To provide recreation of the broadest and most comprehensive character, on neutral ground, for both sexes, unassociated with any sect or political party, and linked up with the Municipal life of the City.[48]

Like most rational recreation initiatives, the voluntary sector was responsible and finance problematic. Council support was anticipated, and in December the Baths and Parks Committee was propositioned for use of facilities for winter recreation rooms or winter gardens, free to the poor. Whilst recognising the need for co-operation, it declined direct involvement. Reluctance may have stemmed from experience, as in the winter of 1901-1902, concerts held at four bathing establishments proved unsuccessful, with attendances of 64 or less, and even as low as 13, for a police-band performance.[49] Furthermore, authority responsibility and support for recreation was in its infancy, and Birmingham was still paying for its era of municipal socialism.

Some city employers were progressive and their backing could be expected but funds were not forthcoming, possibly because like Cadbury's they had already provided for their employees. Consequently, baths-hall clubs did not materialise until 1905, although in 1904 temporary use of the Kyrle Society Hall was accepted. Ultimately, an anonymous benefactor paid for flooring a bath, and another liberally contributed to games. The first winter club-room was opened by Lord Mayor Reynolds in December 1905, at the Northwood Street first-class bath. Admission was free but small charges were made for concerts and use of games. Once the scheme proved popular and self-supporting, citizens willingly contributed. Money for floors, costing about £300 each, and equipment, was

particularly forthcoming, enabling rapid expansion. Monument Road and Woodcock Street Halls opened in the winter of 1906, each taking around 250 payments nightly, and in its second season the former received 70,000 visitors.[50] Moseley Road followed in 1908, Nechells, 1910, and Small Heath and Northwood Street second-class baths, 1911.

The promoters had close links with the New Temperance Hall, and aimed to promote rational recreation and abstinence, by providing alternatives to the public house which equally satisfied masculinity. Northwood's club opened weekday evenings and Saturday afternoons, offering billiards, bagatelle, cards, chess, draughts, and an air gun range. Educational and cultural activities were also available including exhibitions and Saturday evening concerts.[51] During the first decade of the twentieth century, variety performances developed from the less respectable music-hall genre, with its origins in pub culture. Following this model, the club-room concerts successfully catered for everyone, and Moseley Road audiences regularly reached 600-700. Entertainments were strictly controlled by the organisers' rational philosophy, the Lord Chamberlain's censorship powers, the terms of licence held under the 1751 Disorderly Houses Act, required by the 1899 Baths and Wash-Houses Amendment Act, and increasingly stringent bye-laws, especially those relating to safety. In 1908, the Baths and Parks Committee said the results were most gratifying and users conduct was exemplary.[52] Social Institute Chairman, D.J. O'Neill, claimed the baths halls were undoubtedly "helping to reduce the drinking and other evils which existed in the city slums", presumably linking the former with common problems such as domestic violence, poverty and gambling. Illegal street betting was an integral part of working-class slum culture, and in the same year Woodcock Street Club, where 70% of members lacked regular employment, was considered to be preventing thousands of young men loitering and falling into disgrace. According to J. Moth, members' wives and police also praised clubs, for improved domestic and public order. Hence, the Social Institutes Committee developed an important social-service role.[53]

Despite rational origins, baths clubs were unusually responsive to community needs and desires. Popular activities were provided, albeit regulated, and well attended. In 1909, Lord Mayor Kenrick praised the organisers and emphasised their clubs' appeal to all classes. This was high acclaim, given the legacy of nineteenth-century notions of class conciliation through recreation, and its tendency to achieve the opposite. Initially only accompanied women were welcome for "rational and healthy amusement", probably to avoid prostitution, another key fear. However, their attendance was gradually promoted and specific provision made at Northwood and Woodcock Street baths in 1908.[54] The latter's committee was concerned for welfare so, as well as games and dancing, women were taught plain-sewing, fancy-work, flower-making and wood-work. In 1911 Northwood Street second-class bath opened exclusively for women, ostensibly because privacy would encourage attendance, although exclusion from male recreation is an equally likely motive. Nevertheless, the opportunities for women were significant. The halls were also hired by other organisations, and in poor Nechells, Co-op's Christmas party was eagerly anticipated:

> On the day the teachers sent us home early to collect our mugs and put a clean dress on. At the baths all us children had the back of our hands stamped....then we were given a bag with sandwiches and cakes in and a mug of pop....Afterwards we had a concert - some children tap-danced and others sang. We had a lovely time, as we came out we were given a bag with apple, orange and sweets in."[55]

Hence, the whole community benefited from the winter baths scheme. It proved a leading light, attracting widespread attention, with enquiries and deputations from urban settlements nation-wide and America.[56]

During the First World War, rational recreation was linked to the war effort and baths halls were vital to Birmingham workers. Ian Wright states that post-war numerous baths offered popular winter programs with dances, concerts and meetings.[57] Respectable leisure and entertainment, rather than rational recreation, became the focus of provision.

By 1920 Birmingham Civic Recreation League, formed in wartime, was aiming to provide information and initiatives but not interference, for all classes. Impetus was sustained during the industrial depression when the Social Institutes Committee regenerated and several clubs became rest rooms for the unemployed. Inter-war Birmingham experienced a phase of significant bathing-facility provision, and the seven new baths and three reconstructed ones, were designed for dual use. This proved wise as pools were increasingly loss-making and winter swimming remained unpopular, whereas conversion reduced overheads and brought income. Harborne Baths which opened in December 1923, were "floored over, supported 28 dances, 7 whist drives or socials and 6 boxing matches before the first lucky person entered the water", with takings of £161/11/0.[58]

Ballroom dancing was popular and baths halls with balconies were ideally suited. One man recalls Tiverton Baths in the 1920s, when it cost 9d to dance or 3d for balcony viewing. This was the era of the big band and palais-de-dance, which lasted into the late 1950s. During this decade several Birmingham baths had their own bands and offered dancing instruction. Saltley Baths Ballroom was one of the city's most popular venues. Situated in an area where entertainment facilities were practically non-existent, it fulfilled a real social need.[59] Many romances started at baths ballrooms, including the long, happy marriage of a lady, who grew up near Saltley Baths Ballroom:

> When I was a young girl I would love to lie in bed listening to the music. It all seemed so exciting. I couldn't wait to become sixteen, so I could go with my friends. I used to put my make-up on in the entry so my mother could not see me.[60]

Another lady recalls King's Heath having a superb dance floor, and the necessity of queuing early on Christmas and New Years Eves.[61]

Birmingham's baths clubs were discontinued for the duration of the Second World War, largely because premises were required for Civil Defence Measures. In 1945 the Social Institutes Committee disbanded because of irreparable losses to the leadership, and

in the belief that future development of its work should be the municipal authority's responsibility.[62] Despite recognition of recreation needs and the associated social benefits, and an impassioned plea from O'Neill in 1907, the Baths Department had never played an active role in the winter program, and permission was originally subject to it being absolved of responsibility. Although from 1905 it did undertake installation and storage of flooring, this was conditional on ownership being passed to the council, providing an opportunity for control which was not exploited. Local authorities generally preferred to support existing voluntary provision, so prior to the war, developments mainly occurred in this or the commercial sector. However, in planning for peace, the coalition government moved towards radical new, social legislation. By 1944 concepts of free secondary education, a national health service, and social services, were firmly in place, and actioned by the incoming Labour Government. Consequently, the Social Institutes Committee had good grounds for hoping their work would be continued by Birmingham's authorities.

Unfortunately, club-rooms had been declining prior to the war, because of the long-term effects of depression on disposable income, waning popularity of variety and increasing commercial competition, especially from cinema. Reconstruction took the Monument Road and Woodcock Street clubs out of action, and by 1938-1939 only Moseley Road and Nechells Baths Halls were operational. In 1947 eight re-opened, but the post-war period saw unprecedented demand for swimming, including winter facilities to enable higher standards in schools and clubs. During the 1950s the ASA lobbied councillors against winter closure, reminding them of their public health obligations.[63] Despite losing income, Birmingham Baths Committee reduced the halls program and by 1951 only six were functioning: Grove Lane, Harborne, Kings Heath, Moseley Road, Nechells and Saltley.[64] Bona fide organisations were permitted hire for social or charitable events, but the predominant activity, dancing, was strictly under authority control; alcohol was rarely served, events finished by 11PM, and reasonable dress and

behaviour were expected. The motivation for assuming control was probably two-fold: dancing was immensely popular and profitable, and concerns had been raised about the palais, particularly its association with sexual immorality.

Baths halls also began to be utilised for sports. Badminton facilities at Kings Heath were used by leading clubs, and an indoor bowling green at Grove Lane was an immediate success.[65] This development preceded multi-function sports and leisure centres, which from the 1960s completed the transition to swimming for leisure. Baths had nurtured indoor recreation and by 1971 the section of the examination set by the Institute of Baths Management Incorporated, concerning winter entertainments and recreations in baths halls, had been extended to incorporate all indoor recreations.[66] Although in the 1960s, Thimblemill Baths, Smethick, had a new floor and winter programs including cat and flower shows, and televised wrestling, generally swimming took precedence.[67] Wright agrees that demand, from public and competitive swimmers was great, and by the late 1950s very few pools had alternative winter usage.[68]

5.2 Baths amidst World Wars

The First World War heralded a new type of warfare, with 1 in 8 British forces killed, and large losses also occurred during the Second World War, to which technology added further dimensions. Contrary to expectations both conflicts were lengthy, and brought the realities of war into the community. Firstly, by casualties, with 1914-1918 deaths more than double all wars since 1790 and secondly, as stated by S.K. Kent and George Mosse, blurring of the distinction between home and front lines.[69] The conflicts greatly affected civilian life, directly so during the Second World War when heavy bombardment caused 60,000 deaths and damaged 2 in 7 houses, and there was likelihood of invasion.[70] Whereas the First World War inspired mass enlistment, enthusiasm was lacking in 1939. Conscription from the outbreak eventually encompassed single women aged 19-24.

The wars created camaraderie, and communities of "shared sacrifice", which for the greater good, endured mobilisation of forces, reorientation of industries to war work, hardship and anxiety.[71] Particularly during the First World War, civilian safety and separation from atrocities, such as Belgium experienced, was considered a privilege. Moral arguments and political propaganda controlled social behaviour, and non-conformists were outcast. National interests took precedence but J. Winter and J. Robert consider urban identities were never subsumed, as for most people "England" was a very localised area.[72] Hence, the importance of community cohesion and kinship, whether familial, social or adoptive. Emergency conditions recreated social hierarchy, and enabled the rise of disadvantaged groups, especially women. Welfare benefited, and demographic differentials were mediated by migration, intra and inter-urban. However, historians disagree about the net social consequences of war: certain, hampered or accelerated changes, according to J.M. Osborne, A. Marwick, and Jay Winter and J.L. Robert respectively.[73] Nevertheless both world conflicts, especially the second, increased the state's role and profoundly altered public expectations.

The First World War brought an unanticipated need to mobilise society's resources, for maintaining both the front-line and domestic economy. This was enabled by efficient administration and community consent.[74] Frans Coetze and Marylin Shevin-Coetze claim productive capacity and moral support at home were as important as soldiers, and Winter and Robert agree citizenship determined allied efficacy.[75] The working class, which constituted 80% of the population was vital, and rose to the challenge. John Bourne states "it owed everything to its sense of community, its social cohesiveness, its capacity for endurance".[76] During both wars, key industries were required to raise production, so large numbers of women entered the work-force, people worked exceptionally long hours, and with abnormally high commitment. Long-term, this was not sustainable with war-weariness widespread, especially under the increasingly drab 1940s conditions. As stated by Osborne, "the strains of war, expose the alliances and the divisions, the

strengths and the weaknesses of a culture and test the beliefs and self-presentations of entire populations".[77] Maintaining morale was essential, and war effort constituted a community-wide response, displaying "moral fortitude, material sacrifice and collective solidarity".[78] Recreation was recognised as making a positive contribution.

During the world wars, the role of public baths was two-fold: supportive, and directly contributing to war aims. The former was principally an extension of normal function with baths for health, hygiene and recreation, whilst additionally aiding morale. Baths services were considered requisite and maintained as fully as conditions allowed. Until the later years of the First World War, disruption was minimal. Swimming boomed, especially for women, school provision expanded and clubs flourished. Cleansing facilities were in demand, and in Birmingham numerous refugees and soldiers benefited from free use, 45,948 during the first seven months. Almost twice as many soldiers swam as bathed, whereas refugees showed a predilection for washing.[79] When fuel shortages became critical, domestic bathing was expensive and restricted, so public baths were vital. In 1918, widespread closure followed a government order requiring 30% reduction in fuel usage. All Nottingham's baths closed for the winter but Birmingham maintained a skeleton service, largely for the benefit of munitions workers. The Kent Street establishment and cottage baths remained open, but other washing departments operated only three days a week. Sunday opening, Turkish and Russian Baths were discontinued.[80]

There were few resources and little time for good works, and in 1915 the male dominated Social Institutes Committee which ran Birmingham's winter baths halls was disbanded. War diametrically inflated recreational needs; anxiety levels were high, and many people worked long hours at unaccustomed roles. Numerous women from all classes joined the work-force, many performing dirty, dangerous tasks, and young people migrated to cities for well-paid factory jobs. Recreation was necessary for workers' physical and psychological well-being, and hence productivity, and diverting the young ones from undesirable activities. In 1915 the Ministry of Munitions established a welfare

section under Rowntree, prominent Quaker industrialist and social investigator. It set standards and required the appointment of welfare supervisors in factories employing women, or more than 100 boys. Birmingham companies, including Kynochs Munitions, were soon requesting additional swimming facilities, and in 1918 most munitions factories applied to register women's clubs.[81] According to Stephen Jones, linkage with the war effort represented a watershed in the history of leisure.[82]

In 1916 a new organisation, Birmingham Civic Recreation League, resumed the baths halls program for workers' benefit, especially those in munitions. They could afford the activities offered, such as swimming, dancing and education, and opening hours including Sundays, accommodated shift patterns. The clubs were largely self-managed and theoretically quasi-autonomous, although rationalisation was superimposed. Forthcoming funding, especially donations of £500 and £1,000 from the Ministry of Munitions and Birmingham Small Arms Company respectively, indicates the development's importance. The baths halls also hosted community events, including fund-raising for war-related beneficiaries, thus aiding morale. Little is known about Thetford's pool during the First World War, except local opinion holds that troops stationed on the adjacent Barnham Common used it for ablutions, dug out the bank and made improvements.

During the Second World War, public health was in jeopardy because bombing affected housing, water and power supplies, and food rationing was increasingly stringent. The potential for epidemic made hygiene a priority, intensifying the supportive role of public baths. Birmingham's Baths Department successfully promoted cleanliness as integral to the war effort, preventing disease, and saving soap, time and fuel. Advertising and pricing policies encouraged midweek bathing for the public and especially children, leaving weekends for war workers. Free baths were offered to the bombed out, albeit they had to supply their own soap and towel. The school pass scheme was reintroduced, and in 1941 washing baths were offered as an alternative to swimming, because some children

were prevented from bathing at home by the risk of air attacks.[83] Additionally, corporation baths, many supplied by artesian wells, were an important, emergency water source. Local supplies were frequently disrupted, and Birmingham was in a precarious position when the main pipeline from Wales was fractured.

Outbreak of war in September 1939, caused closure of recreation amenities nation-wide. The "phoney war" brought little action, so many rapidly re-opened, but because most of Birmingham's baths were convertible to halls, the Air Raid Precautions Committee commandeered many for gas decontamination centres and first aid posts. Establishments for the latter purpose had closed the previous May, until experience proved whether their washing departments could be opened.[84] Furthermore, danger from bombing made use of baths located in central, or eastern industrial areas, inadvisable, and throughout the war, facilities available varied with current conditions and demand. Winter club-rooms ceased, and opportunities for swimming were limited. However, mixed bathing, introduced during the First World War, was now popular and socially acceptable, and dominated timetables allowing maximum accessibility. Dispensation for lady teachers to accompany boys enabled at least two Birmingham schools, Steward Street and Loxton Street, to carry on swimming despite staff shortages, whereas in 1944 these caused Thetford Boys' and Girls' Council Schools to cease.[85] Temporary rules enabled some Birmingham clubs to continue, although reserved club nights and galas were not permitted. Similarly, Dunlop's club received special dispensation in years prior to the war, when attendances were affected by "very important SPECIAL work".[86]

War inhibited holiday-makers. Hotels were closed or requisitioned, non-essential journeys discouraged to conserve fuel and reduce congestion on public transport, ration books registered with local shops, and many beaches cordoned off. Key coastal areas had further restrictions to prevent espionage. From 1942 compensatory recreation initiatives aimed to boost morale and Birmingham's included the Lord Mayor's Annual Holiday at Home, and Brighter Birmingham Scheme. The Baths Committee played an extensive role,

arranging music, free instruction, displays and galas, which involved swimming clubs, and other groups from the community and allied forces. The Molesworth sisters, renowned local swimmers, were employed, and several baths specially re-opened. Rowheath Lido, requisitioned from Cadbury's by the air ministry, was a popular venue.[87]

Brighter Birmingham Advertisement (1945). (Douglas, Birmingham at Play. p.31.)

At Thetford, a fortnight of events in 1942, terminated with a gala including races and diving competitions for both sexes, and a 100yds freestyle for force's men. Organised by the Service of Youth, it was a community event, with entries restricted to those resident within five miles or attending local schools. Typically prizes were national saving stamps, as material goods were not available and throughout the war there was emphasis on saving and raising funds.[88] Graham Walker's study of Scottish sport states that the community values of swimming, especially in wartime, persuaded Motherwell and Wishaw Council to keep their public pond open. In 1945 the local team, including forces'

sweetheart Nancy Riach, participated in Birmingham's Victory Aquacade, held at the Woodcock Street Gala Bath.[89]

During both wars, public baths offered concessions and training facilities, and were extensively used by forces personnel. In the First World War, baths were also important centres for recruitment and billeting. At Birmingham, the RAMC Reserve used Grove Lane, Warwickshire Rifle Corps, Woodcock Street, and 11 other establishments were involved with demobilisation in the winter of 1918-1919.[90] During the Second World War, baths were used by groups from the forces, National Fire Service and especially the Home Guard, who swam in full kit including arms. From 1942, pre-service units prepared for the compulsory swimming test and held galas. Two years later the 171 teams at the youth championships in Birmingham included 44 boys' and 11 girls' air corps.[91] However, the main direct function of baths was civil defence. First proposed in April 1937, by January 1939 half the Birmingham Corporation's first-aid posts were at baths, and by May only two had not been allocated a special purpose. Possibly because baths were at the heart of local communities, several had public shelters, including Kings Heath and Harborne, and were centres for issuing ration books. Staff acted as fire watchers, and were praised for limiting damage during the intensive bombing of autumn 1940.[92] Having been twice bombed out, a company producing Eddystone radio components and equipment converted the Bath Tub Lido and Ballroom, West Heath, a short-lived, commercial failure, into a factory. Air raid shelters were constructed in the pool, cubicles replaced by power presses and their timber recycled for benches and fixtures, the fun-fair became a packing department, and ice-cream parlour a general workshop.[93]

Birmingham Baths Department set an excellent example during the Second World War. Services were maintained despite requirements to reduce workload and expenditure, shortages of towels, fuel and staff, and extensive damage to facilities, including the October 1940 loss of Kent Street, the city's most popular bath and department headquarters.[94] However, by late 1941, call-up was intensified and its resources were

reaching breaking point. Superintendent Pashler wrote to the Ministry of Labour and National Service stating, in addition to swimming and bathing facilities:

> The department is maintaining 15 First Aid Posts, 20 gas decontamination centres, offers free washing facilities to those disposed of their homes, sanitary conveniences in blitzed areas, the supply of hot water for mobile canteens, provides additional drinking water supplies from 2 wells and maintains the provision of alternative water supplies from 12 ponds and 4 wells for use of the fire brigade.[95]

In spite of this impressive record, the Ministry of Health had refused departmental inclusion under the Essential Works (General Provisions) Order 1941, exempting staff from conscription and preventing them taking alternative employment. The Ministry of Labour and National Service agreed it would issue directives to resume work if necessary.[96] Parallel's can be drawn between the Baths Department's self-evaluation of worth, and the war's empowerment of underprivileged groups, which led to increased strike action.

Supportive and direct functions of Birmingham's baths were much greater during the Second World War, partly due to economic and political issues. In the First World War, the department endeavoured to meet demand, particularly from soldiers and munitions workers, but the Ministry of Munitions refused to contribute to additional cottage baths.[97] Carl Chinn states that ill feeling arose from lack of government financial support during the Second World War, when vital industries made Birmingham a major enemy target. However, the Baths Department was promised payment of costs, and loss of earnings, incurred by civil defence measures.[98] More importantly, baths function appears to have been proportional to the community war effort. The world wars bound communities, blurring traditional restraints of gender and class, with commonality of conditions and purpose. Civilians were virtually unharmed in the First World War, but during the Second, hardship was greater and air attacks brought chaos. This differential is reflected by the intensity of community war efforts, and demonstrated by comparison of

Birmingham's baths with those at Dulwich and Thetford, during the First and Second World Wars respectively. Bird's study of Dulwich indicates baths were central to the community. She found similar usage, including accommodating refugees and troops, housing a temporary hospital and Red Cross base, and unofficially acting as a public air raid shelter, but on a scale closer to that of Second World War Birmingham.[99] This can be theorised as due to bombing only being experienced in London, and the south-east during the First World War.

Thetford's war was very different. Regional focus was on training and supplying food, and large areas of marginal Breckland, previously considered agriculturally unsuitable, were worked. It was not a major industrial target like Birmingham, so community life and war efforts had less urgency and tension. The river pool's operations continued almost unchanged but, as an important source of cleansing and recreation in rural East Anglia, it was used by the forces. Their presence was not entirely welcome. Early in the war, in order to accommodate military demand, the schools had their reservations withdrawn. However, these were reinstated after shared use proved unsatisfactory, giving rise to complaints that troop behaviour and language undermined discipline. The Grammar School Headmistress then complained that the men arrived early and watched her girls. Consequently military authorities were asked to provide supervision.[100] Their reservations were allowed, and in 1944 these included the 2nd Armoured Battalion, Welsh Guards and an American unit. The latter baffled Town Clerk Blaydon by requesting permission to build a fire place for cooking. Unfamiliar with barbecues, he envisaged a permanent brick-built construction.[101]

5.3 Baths alleviating Unemployment

The economic boom after the First World War was short-lived and succeeded by prolonged industrial depression. By the winter of 1920-1921 unemployment was a serious

issue. The decline of Britain's staple export industries was fundamental and, according to Katharine Nicholas, pre-war this sector had employed one in four.[102] Structural unemployment was exacerbated by normal cyclical unemployment, unhelpful government trade policies and the inefficiency of many firms. As these struggled to adapt, streamlining production and introducing mechanisation, there were further redundancies. Stephen Constantine claims never less than a million were unemployed during the depression, with the critical periods 1921-1923 and 1930-1933. The latter coincided with world depression, which ended exports to the American markets that had enabled partial recovery. Wages are affected by unemployment, and Jones records a corresponding pattern. He agrees with Constantine that unemployment averaged 14% but states it peaked at 22.1% in 1932.[103] High, long-term unemployment was unprecedented, the benefits system proved inadequate, and neither central nor local government effectively addressed the problems or their causes. The consequences were far-reaching, including re-examination of the state's role as economic manager and welfare provider, and profound changes in public expectations. Although modern opinion holds that overall the inter-war period saw economic growth, improvements in public health, and for the majority higher living standards, many people suffered undeniable hardship. Negative perceptions of conditions must have been emphasised by stark contrast with war-time prosperity, and post-war optimism for a "Brave New World" with "Homes for Heroes". However, the cost of living rose rapidly in the 1920s, causing extreme domestic economy and widespread concern regarding its impact. Poverty caused by low wages and unemployment affected the mental and physical health of individuals and dependants, and was tenuously linked with crime. The knock-on effect for local communities was decay and often migration, creating a negative spiral. Nevertheless, most families and communities demonstrated remarkable resilience and cohesion. Constantine states that "especially in small towns, the more severe the depression, the closer the community grew".[104]

Public baths helped counter the effects, despite difficulties imposed by coal strikes during the 1920s. Cheap bathing facilities to promote health and cleanliness amongst the working-classes was their raison d'être, and concessions were frequently granted to the unemployed. Swimming and bathing enabled maintenance of physical condition, provided recreation and was probably psychologically beneficial, by reducing stress, aiding decency and self-respect. More importantly, as employers tended to regard long-term unemployed as unfit for work, with reasoning supported by their appearance and manner, participation could aid prospects. Although in October 1921, Selly Oak and Bournville Committee of Local Unemployed was refused free tickets for the private baths, by late November 46,636 unemployed had attended public baths, and the following January the council instructed its Baths Committee to make special provision. Due to the potential demand, approximately 100,000 eligible, half-price rather than free baths were offered at restricted times, and arrangements made for subsidy from the Finance Committee. However, a "disappointing" response made this unnecessary; in the first month 1,079 men and 67 women bathed.[105] Free use was first granted in 1930, to unemployed juveniles attending Birmingham Athletic Institute. Three years later, the unemployed could bathe free at open-air baths, five days a week, in line with allowances in other towns and by request of Birmingham Citizens Society. However, the arrangements may have been restricted to members of occupational centres and clubs until 1934.[106] In this year, Birmingham Baths Department further demonstrated sympathy and support by providing free facilities for 155 Scottish hunger marchers. According to Peter Kingsford, marchers usually met hostility, and sometimes police brutality, and were accommodated as vagrants in work-houses.[107]

Numbers of unemployed bathers remained relatively small. In 1933 and 1934, assuming no-one attended more than once, less than 30% and 14% of Birmingham's unemployed men took advantage of the free facilities.[108] It is more likely that a very small percentage were regular bathers. Open-air baths were generally less popular, and

having to produce an unemployment exchange card might have been embarrassing. David Bowker concedes that this may have applied in Ashton-under-Lyne, but considers the low take-up of 1d baths indicative of apathy and disinterest, according with frequent observations about the passivity and demoralisation of 1930s unemployed.[109] Although less women were registered unemployed, very few took advantage of free baths in Birmingham, and only 11 in 1933.[110] Similarly, few used the baths' rest rooms, and consequently facilities were often withdrawn. The increased domestic demands of living in poverty may be responsible, but also women found work more easily and increasing numbers were in employment.

Unemployment bred a mixture of sympathy, concern, suspicion and resentment. In 1922 Birmingham's Baths Superintendent received a call from the Daily Mail regarding establishments' use by the unemployed, for propaganda and political purposes. There was widespread feeling that only washing facilities should be free, and in 1933 Ashton-under-Lyne Reporter suggested a small charge for use of swimming baths.[111] Leisure was deemed non-essential, yet spare time is the bane of unemployment. Those affected were often criticised for milling about, and accused of idleness or crime. Particularly in winter, keeping warm and dry was an additional problem, so clubs and rest rooms were established. Charitable initiatives, for and by the working class, appear to have made a greater impact than official efforts. Nicholas reports that Stockton had a popular library rest room with books, magazines and games.[112] In Birmingham, the baths halls had long-established winter use and, at the Lord Mayor's request, seven clubs run by the Social Institutes Committee were opened as daytime rest rooms. They had over 30,000 users each winter, and 53,244 in 1936-1937 of whom 17,422 were aged sixty plus and unlikely to find work. Moth states that baths rest rooms were an important development, and attendances suggest they were more beneficial than subsidised baths.[113] As well as providing shelter and recreation, they were vital to psychological well-being. Unemployment causes isolation from colleagues, and reduced income affects leisure

activities. Rest rooms enabled the unemployed to socialise, and through shared experience to offer mutual support, boosting morale. Unemployment was a public stigma, often instigating acute feelings of shame, humiliation and bitterness. Loss of status was keenly felt in areas where it was less endemic, and families where the spouse or children were working. Home could become a stressful environment, where unemployed men were not necessarily welcome all day, so rest rooms also provided a retreat.

Post-war, expectations of public services were increasing but funds limited. In December 1920, the government formed an Unemployed Grants Committee to encourage authorities to form local committees and relief schemes. Loan sanction was granted for capital-works projects proven essential to the community, cost effective, and providing substantial employment. According to J.T. Jones, this resulted in numerous schemes being accomplished in Birmingham earlier than would otherwise have been possible.[114] Humphries, city engineer and surveyor, 1919-1935, was responsible for projects costing £4.5 million. These included widening the Bristol Road, which in 1930 employed 1,045, and several baths.[115] However, the general response was disappointing, probably because of stringent regulations and restrictions on financial support. In deeply depressed areas, where relief work was desperately needed, councils were unable to afford loans. Nicholas found limited work was provided in Middlesborough, because the council was hampered by debt and legislation. Despite relaxation of regulations and increased funding, by 1928 the government had provided direct work for only 4% of unemployed.[116] This may explain why, contrary to the experiences of Birmingham and Thetford, Keil and Wix consider baths as relief work did not became reality until nearer 1930.[117]

Although depression was nation-wide, the midlands and south, with new growth industries, suffered less. Birmingham, the "city of a thousand trades", benefited from its diversified and adaptable economy. In 1931 unemployment was 17.7%, below the national average of 20.7%.[118] In contrast, Thetford was hit hard and early. As stated by Alan Crosby the cause was reliance on a staple industry, Charles Burrell and Sons Ltd,

world-famous manufacturers of traction engines. Trade had stagnated by 1911 but wartime, munitions prosperity encouraged grandiose plans. Unfortunately, 1919 saw many orders cancelled, and after 1922 the company rapidly declined. Crosby attributes this to steam engines becoming obsolete. Burrell's should have switched production to the internal combustion engine, but as Nicholas states over-optimism and reluctance to accept new developments were common problems in contemporary trade and industry. Additionally, Ronald Clark blames Burrell's joining the Agricultural and General Engineers Ltd, a consortium which aimed to finance mass production and increase efficiency with central organisation, but squandered money and achieved little. In 1928 the Thetford works closed, and four years later the company ceased trading.[119] The effect was devastating as Burrell's had employed 25% of the male work-force. Other industries were also less prosperous and the tannery closed. Workers at Norfolk Canneries Ltd and Thetford Moulded Products, now the town's main employers, were predominantly female.[120] From the early 1930s unemployment generally fell and especially so in Birmingham, but Thetford continued to decline. 1920s migration became mass exodus, and by 1939 the town's population was 3,987, below 4,000 for the first time in over a century.[121]

Thetford's Unemployment Committee was appointed in July 1921, and its public works projects included clearing debris from the river, laying kerbs and pavements, tidying Castle Meadow, and the long-needed renovation of Nuns Bridges Bathing Place. This project, proposed in October 1921, was immediately agreed and work completed for the 1922 season.[122] New baths were celebrated with gala events, which must have boosted community morale, and at Thetford's well-attended ceremony, Mayor Brown said the wish for such a pool had often been expressed, but would probably not have materialised so soon without high unemployment.[123] Provision was definitely accelerated as subsequent plans for an improved pool did not materialise until 1972, and other local

towns waited longer for facilities. In 1934 the unemployed were paid £90 for clearing and cementing the pool, and annual maintenance may have provided regular relief work.

When the pool was planned, it was thought the public would be willing to pay for a suitable facility, but with low wages and high unemployment, continued use of traditional bathing spots suggests otherwise. Surprisingly, no evidence has been found of unemployed concessions at the river pool or guildhall washing baths. As working men had long bathed in the river, the parsimonious council probably felt abundance of free, natural amenities made special provision unnecessary. In fact, the pool had few advantages over other bathing spots and was mainly used by children. The Rivers Thet and Little Ouse vary greatly in width, depth, currents, and bed material, with sand, gravel or chalk, often overlain by mud. Hence, "the various bathing spots, had individual attractions and bathers knew which suited them best". Ironically the "Sandy Bank", especially frequented by families, was directly opposite the pool. There were bushes to change in and the bank sloped gently down to a sandy beach, with shallow water. As the pool lacked a boundary, it was possible to cross to a mid-stream sand bank and slip in surreptitiously.

Most of Birmingham's inter-war, public and cottage baths, were constructed as unemployment relief schemes, enabling implementation of ambitious pre-war plans for expanding and improving provision. In 1921 open-air projects, each expected to take six months and employ at least 50 people, were proposed for Harborne and Kings Heath, but loan sanction does not appear to have been granted. In 1922 when the Ministry of Health agreed to the reconstruction of Victoria open-air bath, it queried whether the others were works of public utility and real need, arguing people could use baths at home or existing facilities. Concern was expressed regarding the high cost of building materials, and deferment suggested until the country recovered from war, and scarcity of money. However, the Town Clerk argued that Birmingham had 30% less facilities than similar sized cities, and pools opened at both locations the following year. For some reason,

plans were radically altered to lavish indoor complexes, but then, to gain approval, moderated to a single pool with collapsible changing rooms instead of a balcony. It is fortunate further open-air baths, including 1929 plans for one accommodating 5,000 spectators, were not constructed, as Birmingham's others were forced to close in 1939.[124]

Demand for public baths, and use of unemployment relief schemes to improve Thetford's bathing station and build a number of Birmingham's baths, suggest large inter-war increases nation-wide. However, comparatively few facilities were constructed, 50 and 128, during the 1920s and 1930s respectively, just 13 more than the shorter 1900-1914 period. This may be because, as stated in Birmingham council minutes, baths and wash-houses were regarded as revenue producing schemes and subject to less attractive terms.[125] Nevertheless, as part of a community-wide effort baths schemes were significant, and particularly so in small or greatly depressed settlements.

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CHAPTER 6: OVERVIEW OF PART II

Five key community functions of public baths have emerged: recreation, welfare, social interaction, community spirit and morale, and crises management. By far the most important is community recreation. Baths offered opportunities to everyone. As well as swimming, which achieved instant popularity, these included sports, entertainments, and educational, cultural and social activities. Particularly significant were access to Sunday recreation and women's participation. Winter use of baths halls fostered the development of indoor recreation, culminating from the 1960s in provision of multi-purpose leisure centres. Although participants were primarily motivated by recreation, welfare was in many respects equally important to the whole community. Cleansing facilities contributed to improved public health during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and were vital for maintaining physical condition during wartime and depression. War workers and forces personnel especially benefited. During the Second World War, emergency water and sanitation facilities supplied by public baths were critical. Additionally, developing swimming skills, increased public safety.

Social interaction and community spirit are closely allied. Baths, especially via recreation, encouraged commingling and were more successful than other recreational initiatives at class conciliation. Mixed bathing overcame the separate spheres policy of life and leisure, and enabled baths to abet courting. Together with baths concerts, it also promoted family participation. Socialising at baths club-rooms promoted mutual support and independence, especially during the inter-war years when opened as rest rooms for the unemployed. Furthermore, civic amenities engendered pride, and community prowess was boosted by sporting success, with local teams and competitions, including swimming, well supported. Baths events, wet and dry-side, were frequently means of fund-raising for disadvantaged groups. During both wars and the inter-war depression, baths played

supportive and direct roles in crises management. The world wars intensified long-standing recreation and welfare purposes, whereas direct functions responded to community needs. During the depression these included baths provision and improvements, capital works projects specifically engaging unemployed. Wartime use of baths was proportional to the community war effort. Entertainment was essential to morale, and baths halls and swimming pools played central roles, during the First and Second World Wars respectively. There was relaxation of regulations, particularly those relating to mixed bathing and clubs, and extensive specific functions included use by service personnel, and in the Second World War, ARP.

Public baths have mid-nineteenth century origins, steeped in rational philosophy, notably middle-class concern for working-class health and hygiene. Whilst reformist motives have negative connotations, resultant facilities and opportunities were highly significant. Voluntary impetus was essential given authority apathy and sub-ordinance to rate-payers' interests, compounded by permissive legislation. Cleansing was undoubtedly beneficial, but swimming, and subsequently dry-side activities, became popular. Providers imposed rules and regulations, attempting to condition usage, but these were mostly appropriate and enabled precocious Sunday participation. The decency debate was excessive, and certain policies including club registration and pricing, encouraged exclusivity, antagonistic to the aims of the Baths and Wash-Houses Acts. Opportunities were available for all but equality was not achieved. Some activities had strong class and gender bias, frequently favouring middle-class men. Nevertheless, users successfully asserted their interests and influenced provision, counteracting providers' philosophies. Leisure predominated with swimming increasingly popular, and appealing baths-halls programs were designed. These apparently accomplished rational aims, therefore both providers and participants effectively contributed to community.

Public baths clearly fulfilled a much wider role than originally intended. Recreational use was the most significant and enduring. This complies with Robert Snape's statement

that many universally core leisure provisions were originally introduced for other reasons, including baths for hygiene.[1] The total importance of baths is evident, and its continuation is indicated by contemporary support. Swimming and baths establishments became popular throughout diverse communities, converging cultures, philosophies and traditions. Citizens hold fond memories of baths now closed, and after Thetford indoor pool was destroyed by fire in 1994, there was even a suggestion that the river pool should re-open.[2] In Birmingham, loss of Kent Street and Green Lane Baths appear especially regretted, and further closures have been vehemently resisted. Nechells, a grade II listed building, closed after lengthy protests, whilst Castle Vale and Moseley Road Baths have survived, largely because of public pressure. In 1998, photographic exhibits, at the Midlands Arts Centre, featured community functions of Birmingham's baths. "Diving into the Archive" recorded the historical architecture and activity of these "much-loved institutions" which have "played a major role in the lives of Birmingham people", whilst Tom Merrillon's "Moseley Road Baths" captured its contemporary spirit of diversity, featuring, "the Yemeni Boy's Swimming Club, baptisms, serious swimmers, water therapy for the disabled and much more, including the general public's pleasure".[3]

Notes - Chapter 6: Overview of Part II

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PART III

WOMEN'S SWIMMING

III.1 Synopsis

Part III examines the progress of women's swimming. Few swam before 1850 but subsequently expansion was sustained, with marked increases during the first two decades of the twentieth century and following the Second World War. Participants were mainly middle or upper class prior to the First World War, and swimming generally has greater appeal to younger women. The most significant finding is the lack of resistance to, and extent of women's participation. Biological function is viewed as the primary limiting factor, creating natural barriers and, as the basis of social-role construction, the inhibitive decency-femininity debate. For working-class women, attitudes were slower to change, and the cost of participation was a major deterrent. Education and mixed bathing are important positive influences, and other topics of interest include fashion, and school and club swimming.

III.2 Introduction

The traditionally low status of sport and women in society has contrived to leave a massive historiographical void. Sporting literature makes little reference to the role of women, and even less in conjunction with other forms of inequality: class, age, disability and race. Such inertia suggests historically women did not participate. The notion of sport as a male preserve is a legacy from the Ancient Greek and Roman Civilisations, and organised sport, encompassing masculine identity and British Character, emerged from public schools during the nineteenth century. Its gendered culture has resisted change, and despite 150 years progress, sex inequality remains prevalent. The term "gender" was given a new specific definition in Longman's 1985 Register of New Words, as a verb meaning to associate something stereotypically with one sex. Although in this context, "gendered" has only recently been applied to sport, it is pertinent to its historical development, and a potent source of participation inequalities. Discrimination, based on socially-determined sex roles, was a key restraint and interacted with many others, especially the impact of class structures on lifestyle. Studies of the development of women's sport tend to focus on socially-constructed inequalities, and participation by the middle classes. Most concur on limited swimming, which C.M. Parratt considers illustrates some of the most powerful societal checks applied.[1] However, this chapter explores issues influencing the development of women's swimming, and demonstrates considerable involvement across age and class spectrums. Additionally, the effects of biological function on participation are discussed.

Notes - Part III: Introduction

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CHAPTER 7: WOMEN'S SWIMMING

7.1 A Woman's Place

The corporeal body is the prime constituent of personal and social identity. The construction of the body, and therefore the embodied self, determines how it is treated and the manner in which life is lived. Consequently, the deepest prejudices and discriminations accrue to the body, and power struggles wage regarding its ownership.[1] In recent centuries, issues of sexuality have been very influential in social organisation and intervention. Genetically determined, biological sex is the basis on which gender and sexual roles, which define people socially, morally and health-wise, are culturally ascribed. Action and meaning vary culturally and social definitions can mould or transform interpretation within the role-set.

Nineteenth-century men asserted patriarchy, as did the state from at least mid century. With respect to women's bodies, individualism was low on the agenda. Restraints on women's sport and recreation polarised on biological sex and consensus of the "hysterical" woman: an adjective derived from the Greek "hystera" meaning womb. Classical medicine held its under-use as the root of all feminine ills, and in the 1860s clitoridectomies were performed to cure hysteria and other conditions including amenorrhoea, sterility, epilepsy and insanity. Joseph Breuer and Sigmund Freud undertook detailed case studies in the psychological and sexual implications of hysteria.[2] Marital constraints were thought to promote mental stability and personal happiness, and motherhood was decreed the females' highest function. Hence, repeated pregnancy was considered to ensure a woman's health, happiness and moral welfare. Notions of sexual demarcation based on nature's destiny, led to men and women inhabiting separate spheres of life with symbiotic co-operation of opposites. The idealised woman's place was in the home, a private haven of rectitude, caring for her husband and raising a family. The traits associated with this socio-biological purpose were absorbed into concepts of femininity.

Whilst women were subordinate, men assumed a public, cultural role of business and responsibility. Sport, and indeed all competitive tendencies, were deemed physical and masculine, and therefore outside the norms of the emotional and spiritual, feminine sphere. Desire to enter the male sphere was considered most unnatural. However, public image was a facade and, although familism effectively constrained women, it should not be assumed they felt impeded or indeed accepted subservience, as many led fulfilled lives.

Home-based ideology of sexual-role respectability was an expression of Victorian middle-class life and aspirations. The moral tide arose as a reaction to the social and sexual licence of Regency Aristocracy, and was exported to the upper and working classes. Femininity became a social institution to be upheld at all costs. The idea of "refinement" which prescribed that women, other than working-class, should abstain from gainful employment, developed in response to increasing national wealth. Women were regarded as objects of conspicuous consumption, and symbolic of achieved status. Although, as the century progressed family structures relaxed, potential for upwards mobility ensured social mores remained paramount. An isolated instance of inappropriate behaviour could destroy individual and family reputations. Independence was difficult for women, without contravening convention, and limited educational and employment opportunities meant making a good marriage was their ambition. Without economic and political power, or legal rights, women relied on sexual purity as a marketable commodity, and this was inextricably linked with femininity. Sport was considered unsexing, and vigorous activity to have a neutering effect. Consequently, as women became more active there was strong moral resistance from both sexes.

In 1899 Dr Arabella Kenealy theorising the subject of "Woman as Athlete", concluded that the qualities of womanhood were sacrificed by pursuit of man's muscular and mental energies. The case study of Clara, a typical modern woman, found she acquired considerable motor skills, but her movements became less womanly; her voice louder and more assertive; she was more out-spoken and selfish, and lost her subtle

charm. As such development was thought to threaten the health of individual and progeny, physically active women were regarded as shirking their duty of securing the future of the human race. Kenealy considered that sexual differentiation increased with level of civilisation. This conveniently exempted working-class women, prevented by necessity from conforming to the idealised Victorian archetype, inactive and invalided, counteracting many physical and moral arguments against their sports participation. However, it reinforced activity for the leisured class as "degradation of evolved faculty and a grievous loss to humanity".[3]

Although, by the twentieth century medical objections to women's participation had subsided, homophobia was the social legacy. Sport embodies concepts of masculinity and therefore "normal" sexuality, and non-conformists, women and homosexuals, are marked down and mocked. Initially, women succeeding in sport, defying traditional feminine values and trespassing male territory, were considered freaks, but during the first half of the twentieth century expanding participation brought conditional acceptance. "Femininity", which became a codeword for "attractive to men" and therefore "heterosexuality", had to be maintained via participants' choice of activities, attitudes and clothing. Women exceeding the boundaries of acceptable behaviour were labelled "mannish lesbians", and in the second half of the twentieth century concerns were raised regarding the risk of these "predatory dykes" perverting others. Hence, sportswomen were pressurised into unequivocal heterosexual representations and, despite relaxation of public attitudes towards sexuality since the 1960s, in sport closet homosexuality remains.[4] Sport's sexist agenda has persistently controlled women's involvement and competence. The image of woman and athlete remains largely incompatible, and the introduction of sex-testing, and alleged practice of illegal performance-enhancing methods, and unethical use of ergogenic aids, appear to reflect male opinion that women are naturally second-rate athletes. This misguided perception also affects the status of

female coaches and administrators: in 1995 women held only 6.2% of senior positions in the ASA.[5]

7.2 Decency, Modesty and Prudery

Nineteenth-century society imposed rigid propriety. Expectations of female modesty prevented exposure of body parts, even to their own sex. Women were considered to require protection from indecency, particularly male nudity, and hence bathing was problematic and women's opportunities limited. Men had traditionally bathed nude and resisted efforts to introduce respectable swim-wear. Many disliked bathing drawers, deeming them unnatural and dangerous. The holiday diary of Reverend Francis Kilvert, 1874, claims he was injured when, in rough seas, his bathing drawers fettered his ankles.[6] According to Phillis Cunnington and H. Mansfield, male nude bathing was practised less openly from the 1830s and had died out by the 1870s, but bye-laws show it existed at Colchester as late as 1882 and Thetford until at least 1909.[7] A Birmingham man, recalling the 1930s, stated this was how "many prim young maidens got their first view of manhood - saucy wenches!" Such informal participation was deemed inappropriate for girls, and a contemporary recalls his sister, although a competent swimmer, "got a good hiding" for swimming in the canal with the boys, when about 14 and starting to develop.[8]

In August 1892, Thetford Council received complaints that bathers were monopolising the river near the First Staunch, and preventing lady boaters approaching. The inferred problem was naked men. Apparently, the recently established bathing place was insufficiently deep for adults and only suitable for boys, although some people felt sentimentality was the reason for bathing persisting at the staunch. The mayor said a ban was impossible because the location was more than 100 yards from a public road, so bye-laws were not being broken. Construction of a deep, fenced bathing pond at the spot was suggested, but the mayor merely expressed hope that bathers would behave decently.

BOROUGH OF THETFORD.

BATHING

Bye-Law, No. 16.

"No person above the age of ten years shall within 200 yards of any street, or public place, unless effectually screened from view, bathe from any part of the bank of any river, broad, watercourse or pond, or from any boat, stage or other place unless such person is clothed with a sufficient dress or covering to prevent indecent exposure of the person."

Penalty for offending against above Bye-Law not exceeding 40s.

By Order of the Council,

JOHN HOUCHEN,

April, 1909. **Town Clerk.**

J. W. CLARKE, PRINTER, THETFORD.

Norfolk Library Information Service - Thetford Local Studies)

The mayor said adults should bathe early morning and late evening "so as to put no obstacle in the way of ladies enjoying the river at proper hours of the day".[9] Fourteen years later, in 1906, there were further complaints, that people were prevented from enjoying the Abbey Meadows, because "many persons bathed quite nude".[10] This time the council resolved that proper steps be taken, and a 1907 public notice drew special attention to the bathing bye-laws. Two years later, a new one was issued, forbidding persons over the age of ten from bathing within 200 yards of a public place unless screened from view, or "clothed with sufficient dress or covering to prevent indecent exposure". (See previous page).

Male patriarchy was significant in preservation of modesty, but prudery largely resulted from female-imposed standards of sexual purity. Respectability was their main source of status and prospects and, from mid nineteenth century, the growing feminist movement sought to pressurise men into conforming to female ideals. This retrogressive step was ironic, as was the notion that women frequently caused indecency. About a third of articles concerning indecent bathing at sea-side resorts, published in The Times circa 1800-1850, were anti-women. It was felt they should be banned from male bathing areas, because women from all classes spectated, embarrassing men and spoiling their enjoyment. Although men were similarly guilty of immoral behaviour, women were felt to deliberately attract attention to themselves, and slated for indecent bathing methods. In 1859 it was suggested that if plunging baths were reserved for women one or two days a week, with jacket and trousers provided, it would prevent the annual bout of complaints.[11]

Because "the closeness of near naked bodies smacked of depravity", swimming was only acceptable under the most modest and controlled circumstances.[12] It is not known when women first had access to baths. However, in 1846, following numerous petitions, the private establishment at Balsall Heath was reserved on Wednesdays for teachers and pupils from ladies seminaries. They were promised the greatest attention and strictest

privacy with an elderly and experienced lady in constant attendance.[13] When public facilities were established, the sexes usually had separate departments including men's and women's entrances, and bathing remained strictly segregated until the twentieth century. In 1893 Archibald Sinclair and William Henry claimed few women bathed due to privacy problems, especially at open-water locations, which probably explains why Birmingham's open-air baths were rarely available to women.[14] Similarly, Christopher Upton says mixed bathing was responsible for the very small proportion of female participants, just 1 in 26 in the early years of Birmingham's Public Baths, and that this resulted in women's sessions and plans for a women's bath.[15] However, social conventions would not have countenanced the impropriety of mixed bathing which was illegal under the Baths and Wash-Houses Acts. Furthermore, Upton's assumptions are not substantiated by council minutes, and do not explain why in 1856 up to five times more men used private bath tubs. He may have misinterpreted J.T. Bunce who noted that during 1851-1884, less than 300,000 of 6,794,824 bathers were women, and attributed this to "the want of adequate separate accommodation". Bunce outlined remedial action in the form of three reserved sessions weekly and provision of a women's bath at Kent Street.[16]

7.3 Fashion, Costumes and Society

Social construction of the body is reflected in its adornment, and historically prudery manifests itself most clearly in women's clothing. Early sportswomen wore daily attire, so objection to swimming and bathing might be expected given the inherent potential for exposure and eroticism. Seventeenth-century ladies visiting spas wore long, loose-fitting bathing gowns, which covered and disguised the figure, but when wet were often revealing, clinging to, or floating outwards from the body. Although swimming was a minority sport well into the twentieth century, J. Kennard considers that the bathing costume and riding habit, represent early stages in the evolution of sport-specific wear for

women.[17] As well as contemporary influences, fashion draws on historical design so it was almost inevitable that women's sports clothing incorporated elements of masculine attire. Bloomers were ridiculed when introduced to England in 1850, but were adopted for bathing by the 1860s. Presumably, they were intended to preserve decency, although James Laver's functionalist examination of clothing demonstrates that fashion is little affected by the utility principle. Designers tend to disregard suitability of garments, and wearers are frequently guilty of post-rationalisation. They are convinced their clothes are practical and attractive, yet once a trend becomes passé, collective opinion cannot comprehend its popularity. Functionalism is undermined by human desire for love and leisure, with clothing following the hierarchical and attraction principles demonstrating wealth and status, and sexual appeal, respectively. These processes reflect gender division and lure fashion away from utilitarianism.[18]

A Birmingham woman, born in 1937, recalls being immensely proud of a costume knitted by her mother, "you were the cat's whiskers in those days with a two-piece". It was navy, with red, white and blue yachts on the left cup and opposite hip. A belt with pom-poms held up the trunks. Unfortunately, when she jumped into Green Lane Baths, it proved useless:

> To my horror the costume just sagged, the trunk part dropped to my knees and the bra top dropped to my waist, and the inch wide straps of the bra top was just covering my little nipples.[19]

She remembers her embarrassment and absolute devastation.

Women's early sporting efforts were hampered by inappropriate clothing which restricted the range and speed of mobility. Nineteenth-century dress was voluminous, heavy and emaciating. Reflecting prevailing Romanticism, and the ideology of sentimentality and demure passivity of mind and body, women's costume served to emphasise their dependence. Social construction of the attractive female physique often involved extreme body distortion, with corsetry fashions restricting ventilation and

circulation, and hence aerobic capacity. In the 1870s an 18 inch waist was most desirable, and the hourglass figure created by tight lacing and flared skirts. Although mid-century the crinoline had enabled much lighter garments and increased freedom of movement, the large expanse of skirt was problematic and wearers could only take short steps.[20] The bustle, in use from 1865, exaggerated the bottom, and the Edwardian 'S' shape was created by wearing the absurdly named "Health Corset" which pushed the hips backwards and bosom forwards, straining the lower spine. To maintain hierarchical codes fashion continually changes, reflecting class structures, and working-class women were restricted by corsets long after the middle class derationalised their use. During the last decades of the nineteenth century, a minority of women adopted more rational dress, especially those involved in active recreations, but the bathing costume remained obstinately dysfunctional. Bathers must have found layers of wet clothing, which dragged them down and increased water resistance, excruciatingly uncomfortable and tiring.

By the end of the century, there was greater acceptance of women's participation, and growing distinction between serious athletes and dilettantes. A prominent member of Brighton Ladies' Swimming Club stated real swimmers should prioritise comfort and convenience. She recommended a rather risqué apparel, a sleeveless costume with the top cut so as not to fill with water and knickers above the knees, saying "Bobbers" and "mere paddlers" could uphold elaborate costumes.[21] Although rational sportswear, safer and more action-orientated, was gradually accepted and boosted participation, efficient swim-wear was slow to evolve. A member of Birmingham's Severn Street SC, born in 1911, remembers women wearing standard black club costumes, with an optional quarter skirt across the front, and straps which buttoned to the low back or tied as a halter neck. Initially, these costumes were woollen and very heavy when wet.[22] Major impetus for rationalisation came with the 1930s mania for sun-bathing, when both evening dresses and bathing costumes became backless. Growing liberation greatly influenced recreational swim-wear, and immediately following the Second World War, two-piece outfits became

popular. Despite attempts to ban them at sea-side resorts, they gradually decreased in area, becoming the bikini, but two-piece costumes were not permitted in competitive swimming until the late 1980s, and their usage remains uncommon.

Twentieth-century development of competitive swimming has promoted preoccupation with costume design. Light-weight, form-fitting costumes reduce resistance and drag, increasing efficiency and speed through the water. The availability of lycra from the late 1970s was a breakthrough, and research into new designs is continual:

> People in white coats are preoccupied with breast turbulence and zipper drag in the frantic quest to engineer the thinnest, flattest, lightest, tightest, fastest swimsuit in the history of water travel, a suit of hydrodynamic fabulousness that will win medals, smash records and achieve global swimgarb supremacy.[23]

Interestingly, the current trend is for greater body coverage. Racing laws limit exposure and modern fabrics have proved faster than bare skin. Modern "bodysuits" are not unlike snug-fit versions of the "cover all" costumes worn 100 years ago. The Speedo Aquablade range was closely followed by the Adidas bodysuit which covers everything except head, hands and feet, and in the year 2000 Speedo FastSkin costumes have caused widespread controversy. Developed using biomimetics, the fabric's features are based on shark skin and "control the flow of water and reduce drag". The design gives "the optimum silhouette", increases muscle co-ordination and "maintains the swimmer's grip and feel in the water". In passive drag tests the FastSkin proved 7.5% faster, and tumbling records testify to its success.[24] Not surprisingly, the British Olympic team demanded the choice of wearing it in preference to costumes by Adidas, the official supplier. However, many people are calling for a ban, including Cecil Colwin who states:

> With the advent of full-length body suits, the whole nature of competitive swimming has been changed from a "natural sport", in which the human body interfaces naturally with the water into an "implement sport" in which a body suit intervenes between the body and its natural contact with the water. The suit is an aberration.[25]

Concurrently, fears of skin cancer have encouraged less revealing recreational swim-wear. With retro-fashion the rage, over-skirts have made a comeback, and attraction principles continue to affect participation. In 1931 P.S.A. Dalton stated that in the past, women's chief objection to swimming was the difficulty of drying long hair.[26] The validity of this statement is questionable, but it was undoubtedly a problem. In the 1920s emancipated women cut their hair, and the fashionable bob was advantageous for swimmers. A Thetford girl, keen on swimming, borrowed a shilling to have her plaits cut off.[27] Water is incompatible with elegant hair styles and make up, either deterring participation or encouraging an inefficient, head-up stroke.

7.4 Biological Function and Control of the Female Body

Biological function was a cogent limiting factor to active lifestyles. Male belief in the medical ideology of hysteria and its avoidance by almost perpetual pregnancy was farcical. Many women endured a "continual cycle of nine months pregnancy, followed by six months breast feeding, causing ill health and misery". The plight of married women was highlighted in 1888 by the Social Purity Movement, which contended the immorality of frequent non-consensual intercourse and involuntary childbearing, purchase of women in the marriage market, and that loveless union amounted to prostitution.[28] Abortion was illegal until the 1960s, and self-induced methods or back-street operations were dangerous. In 1934, 20% of maternal deaths were abortion-related. During the nineteenth century absolute rest was recommended for pregnant women, and physical activity abhorred. A photograph circa 1901 (overleaf), shows the Hands sisters of Birmingham in bathing attire, with the eldest seated to disguise her pregnancy.[29] From the late 1920s pre-natal exercise programs were developed, and gentle swimming was recognised as beneficial. Today, aquatic exercise is recommended with specialist classes for pregnant

and post-partum participants, often run in conjunction with midwives, providing a supportive environment for safe exercise.

Agnes, Edith and Florence Hands of Severn Street SC, circa 1901. (Photograph donated by Eunice Wilson, daughter of Edith).

Despite the availability of maternity sports wear, some women find exposure embarrassing and the hormonal changes can greatly affect emotional control, breeding

reluctance to swim. However, in recent years it has been shown that motherhood does not preclude a woman from being a successful athlete, and that pregnancy has training benefits. During the first three months, cardio-respiratory performance is assisted by an increase in red blood cells, muscle capacity improves by up to 30% and raised levels of progesterone aid flexibility. Consequently, there have been allegations of "pregnancy doping". Olga Karasseva, gold medalist gymnast at the 1968 Olympics, revealed to the Sunday Times that she deliberately became pregnant and had an abortion shortly before the games. She was a product of the Soviet System and claimed that during the 1970s females as young as 14 were ordered to have sex with men friends or coaches in an effort to conceive.[30]

Birth control is not a modern phenomena. Despite the lack of major advances in contraception's reliability, and hostility from the medical profession, church and state, English fecundity sustained decline from 1800. Social and economic factors were responsible for this trend, which filtered downwards through the class structure and more slowly so in rural areas. By the early nineteenth century, the rudiments of conception and birth control were understood, but the barrier, chemical and more widely practised natural methods were unreliable. The onus was largely on men, although procreative decisions have greater significance for women. Victorian ideology of "passionlessness", which held that women did not need sexual pleasure, is generally considered a product of social repression and dysfunction, but Nancy Cott suggests that they adopted desexualisation as a means of self-preservation from pregnancy. Unfortunately, the perceived lack of carnal motivation was confused with issues of prudery and undermined them, through physical immobilisation and restricted access to information.[31] Although recommended in the 1927 Board of Education Act, there was a widespread lack of sex education until after the Second World War. Together with the embarrassment of seeking medical advice, this caused women, especially working class, to rely on community networks. Marie Stopes' Motherhood Clinic, which opened in 1921, targeted working-class women but mainly

benefited the middle class who were more likely to heed its advice. Despite growing acceptance of family planning, ignorance of sexuality and contraception persisted, and hence class-differential fertility was marked. The decline in working-class birth rate from the 1920s was probably due to women asserting independence and, most importantly, the shift towards female autonomy of choice and responsibility.

Menstruation, long subject to taboo and cultural violation, has frequently entailed exclusion. This is evident in advice on "Personal Cleanliness" given in the Old Testament.[32] During the nineteenth century, menstruation was perceived as a source of contamination, probably due to increasing public attention to health and personal hygiene, and the association of cleanliness and godliness. Carl Chinn found instances in Birmingham whereby exclusion was ensured by a strip of red rag tied around the wrist, a humiliating practice which persisted in poor areas until the 1920s. Sometimes women were prohibited from talking to the opposite sex or handling meat and, even had medical and practical barriers not existed, menstruating women would have been considered unfit to enter a pool. In the late nineteenth century, Swimming Notes recorded one man's fear of using water in which women had swum as a reason for their exclusion.[33] Social Darwinism was applied to reinforce women's subordinate status, with menses proving they were closer to animals in the evolutionary scale. Mike Featherstone considers that the best explanation for male domination was given in 1989 by Heriter-Auge, who postulated control over life and blood was the fundamental determinant in the relationship between the sexes. He theorised that, unlike men, women experienced blood flow and reproduced, without necessarily wanting to or being able to prevent these happening.[34]

Menses was regarded as a pathological condition which rendered women chronically, physically and mentally weak. The onset of menarche was considered a critical period, associated with high susceptibility to incurable or life-threatening diseases. This approach strongly influenced the attitudes of medical professionals and general public to female exercise. Femininity was thought to be threatened by the impact of exercise on the

reproductive system and pelvic structure, although male genitalia were not deemed endangered. Such notions illustrate male hegemony, and power of the medical profession to dictate the pertinence, morally and physically, of sporting activities. Patrica Vertinsky suggests that physicians attempted to stem demands for emancipation, by invoking scientific authority to assert continued control over women's bodies.[35] Physical activity was condemned during menstruation, and bathing believed hazardous because the blood rushed to wet areas. This seems nonsensical, especially in view of the growing appreciation of the importance of personal hygiene, but generations of all classes were indoctrinated against bathing, hair washing or even getting their wet feet. A woman, born in the 1910s, recalls her teacher warning that a girl had died from taking a cold bath during her period.[36]

The medical profession was predominately male, but several women pioneered investigation into the relationship between exercise and menstrual function, challenging established concepts. As early as 1877, Mary Jacobi of the USA concluded that "sufficient exercise was an important factor in painless menstruation". Later, Dr E.H. Arnold at the New Haven Normal School of Physical Education successfully instigated participation in all exercises except swimming. Alice Clow studied the menstrual function of schoolgirls and in the British Medical Journal, 1928, recommended regular exercise and warm baths. Four years later she reported a high success rate, but widespread resistance to bathing.[37] Nevertheless, in 1938 Stephan Westmann quoted three cases of females, in their early twenties, suffering long-term ill affects from swimming whilst menstruating. He sanctimoniously stated they had "tasted the bitter revenge which nature wreaks upon those who desert the path of the golden mean", an attitude evoking Victorian ideology.[38]

It is extremely difficult to appraise the social impact of menstruation. Although a natural bodily function, its long association with shame, embarrassment and secrecy, makes explicit discussion rare, except in scientific literature. A Birmingham woman, born

in 1937, said ignorance caused her to be traumatised by her first period; she thought she was dying.[39] Euphemisms were widely used, especially "unwell" and "the curse", terms reflecting nineteenth-century thought. "George" was common in the Birmingham area.[40] In 1943 the headmistress of Thetford Girls Grammar School wrote to Town Clerk Blaydon, protesting against charges being introduced for girls spectating:

> In the past, girls who are not able to enter the Baths on any day for reasons of health have attended with their class and followed the instructor.[41]

She requested concession be made because it was "a matter only likely to affect the girls school", but he completely missed the point, replying that he had been unaware non-paying children were using the baths, and any arrangements had to apply to all schools. Reticence also created problems with the marketing and hence commercial development of sanitary products. According to J. and P. Phillips, advertisements were very restricted and women reluctant to read them.[42]

The first sanitary pads were produced around 1880 by Southall, Barlcay and Co in Birmingham, and unsuccessfully promoted by a leading British gynaecologist. The sanitary towel was patented in 1892, but until the 1920s protection generally involved improvisation. Phillips and Phillips state that, during the First World War, French Nurses discovered the value of bandages, which presumably explains why Elizabeth Roberts says post-war, bandage factories switched to producing towels.[43] Dr Whites, one of the first commercial products, were bulky, "beastly uncomfortable because they stretched", and required a belt. Many working-class women continued to rely on layered rags for absorption, which were then soaked in salt water and washed for reuse. One Birmingham woman used terry towelling which had to be "boiled and boiled and soaked and scrubbed", until the Second World War. Another recalls using old cotton sheets, and the embarrassment of school physical education where everyone knew, because you did not swim and navy gym knickers revealed lumps and bumps. By 1937 tampons were available

by mail order from America, and a former competitor and swimming teacher described Tampax as "a godsend".[44] However, both church and medical profession were judgmental and moralistic concerning usage and until 1956 cartons carried this caution:

> Tampax is not suitable for all women: unmarried women and young girls should only use Tampax on the advice of a doctor.[45]

Tampons apparently threatened morals, and stole men's conjugal rights. Phillips and Phillips agree there was considerable resistance to Tampax, on the grounds that it would break the hymen, and aid masturbation and contraception.[46] Hegemony was similarly exercised with regard to the latter, and in the 1970s, despite the intervening freedom culture of the "Swinging Sixties", the Medical Defence Union was still advising practitioners not to fit inter-uterinary devices without a husband's consent.[47]

The absence of discreet, practical protection must have severely restricted women's activities, and menstrual symptoms interfered with training and competitions. Swimming, for which internal protection is essential, was especially affected. Phillips and Phillips consider that pads "hardly solved the problem for athletes and gymnasts, and not at all for swimmers", but agree tampons were the solution. They state that from 1964 gold medals were won, and records set, at all stages of the cycle, but in the early 1970s, 5% of Olympic sportswomen were still discontinuing training.[48] Oral contraceptives introduced during the 1960s enabled control, by delay of menarche, prediction and manipulation of the cycle, and alleviation of its adverse affects. Ability to overcome nature has been a great boon for female competitive swimmers and has helped liberate women. Empirical evidence has repudiated fears about the safety of physical participation, and active lifestyles are employed, especially on television, as a marketing tool for sanitary products. Female performance in swimming is now closer to that of males than in any other sport, and predicted, at least in longer distances, eventually to surpass them.

7.5 Resistance and Lack of Encouragement

Women's sports participation created role conflict, with complete antithesis between the ideological ladylike persona and vigorous activity. Competitive sport was considered the exclusive realm of males, tough and aggressive, presenting early female participants with a dilemma. Adopting a serious attitude labelled them freaks, whilst a light-hearted approach was considered an imitative trick which ruined the game and cited to secure exclusion. In 1874 a 440 yards ladies' swimming race held at Blackrock, County Dublin, was reported in a humorous, superficial manner by the Irish Times, and in 1877 Sylvia's Home Journal compared a woman taking an competitive role to a swan waddling on a bowling green.[49] Robust fitness was considered vulgar, yet sedentary lifestyles had a detraining effect, so early sporting efforts reinforced prejudices. This no-win situation was exacerbated by social conditioning which imbued ambivalence. The inherent benefits of team games were considered unnecessary for women, so these fared worse than individual sports. Femininity was definitely a handicap and participation required compromise, and hence sportswear retained skirts until after the First World War. Aesthetic activities generally prospered more readily, by obtaining assent through concession to popular opinion, with femininity outweighing athleticism and achievement. In the late 1940s and 1950s American Olympian turned film-star, Esther Williams, was seen as an icon. Wearing glamorous costumes and hairstyles, she performed diving, synchronised swimming and other stunts, and was idolised and emulated by young girls. A Birmingham teenager who learnt to "gambol" like Esther, was inspired to save her early wages to buy an expensive Hollywood style costume, pale blue with black stripes, skirt, vogue bra, zip back and black cuffs, for her caravan holiday by the Avon. Its water was filthy, weedy and muddy and the costume proved totally unsuitable.[50] Williams oozed femininity and her work became a vehicle for making swimming attractive and an acceptable recreation for enjoyment and health.

In a few sports, particularly swimming, women's participation met little opposition and rapidly expanded. Rees attributes this to the privacy afforded.[51] Whilst this was enabled by the spread of enclosed, public facilities, Derek Birley suggests a more significant factor, that swimming was a low-status sport with stigma attached to the facilities provided under Baths and Wash-Houses Acts. Hence, women's participation "threatened no entrenched public-school dominated male coterie".[52] Although his extremely negative, dismissive regard for swimming is unsubstantiated and unfounded, it was not a major sport nor character-building team game, so unlikely to have been jealously guarded as an integral part of masculine identity. Douglas Booth agrees, stating that segregation, enclosure and the aquatic medium, which minimised the outward appearance of effort and exertion, legitimised women's participation by creating the impression of a socially non-threatening sport.[53] Denis Molyneux claims Birmingham women successfully broke into a number of sports, including swimming, with tacit male consent, and Karla Henderson views women as "invisible pioneers", explaining the scarcity of evidence as due to participation in different activities. Their opinions are cognate.[54] Recognition of success in long-distance swimming also demonstrates lack of hostility to women's participation. In 1878 Agnes Beckwith received the British Legion of Honour for swimming a twenty mile stretch of the River Thames.[55]

Generally, there was neither much resistance nor encouragement for women's swimming because men and women spent leisure time in separate spheres. A working-class man from Birmingham, a keen swimmer from 1915 said:

> We didn't think about having the women. We used to enjoy ourselves on our own. In the pubs we had our own smoke rooms where the women weren't allowed.[56]

Inclusion was rare because collective male opinion assumed their interests were not shared, with women satisfied to remain within the feminine sphere of home, family and neighbours. At least one Birmingham woman agrees, although her father, born in the

early 1900s, was an exception and liked to include his family. He encouraged his wife and daughter to learn to swim for safety, although none of the couple's many sisters swam.[57]

Although physical and emotional emancipation was achieved through active leisure, women's status remained almost unaffected, and sport was not much employed in the fight for legal and political liberation. Until at least the 1950s, the general consensus was to keep participation:

> Feminine, psychologically and physically undemanding, and directed away from any tendency requiring such masculine traits as endurance, strength and competition.[58]

Kathleen McCrone's study of women's sport at the University of London during the early twentieth century, found that as emphasis on competition increased, swimming for recreation by beginners and semi-skilled declined.[59] J. Park suggests women made little effort to break social controls because sport provided a marriage forum. Likewise, David Bowker views sport as an encounter, and cites the advent of mixed bathing as responsible for the remarkable inter-war expansion of swimming at Ashton-under-Lyne. As stated by Rachel Wilkins, meeting at the baths became part of teenage social life, and Thetford's youth did so, even when it was too cold to swim.[60] Not until the 1960s was sport globally targeted by the women's liberation movement, as one of the remaining male bastions. Interestingly, this coincided with feminist acceptance of birth control, with freedom procured by reliable, oral contraception and legal abortion. According to A. McLaren, women had previously feared that control would remove their already limited status, conferred by maternity.[61]

7.6 Limited Opportunities and Restraints

In the early days of public baths, swimming facilities and teachers for women were very limited. There was little encouragement and lack of role models. In 1859 Harriet

Martineau, authoress and economist, wrote an article highlighting these problems. A response printed in The Times, stated that women could only use one London bath.[62] Where allocated, facilities were typically inferior, and often restricted to small, plunge baths, sometimes used as teaching baths. It is unclear when Birmingham women first gained access, but Kent Street had a plunge, 19 by 13 feet and 5 feet deep, specially fitted for lessons which was probably used until 1867, when its first-class bath was experimentally reserved for women on Thursday mornings.[63] This is supported by contemporary bather returns, which give the number of men's and women's private baths taken, yet only a total for swimming, suggesting that men had sole access to the main baths. From 1883, the plunge at Woodcock Street was used by school girls, and subsequently by the Kryle Society women's recreation classes.[64] Swimming baths reserved for women were often second-class, and hence smaller, shallower and only suitable for beginners. The rationale was that these were best suited to children, likely to attend with women, and the timid, reflective of bigotry towards the "weaker sex". Even Sinclair and Henry who considered provision of women's baths "most essential", recommended third-class dimensions, 60 by 40 feet.[65]

Cost restricted participation because women were more likely to lack disposable income. Their earnings were comparatively low, and few married women worked. Although, many of the working class undertook part time and poorly paid washing and cleaning jobs to supplement the household budget, this rarely allowed them pin money. In contrast, most husbands retained part of their wages for leisure. Polly Bird takes issue of baths department sex discrimination in terms of allocation of staff roles and pay scales, and user policies, with gender-differentiated provision including strict segregation. However, she fails to examine the facts in their temporal and social context whereby bias was standard practice.[66] In 1876 and 1886 wages for Birmingham's female attendants were 10/- and 12/- a week respectively, whereas their male counterparts earned more than double. Despite massive social revolution during the inter-war period, with

increasing employment opportunities for women, discrimination remained rife. In 1931 Birmingham Corporation's refusal to employ married women as swimming instructors was said to be adversely affecting the quality of applicants.[67]

Ironically, admission charges tended to be discriminatory, with women's swimming sessions often at first-class rates, and restrictive programming reduced flexibility of opportunities. In 1885, newspaper correspondence exposed unfair charges in Birmingham's baths. Whilst a girl had to pay 6d, at certain times her brother could attend for just a half-penny. The Baths and Parks chairman said girls could purchase tickets from school at 1d, but this was still twice as much. Similarly, Abingdon women had restricted access to special offers, in spite of receiving generous provision by contemporary standards. They could bathe six days a week, with two afternoons free of charge and competitive rates of 2d at other times, but men had access everyday with four free afternoons, and only paid during the hours 7-8AM and 6-7PM.[68]

Costume hire also disadvantaged women. In 1899 Aston Manor Urban District Council charged 1d for men's drawers and 3d for women's costumes.[69] By 1927 Birmingham's charges were 2d during mixed sessions, but at other times men paid only 1d in first-class and a half-penny in second-class.[70] Few working-class people possessed swim-wear, due to their price and limited usage, and they were likely to be pawned. Hence, the cost of hiring or buying suitable bathing wear greatly affected accessibility for women. Kathleen Dayus of Birmingham describes her first experiences in a borrowed costume resembling "a wet prehistoric bumblebee!" The striped suit was too big and fell off when she had to be rescued. She also records her mother's reaction when her father purchased a second-hand costume so she could learn to swim:

> I could 'ave bought food with that, instead of turnin' 'er 'ead on such silly folderols!

Dayus's efforts to acquire swimming money included running errands and even petty theft.[71] In the 1940s and 1950s some Thetford children retrieved jam-jars from the dump and sold them. Financial restraints were clearly significant to the working class, yet the middle class believed they did not want to swim. A Birmingham born, Cambridge graduate considered Dayus an unusual case, and revealed a total lack of appreciation of working-class circumstances in her comments:

> After all it was only a tuppence or fourpence to swim and they gave you a rather nasty little towel with Birmingham Corporation along the edge, but you usually took your own if you'd got any sense.[72]

Douglas Reid and Molyneux both concluded that in Birmingham cost of swimming was a deterrent. Reid compared the number of bathers with that of visitors to free parks, and in view of the large number of women using them latter, found the small percentage bathing striking; in the 1850s 7.2%, 1860s 5.5% and 1870s 3.9% of bathers were female. By the 1890s women comprised only 5.6% of bathers, despite the previous decade's promotional initiatives and reservations.[73] Local authorities' commercial orientation, expecting public baths to show profits, was the root of the problem. Women's sessions were expensive, and low uptake created a negative spiral. Extensive provision was not an economic proposition, and low demand often perceived as lack of interest, resulting in withdrawal of already limited facilities.

Women, particularly of the working-class, lacked time and energy for sports participation. Economic necessity obliged early entry into the work-force, and married women were constrained by family commitments. Life was a constant struggle, especially as few had access to time-saving domestic technology. Phillips and Phillips agree that benefits from labour-saving devices in the first half of the twentieth century are largely a myth.[74] Although children had relative freedom, daughters were expected to help from a young age and played an important role in sibling care. The impact of life-style is evident from gendered uptake of free bathing for Birmingham's registered unemployed. In 1933,

29% of unemployed men and 0.1% of women, and in 1934, 14% and 0.3% respectively, took advantage.[75] Neil Wigglesworth suggests working-class women opted for passive leisure pursuits, because their daily routine was already physically demanding, and they were aware of cultural, gender barriers.[76] The cinema was very popular, with Hollywood films providing romance, comedy and escapism from life's daily drudgery. Furthermore, pool timetables gave preferential treatment to working men, especially at weekends, so women's sessions tended to be inaccessible. Although in some urban areas it was theoretically possible to swim regularly with baths open to ladies on different days, travel and time were difficulties. In 1903 Birmingham Baths and Parks Committee was persuaded to offer second-class facilities on Wednesday afternoon, half-day for the girls working in shops and warehouses. The previous slot, Tuesday at 6PM, had proved inconvenient for "the class desired to accommodate", and who were unable to afford first-class sessions.[77] Women needed to be highly motivated to overcome the economic, temporal and cultural barriers to swimming, and female officers and instructors of clubs were generally single, and resigned on marriage. Molyneux agrees that despite growing acceptability of participation, it was limited to those with spare time and money.[78]

Restrictive programming would not have enhanced the promotion of women's swimming, and during the nineteenth century supply generally exceeded demand. Equality principles require sufficient opportunities and encouragement for both sexes rather than necessarily equal amounts of provision, so women's limited facilities did not necessarily constitute discrimination. However, their participation saw major expansion in the early twentieth century, coinciding with growth of school swimming and sport in general. Public facilities proved inadequate and there was reluctance to allocate women additional time. In 1914 Birmingham finally had the women's bath first proposed in 1883, which Upton incorrectly states was never built. The project had been deferred due to council parsimony, following massive capital investment during the era of Joseph Chamberlain and the civic gospel. Raised again in 1899 by the Birmingham Branch of the National

Union of Women Workers of Great Britain and Ireland, the issue finally received serious attention in 1910. Remarkable increases in women's annual usage from 8,000 to 46,000 between 1902-1903 and 1910-1911, caused frequent overcrowding, and repeated demands for additional facilities. These could not be met without inconvenience and dissatisfaction to male clientele, and consequently Kent Street Women's Bath opened on 30th March 1914 with a paid female instructor.[79] Elsewhere, additional time was gradually allocated, although timetables remained disproportionate until the Second World War, when mixed bathing became general. In 1923 when Kings Heath Baths opened, men had 26 hours of first and second class per week, and women only 11 and 10 hours respectively.[80]

7.7 Women's Early Participation

The earliest record of encouragement found by Nicholas Orme, was in William Percey's, The Compleat Swimmer, (1658).[81] There is little evidence of women bathing prior to the seventeenth century, and many spa treatments did not involve immersion. Shirley Reekie claims women were swimming prior to the Industrial Revolution, but only a minority before 1850.[82] At this time there was growing emphasis on health and safety, and provision of public amenities, and in 1859 an article in The Times stated everyone should learn to swim, women and children included. In 1875, the Irish Sportsman editorialised similar views. It scorned the notion that concerns for nakedness should prevent one from swimming, and recommended the prudery regarding the fair sex be dropped.[83] Although, moderate exercise for women had long been promoted by the medical profession its advice had been ignored, and by the late 1870s the negative effects of sedentary life-styles and need for exercise were evident and being emphasised. G.J. Romanes said habitual neglect led to enfeeblement, and the Medical Press and Circular indicated the advantage of female bodies for swimming.[84] The principle that women should swim was accepted,

but tangible action limited, with declared support coming mainly from the education sector. MacGregor, a key figure of the London Schools Swimming Club, which instructed 1,500 boys yearly, said hundreds of London women were learning and more would if teachers were available.[85] In Birmingham, circa 1880, Wilson delivered a paper entitled, "The Physical Education of Girls" at Handsworth High School for Girls, stating swimming was:

> A downright necessity, for it calls all the muscles into an unusual activity, and is exercise calculated to make girls less timid and afraid of danger.[86]

Similarly, at the 1883 opening of Monument Road Baths, George Dixon, later chairman of the school board, expressed hope for increased facilities for women and girls.

Birmingham women appear to have had access to main pools from 1867. As expected, sessions were popular averaging 50 bathers. Success must have been enduring, as in successive years two additional mornings were reserved, and books of first-class tickets extended to women. By 1880, the bathing-season advertisement stated reservations were available "as usual", and that the desirability of ladies developing an interest in learning to swim was equal to men's.[87] During the next few years time was allocated to women at the four existing establishments, and demand continued to grow. In 1881 some Handsworth ladies requested a first-class day at Northwood Street. Two years later, Edgbaston ladies asked for at least three sessions including Saturday morning, and the school board wanted time for girls. In 1884 the council expressed hope that women would soon be able to bathe daily, and proposed construction of a bath for their exclusive use. During this period approximately 4-5,000 women swam annually in Birmingham, and expansion continued into the 1890s spurred by developments in school and club swimming.[88] One woman, Mrs Smith, attended the public meeting of householders called to discuss Thetford's Bathing Station proposal, which was implemented in 1890.[89] Its instigator, Headmaster Reed of the Grammar School, had

obtained a copy of Abingdon Bathing Place's timetable, which had extensive time for ladies. Although there is no definite evidence of their participation at Thetford prior to the 1920s, if a similar program was adopted they would have been well catered for.

7.8 Swimming for Schoolgirls

The late nineteenth-century development of physical education for girls gave major impetus to swimming, by generating the skills and motivation for participation. Despite the dearth of suitable facilities, from 1875 schoolgirls and women teachers were trained by London Schools Swimming Club, and MacGregor was instrumental in swimming's inclusion in the Education Code. As a member of London School Board, he is likely to have been largely responsible for its commitment to swimming during the early 1890s, and provision of lessons from 1892. Girls took part in annual school swimming sports from at least 1894, and according to McCrone 35,000 were taught in 1910.[90] Cheap tickets were available to Birmingham schoolgirls in 1874, but the offer does not appear to have been taken up, probably because the school authority was expected to provide bathing dresses, at a time when funding of sports was not permissible. This may be why in 1887, a London class had costumes made by parents, from donated material.[91] Some Birmingham girls did swim from at least 1881 when the school board was granted use of Kent Street, and Woodcock Street Baths for several hours each weekday. Admission cost 1d, as did hiring a costume. By 1883, the schools swimming included the fee-paying Edgbaston High School for Girls and two grammar schools. Schools' attendance may have been inhibited by the baths department requirement for a teacher to every 10 girls, whereas a large number of boys could be admitted [92] During the mid 1880s the School Board engaged a swimming mistress and offered lessons to teachers willing to be taught the art of swimming and impart skills to their pupils. This development was precocious, but great disparity persisted between boys' and girls' provision in London and

Birmingham. Unfortunately, the latter was less successful in attracting female teachers and from 1897 girls' elementary schools discontinued swimming until 1901, when the school board, keen to promote it, gained approval for attendance at small plunge or teaching pools at the same half-penny rate as boys. Although they received superior facilities and were more likely to have exclusive use, the scheme proved successful by 1904, when 801 girls swam. Several years later, scholars passes were extended to girls and in 1912 professional instructors employed for them.[93]

The free passes were probably first awarded in 1908. In this year 32 successes were recorded, equivalent to only 2% of the boys' total. In the following years, growth was extremely rapid, reaching 1,045, comparable to 24% in 1913, and 35% by 1915. Although girls were gaining relative ground, demonstrating enthusiasm and commitment, the gender differential suggests considerable inequality of opportunity. Restricted water time would limit instruction, thus reducing the likelihood of success and advantage of winning a free pass. Additionally, girls generally had domestic chores and less free time than boys. Social factors may have operated to create disinterest and a lack of appreciation of the relevance of swimming, by girls and their parents. However, a favourable number of schools were involved and, as success rather than attendance figures are recorded, distortion may be occurring. Originally, girls were required to pass the same test as boys, so physical condition was an important factor, especially as biological differences were exaggerated by gendered lifestyles. There were also psychological implications. With a limited tradition of success, girls and their teachers may have lacked confidence to enter for the test. In 1913, of 114 schools participating, 50 had zero renewals and a further 46, five or less, suggesting recent entry into the scheme.[94] Tradition and role models are crucial for instilling self-belief. In 1925 Gertrude Erdle created a sensation by becoming the first woman to swim the Channel and smashing the men's record by two hours. Her success was particularly significant because unlike most heroines she was working class, albeit heavily subsidised by wealthy patrons. During

the next six months, six more females succeeded, whereas all previous attempts had failed. As early as 1900 the Viennese Lady Champion swam 20 miles but was defeated when the tide turned.[95]

Thetford girls probably swam prior to the 1922 bathing station refurbishment. One, born circa 1915, says the water meadows were the children's summer playground and all learnt to swim at an early age. Although no entries were received, the Baths and Parks Committee included events for women at the re-opening ceremony, and Mayor Brown said everyone should learn to swim and hoped ladies would use the pool. However, he also commented that it was a real acquisition, especially for the boys and young men attending the town's schools, suggesting participation by the girls' schools was expected to be limited. On the contrary, there was a strong tradition of swimming at the girls' grammar school from at least the early 1920s, and although the council school did not participate until the following decade, encouragement meant local girls were more active than boys. The earliest reference to swimming in the Girls' Council School Log Books was the first sports in 1937. Subsequently, intermittent mention is made to lessons, tests and demonstrations by visiting county physical training advisors.[96] Photographs of girls' school swimming lessons are on pages 118, 157 and 162.

7.9 Women's Clubs and Instructors

Social restraints and lack of opportunities considerably delayed development of women's competitive swimming and clubs. Men were involved in racing by the late eighteenth century whereas ladies' events only began in the 1870s. Early events include a challenge race between Misses Beckwith and Saigeman at Lambeth in 1879, and a mile championship for a £200 prize at Devonshire Baths, Eastbourne in 1883, for which the winning time was 35 minutes 34.5 seconds.[97] Men's clubs emerged from the 1850s but Birmingham-based Leander Ladies', formed 1877, is believed to be England's oldest

women's club. In the last two decades of the century, improved facilities enabled Birmingham's female swimmers to assert independence, and further clubs were established. The second, Birmingham Ladies', founded in 1884, rapidly became the main club. According to Molyneux, by 1890 it met weekly, and that year an ex club captain swam four miles at Tenby, and a 14 year old member more than two miles at Kent Street Baths. This indicates high standards and three years later the club's second annual sports were held. Members included the Molesworth sisters, who in the 1920s swam in numerous galas and displays, and one was an Olympian. In neighbouring Aston, a ladies' class was started within a few months of baths opening in 1892, and a club formed the following year. By this time, several local men's clubs included ladies' races at galas, but not until 1909, at Moseley Road Baths, was this reciprocated.[98]

During the 1860s Birmingham's swimming instructors included at least one lady, Mrs Tomlinson. When she and her husband resigned in 1890, following 29 years service, her successor was Miss Hoskins, secretary of the Kent Street based club.[99] In this decade women coaches were operational in Birmingham and Aston, although Molyneux considers women's sports participation was a twentieth-century phenomena, consequent of growing emancipation and characterised by assertion of independence and rights of governance. He links the development of female teachers and coaches with Grundyism which frowned upon women being coached by men, and as indication that women no longer needed an all-powerful male.[100] This seems unlikely because of decency issues, and the furore of the 1910s and 1920s when some women's clubs appointed male instructors on the grounds that women lacked the strength to coach elite swimmers, and there were none able to teach life-saving. Furthermore, Birmingham Association of Swimming Clubs claimed most participants preferred a male. One male coach per club was eventually authorised, but not until 1941 when many school masters had been called up did women even take boys' sessions.[101]

There appears to have been considerable support for women's competitive swimming at national level. In 1901 the ASA instituted a 100 yards championship, with a perpetual silver vase, to be held annually in different areas of the country.[102] It is significant that the ASA encompassed women's swimming from an early stage, because most governing bodies operated exclusion. Parallel bodies usually developed, with subsequent recognition or affiliation. By 1911 the ASA actively promoted swimming for both sexes, and at the 1908 London Olympics had been instrumental in forming an international governing body, Federation Internationale de Natation Amateur (FINA). According to Allen Guttman, it made women's swimming a priority, and events were included at the next Games. However, the proportion of female Olympians was minute, 2.24%, and even by 1980 was only 20.68%. U. Simri considers FINA to be the most liberal organisation with respect to women's participation, and that it is largely responsible for the almost total equality experienced in swimming today.[103] In many sports, the battle for recognition continues.

7.10 Middle-Class Crusaders

Organisation of sport and development of clubs was a middle-class product, strongly influenced by educational developments. From the 1860s the new wave of girls' schools adopted the concepts of physical culture applied to boys, and middle-class women began to assert their physical frustrations, needs and aspirations. The development of higher education for women was an important influence, instigated in 1869 by Emily Davies. The university students had daily time allocated for health and fitness training which was considered essential for them to cope with studying, and as few could swim they were encouraged to use the local baths. In 1900 Girton College, Cambridge, had an open-air bath, and the year after formed a club. An 1938-1941 undergraduate, who won a blue for swimming against Oxford, recalls using the pool and, during the winter, an indoor one at

the nearby Lees School. River bathing was popular amongst students, and she enjoyed canoeing or punting up to Byron's Pool for a picnic and swim with her boyfriend. According to McCrone, inter-college and inter-varsity races and water polo matches commenced in 1907, an unofficial inter-collegiate championship was held in 1909, and by 1914 Birmingham was competing against Durham, Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester Universities. Sonja Lilienthal's study of Sydney University, Australia, noted similar effects from emergent university education on sports participation.[104]

From the mid nineteenth century, middle and upper-class women were frequently involved in sport as spectators, patrons and sponsors, providing the venue, refreshments and valuable prizes which stimulated competition. Neil Tranter believes this assiduous patronage, which continued until the Second World War, was highly significant in the development of organised sport.[105] Towards the turn of the century, the healthy, athletic female became a socially-acceptable figure and women took an increasingly active role in sports such as cycling, swimming and cricket. It became fashionable to claim achievements, and the expanding media further promoted participation. Swimming featured in Every Girl's Book of Sport - Occupation and Pastime published in 1897, and from the second issue of Womanhood, January 1899, two to four pages were devoted to "Women's Sports", covering activity in at least 30 including swimming. By 1905 several magazines carried features such as "The Sportswoman" and "The Outdoor Girl", and the 1911 edition of The Encyclopaedia of Sport has a page on "Swimming and Diving Hints for Women".[106] However, even as spectators, sport remained rare amongst working-class women, who were constrained by time, money, education and cultural prejudice. Had barriers not existed they might have led women's sporting revolution because, as Chinn states, their daily lives fostered physical endurance, self-reliance and independence, and in these respects they were rare pioneers of social progress.[107]

7.11 Swimming for Working-Class Women

Few working-class women swam prior to the First World War. Some girls had school lessons and a few progressive employers made recreational provision. Cadbury's did so from 1890, and circa 1900 extended this to female workers. Under 16s had compulsory swimming and gymnastic lessons during factory hours, and all women were encouraged to learn swimming, diving and life-saving. In 1905 a large ladies' bath opened at the works, and within four years 700 learnt to swim. From July 1906 an annual Girls' Swimming Sports Day was held. Members of the ASA affiliated club competed at local and county level, and in 1912, at the All-England Ladies' Competition, organised by the RLSS.[108]

Works-based schemes were probably the most important early source of sport for women, and during the First World War caused remarkable expansion in their swimming. Munitions factories were mandated to appoint welfare officers, and in the Birmingham area they established swimming clubs and achieved a general increase in women's facilities. Between 1912 and 1917, women's clubs rose from 10 to 22, whereas men's declined from 31 to 28. Early in the war the latter had boomed, but from 1916 membership drastically decreased, presumably because of call-up and casualties.[109] Immediately post-war women's participation virtually equalled men's and, although dominance was regained by the early 1920s, women maintained substantial involvement. In 1930, 32 of Birmingham's 73 swimming clubs were women's. Two years later Sparkhill Ladies had the city's highest club-night attendance, averaging 50.9, and Lucas Ladies the highest weekly average at 78.2. Ladies' water polo was also a growth sport from the early 1920s, despite resistance and alarmist claims that it was carcinogenic.[110]

Contemporary interest in women's health and beauty helped promote swimming as an invigorating pastime, and by the 1930s there was growing government support for sport and recreation. Propaganda included sponsored films, evening classes, and coaching

schemes, efforts which increased with threat of rearmament. Birmingham had free RLSS classes for both sexes. In 1933, The Bulletin of Tubes Ltd, Sports and Social Club, exalted the delights of attending the ladies' swimming club on a hot summer's day, and in addition to physical and psychological benefits, there was emphasis on group affiliation.[111] In the early years of Birmingham Municipal Employees SC, founded circa 1928, ladies were active, and by 1930 their section had joined Birmingham and District Works and Business Houses Team League. In 1937 a member competed with 20 men in the annual river race at Winnal-on-Severn.[112] Nevertheless, comparatively few working-class women swam, especially older ones, and even in a Birmingham family with long-standing involvement with swimming, the mother wouldn't even put her toe in. Similarly, a Thetford man, born 1920, said his mother's inability to swim was the norm, although some supervised their offspring from the bank and fathers bathed at weekends.[113] Culture and socialisation of mores, strongly affect role performance, and it is likely that many women, especially amongst the working class, did not perceive active leisure as relevant to their lifestyles. Hence, limited participation in swimming was as much a conscious decision as due to exclusion, although this perspective can operate as disinterest or opposition by others. Such tyranny, effected by members of the same sex, could be argued as indirectly resulting from male patriarchy.

7.12 Family and Mixed Bathing

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the continental fashion for mixed sea bathing was gradually accepted, albeit mainly in family groups. However, some resorts had bathing machines into the 1930s, and mixed bathing at public baths was technically illegal until 1925. During the first decade of the twentieth century, a few pools experimented with family bathing, followed in the 1910s by large corporations including Birmingham and Manchester. Prudery ensured that sessions were strictly regulated, with additional

costume requirements, curtains shielding the entrance to changing rooms, bathers only permitted to leave the water on the side designated for their sex, and spectators prohibited. Birmingham introduced family bathing in 1915, and Thetford must have had some after the bathing station's 1922 re-furbishment as family season tickets were available for 10/- and there were six cubicles for each sex, in addition to the open-plan changing room.[114] The 1928 photograph (p.125), shows a mixed session in progress.

Mixed bathing was an immediate success and gave additional opportunities to women. Under the guise of family bathing, men had to be accompanied by a female family member, which would have increased the number of women swimming. John Hargreaves reports that ASA Champion Rawlins, took his mother when training.[115] By 1918 more Birmingham women attended mixed sessions than men, despite the fact that overall only half as many bathed. Mixed sessions expanded throughout the inter-war period, and particularly during the Second World War when conditions meant it was more practical, and social changes made it acceptable. Apart from the four single-sex school reservations, by 1943 Thetford's timetable was all mixed bathing.[116] In Birmingham those pools remaining open had mainly mixed bathing, and after 1944 bathers were rarely recorded by sex, mixed clubs became commonplace and by the 1960s few were for ladies only. Hence, it is impossible to accurately trace the sexes post-war participation patterns, but information from General Household Surveys shows that between 1977 and 1996 adult swimming doubled and women's participation rates surpassed men's. The sport is now one of few where the sexes participate in approximately equal numbers.[117] Ironically, to cater to religious denominations and provide equal opportunities in a modern, multi-cultural society, ladies-only sessions have been re-introduced. Preferred by those who are body conscious, or seeking to avoid sexual harassment and boisterous bathers, these additional sessions can bias programming towards women.

Notes - Chapter 7: Women's Swimming

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CHAPTER 8: OVERVIEW OF PART III

The development of women's swimming started in the mid nineteenth century. Progress gradually gained momentum and remarkable increases in participation occurred during the first two decades of the twentieth century. During the inter-war period growth continued, but the numbers involved were still considerably fewer than men. After the Second World War expansion accelerated, and more women than men now swim, with re-introduction of ladies' sessions weighting provision in their favour. Women of all ages and social backgrounds have participated, but prior to the First World War it was mainly the middle-class, and swimming generally has greater appeal to younger women.

The biological and social body was the fundamental restraint to women's participation. They lacked control over their bodies, and pregnancy and menstruation inhibited swimming, especially when the effects were reinforced by myth and lack of health education. Biological function was the root of women's socially determined role, and the hindering concept of femininity. Male patriarchy demanded modesty and furthermore women imposed prudery to obtain status. This restricted opportunities because of the difficulties ensuring decency. Outdoor bathing lacked privacy, and the availability of indoor facilities was limited. Prudery may partially have been a reaction to women being blamed for indecency at sea-side resorts during the first half of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, swimmers were hampered by the feminine, early bathing attire, and other beauty factors, hair and make-up, were incompatible with participation. From the turn of the century, serious participants adopted a more rational approach

Cost was a major deterrent for working-class women. Timing further discouraged participation, especially if travelling was involved, and they may have lacked energy because of their arduous lives. Their nineteenth-century, middle and upper-class counterparts led sedentary, detraining lifestyles and would have been in poor physical

condition. Working-class participation was comparatively delayed because education and social change took longer to reach them, and thus biological function, clothing and social attitudes were enduring hindrances. Overall, women's swimming received little tangible encouragement, and role models and tradition were lacking. Although facilities were limited, and only gradually and grudgingly expanded, discrimination does not appear deliberate until the early twentieth century, when general expansion of participation was placing public baths under strain. Allocation of additional women's facilities was repeatedly refused because of the potential detriment to male clientele.

Swimming is one of few activities in which women gained early participation, against a background of gendered sport. Combined with established notions of a woman's cultural role, this created an ideology of exclusion and resistance, yet women's swimming met little resistance from either sex. Tacit male consent was given because it was an individual activity rather than character-building team game, and hence not seen as a male preserve. Additionally, its aesthetic qualities enabled preservation of femininity, a necessary facade for participation, and use of sport as sexual encounter. From the mid nineteenth century, in the face of growing concern for public health and safety, swimming was widely accepted as a healthy and rational activity. Even the medical profession recommended it as a means of the moderate exercise, appropriate for women.

Probably the most proactive influence was education. Girls' private schools and women's university colleges developed similar emphasis on physical training to male establishments. Swimming was particularly encouraged and included in state physical education from an early stage. School lessons provided impetus for future participation, and works-based schemes were important. In the late nineteenth century some progressive employers made provision, but major expansion was consequent of the First World War when munitions factories were legally obliged to cater for employee welfare. Government support continued during the inter-war period, with increasing emphasis in the 1930s because of the need to prepare the nation for war.

Social change facilitated expansion of swimming. Emancipation, starting towards the end of the nineteenth century when women began to assert their independence, was accelerated by the social impact of World Wars. Women's new-found confidence and status helped boost participation. More importantly, changing social attitudes permitted the introduction of mixed bathing which further increased numbers, especially the initial family group requirement. During the Second World War mixed bathing became the norm, markedly increasing women's opportunities. Another positive influence was women's growing corporeal control. Particularly pertinent to swimming was the development of tampons and reliable birth-control, including a shift towards female responsibility for protection. From the 1960s the pill enabled women to overcome biological function and hence natural participatory barriers.

The organisation of women's swimming clubs from the 1880s was indicative of increasing participation and performance standards. Competition stimulated these, and significantly there was early support from the ASA. In the first decade of the twentieth century, it was instrumental in forming the international governing body, FINA, whose liberal views gained female swimmers entry to the 1912 Olympics, and have enabled the almost compete equality, still uncommon in sport. The development of club and competitive swimming led to the emergence of role models, which raise standards by inspiring participation and creating belief in potential achievements. The gap between men's and women's times is rapidly closing, and in longer events, women with their physiological advantages are predicted to surpass men. Phillips and Phillips aptly conclude that "women have disproved all the old mans' tales".[1]

Notes - Chapter 8: Overview of Part III

1 Phillips and Phillips, "History from Below", p.129.

PART IV

CLUB SWIMMING

IV.1 Synopsis

Part IV examines the nineteenth and twentieth century development of swimming clubs, within the context of the organisation of sport. Swimming developed early and a national organisation existed, albeit with very limited influence, as early as 1837. From mid century there was re-development as an amateur sport and in 1869 the Amateur Swimming Association was instigated. Clubs emerged from the 1850s, and the multitude of factors responsible for their inception and progress are discussed. Facilities, closely followed by financial issues, have been found most important, and both are linked to club relationships with local authorities. The nature of the club scene is revealed, and its complete transformation since the Second World War theorised. Modern clubs are youth dominated and competitively focused, whereas previously the membership was primarily adult with social and recreative objectives. Topics of particular interest are gala structures including commercialisation and spectatorship, decency and mixed bathing, and the role of works-based clubs.

IV.2 Introduction

Since the Second World War the concept of a swimming club (SC) and its aims have been transformed. Modern clubs are youth dominated and competitively orientated. Their focus is intensive training with most concentrating on short-distance racing, although some offer instruction. Membership imbues social benefits, but performance takes priority, and clubs tend to be large and anonymous. Originally, they were primarily social and recreative organisations offering a range of activities, particularly the opportunity to learn to swim and participate at affordable rates. Competition was limited but keen and helped boost interest. There were numerous small groups which often arose from a common background or interest, creating a strong sense of identity and close association with the local community. Hence, galas attracted strong spectator support. There is a lack of research pertaining to the factors responsible for the dramatic change, or relating to the inception and progress of sports clubs, but the nineteenth-century origins of the organisation of sport and impact of amateurism are widely recognised.

Competitive swimming developed from the late eighteenth century. In 1837 a National Swimming Society was established and organised events, although its influence was minimal outside London. Professional sport was subject to problems including gambling, drinking and corruption which, combined with media focus on sublime or tragic events, brought swimming into disrepute. From the mid nineteenth century, largely due to public school influence, sports were purged and re-developed as amateur, resulting in a rapid spread of clubs, leagues and organisations including national governing bodies. In 1869 one of the nation's first sports governing bodies, later known as the ASA, was formed. It is the oldest governing body of swimming world-wide and was instrumental in the inauguration of FINA, the international governing body. Within this context it is possible to examine the development, and activity of swimming clubs during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A multiplicity of factors are involved; availability of

suitable facilities and finances are fundamental, with religion, war, decency, changing motives and attitudes, also critical.

CHAPTER 9: CLUB SWIMMING

9.1 The Organisation of Sport and Competitive Swimming

The pattern of organised sport in England was set during the nineteenth century, particularly the latter half. Organisational roots were generally middle class as this expanding social group had access to education, and the economic and temporal viability for participation. Former public school pupils indoctrinated with sports culture, exported activities to the towns, provinces and empire, and established clubs. Improved communication links, particularly the railways, helped open up competitive sport by enabling more distant fixtures. Efficient, affordable transport also increased working-class involvement as players and spectators, especially after the 1878 Factories and Workshops Act reduced hours and created a weekly half-day holiday. Expansion of participation in this social sector was enhanced by a growth in real earnings, and sport at local club level became established across the class spectrum. Increasing numbers of participants and competitions created a need for central organisation and control of activities, and competitive structure and codification. National governing bodies were formed including the Football Association (1863), Rugby Football Union (1871), Amateur Athletics and Amateur Boxing Associations (1880), and Amateur Rowing Association (1882).

Public school influence was immense, and the gentleman founders of governing bodies formed stringent rules and embraced a staunch ethos of amateurism, developed from the philosophies of athleticism and Muscular Christianity. The fundamentally middle-class organisations fought for purity, distancing their activities from pre-existing forms considered inferior and distasteful. Working-class motives were different; pursuit of recreation and entertainment, and to a lesser extent employment and social mobility, through sport. A commercial perspective had long existed in sport and leisure, and was increasingly exploited in the capitalist, post-industrial society. Commercialisation fuelled

participation, by providing new opportunities and intensifying the sporting debate. The result was a complex political struggle between amateurism and professionalism, marked by social-class structures. Its impact pervaded all sports and some became divided, with enduring influence. The effects on the national sports of football, rugby and cricket are well documented, but as Neil Wigglesworth notes, swimming also experienced strict cultural demarcation.[1]

Competitive swimming developed early. The ASA superseded the National Swimming Society (1837) and British Swimming Society (1840). The former had organised races and promoted the sport, but did not survive the 1840s, and the latter aimed to promote health and cleanliness, and provide free instruction. Both were focused on London, where open-water races had been common for some years. The Times reported events from the late eighteenth century and with increasing frequency by the 1820s. Typical examples are an 1791 race from Westminster to London Bridge for an eight guinea prize, and in 1824 two men swam across The Serpentine and back for a wager of four sovereigns. Although newspapers reported results and noted outstanding feats, they gave disproportionate attention to novel or tragic occurrences. The 1791 race winner was conveyed to a public house, and within half an hour had consumed a fatal quantity of gin. Similarly, the 1824 event ended in disaster, as one competitor suffered cramp and drowned.[2] Such sensationalised incidents must have marred the sport's reputation, although they did not stop its development. By the 1840s swimming events were frequent, and substantial prizes awarded, often purses full of money. Thus, swimming developed along professional lines, with the associated scourge of gambling and related problems of cheating, bribery and corruption. Endemic in contemporary sport, these brought disrepute.

On 7th January 1869 a new body, the Metropolitan Swimming Clubs Association pledged to purge and develop swimming. Progress was impeded by acrimonious debate, mainly concerned with defining amateurism, and its activities were predominantly

London-based. As northern counties permitted competition between amateurs and professionals, there was friction and geographical divide. However, as membership spread rules could be enforced and by 1886 the governing body, now known as the ASA, was well established. Its story from 1869-1994 is documented by Ian Keil and Don Wix.[3] The modern organisation has five districts - Midland, Northern, North Eastern, Southern and Western, through which the county associations, and in turn clubs, affiliate, with a progressive competitive structure. The Midland District, one of the largest and oldest, encompasses both Birmingham and Thetford. England's example was followed globally and the ASA was instrumental in FINA's 1908 inauguration. The precocious organisation of swimming is evident when, using Jim Sharlott's study, comparisons are made with athletics, which developed along similar lines. Sharlott dates athletics clubs to the 1860s, whereas swimming clubs existed at least a decade earlier. The Amateur Athletic Club, formed in London (1866), became the Amateur Athletic Association (1880). Swimming possessed a regulatory body from 1837, and by 1886 the ASA had overall control. It quickly developed a district and county structure, whereas the first county athletics association was formed in 1918, and the International Amateur Athletics Federation in 1912.[4]

The early, professional development of English swimming is documented by Thierry Terret. He notes that in the nineteenth century, successful swimmers assumed the teaching roles traditionally taken by river people. Other sources of income for swimming professionals included promoting aquatic shows, at which betting was common, employment at public baths, and writing for the emergent specialised press.[5] Although often perceived to have selfish, pecuniary motives, professional instructors were vital to swimming's early development. Ironically, by instigating swimming matches and clubs, they benefited the amateur swimming movement which outlawed professionalism. Birmingham's first professional was Mr Dalton who gave lessons and exhibitions at Kent Street Baths from 1857. The Baths and Wash-Houses Committee was supportive and

donated competition prizes. It believed that Dalton's service would provide increased opportunities and hence greater proficiency for bathers, together with additional publicity and income for the corporation baths. Keil and Wix state this system of freelance teachers associated with particular pools was widespread.[6]

BIRMINGHAM CITY BATHS, KENT STREET.

Prof. & Miss ROSE BATES,

Teachers of Swimming.

TERMS:

Single Lesson, 2/-; Six Lessons, 8/6;

Breast Stroke, Full Tuition, 21/-

The above charges are exclusive of the charges made for admission to the Baths

All Fees payable in Advance.

Special Terms to Schools, etc.

BATHING CAPS, 1/- to 3/6

BATHING COSTUMES, 2/6 and 3/6

A Private Teaching Bath at Kent Street for Ladies and Children. Admission, 4d.

Private Address: The Evergreens, 81, Murdock Road, Handsworth

Business card for Professor and Miss Rose Bates, swimming teachers in Birmingham from 1889 and 1904 respectively, until circa 1918.[7] (Carl Chinn Archives).

By the early 1860s, Birmingham had a number of active teachers. This decade saw the establishment of clubs including Birmingham, Northwood Street and Birmingham Athletic. There was at least one female instructor, Mrs Tomlinson, and Leander Ladies, founded in 1877, claimed to be England's oldest women's club. This is probably true, as the earliest related reference in The Times is of the captain of London-based Norwood Ladies presenting prizes at an 1890 gala. The new Birmingham clubs organised galas and

individual promoters seem to have ceased in the 1880s, coinciding with the re-development of swimming as an amateur sport.[8] Professional teaching continued but attitudes were changing. In Birmingham, instructors were self-employed, tendering for the right to teach in corporation baths, but regulation proved increasingly difficult, especially as formal qualifications were not available before 1899, nor generally statutory until much later. In 1924 only three of 14 applicants in Birmingham had ASA teaching awards. Three years later, the public were complaining of high charges, and the corporation decided that the influence and motives of professionals were undesirable. The tendering system was abolished and instructors employed to provide an improved, yet cheaper service, benefiting both public and departmental interests.[9] Until Thetford's first indoor pool opened in 1967, instruction was given by school teachers or the attendant. The new secondary modern pool had an experienced, albeit unqualified instructor, Tony Hegarty, who started a swimming club.

The organisation of sport upheld amateurism as "good, wholesome and worthwhile" against "primitive, unworthy and dangerous" professionalism. However, definitions of what constituted an amateur were variable and subject to intense debate. Most sports based their rulings on the definition used for athletics in the 1870s, which stated an amateur was:

> Any person who has never competed in any open competition or for public money or for admission money or with professionals for a prize and who has never taught or assisted in the pursuit of athletic exercises as a means of livelihood.[10]

The development of swimming under amateur auspices began in the 1860s. In 1863 an amateur mile championship was instigated in the River Thames, and London-based Otter SC, founded circa 1869 coinciding with the Metropolitan Association, claimed to be the oldest amateur club.[11] Spread of amateurism was aided by the generalised nature of many contemporary clubs. Competition results in The Times show, that during the last quarter

of the century, members of athletics, gymnastics, rowing and even football societies were active in swimming. Furthermore, athletics, rowing and swimming, the bastions of amateur sport, had almost identical policies and recognised each others' bans.

Purportedly designed to maintain the physical and mental values of sports participation, amateurism operated primarily to preserve class exclusivity and superiority. Professional sportsmen, generally working class, were deemed to have an unfair advantage and, as public school legacy equated sporting success with military prowess and masculine virility, their participation threatened social order. However, in open competitions, amateurs were permitted to compete against professionals and when victorious gained considerable acclaim. Birmingham SC held an All-England Open Championships for ladies and gentlemen at its annual sports in 1914. The handicapping system advantaged the amateur champion with a head start.[12] Unfortunately, there were frequent problems with mixed competition, regarding receipt of prizes by amateurs and professionals masquerading as amateurs. In the 1890s Otter SC was boasting its prominence and that membership was, "limited to amateurs whilst Illex was limited to rowing men". This suggests the latter was open to the working classes and its formation circa 1859, ten years prior to Otter, further implies professional origins.[13] At club level, selective membership was easily effected via entry requirements, and physical and economic barriers. Although London SC offered free instruction, to non-swimmers unable to afford a professional, tickets were acquired by written application enclosing a stamped addressed envelope, thus discriminating against the illiterate and really needy.

Inclusive competition was limited, affecting standards and validity. Paradoxically, amateurism excluded some performers who upheld the classical ideals of sport. K. Moore and M. Phillips illustrate the amateur-professional dichotomy with reference to the career of Hardwick, an Australian swimmer who won the ASA 110 yards, and 440 yards salt-water, in 1911. Ten years later, despite displaying the quintessential qualities of a gentleman amateur, he was banned from returning to amateur swimming due to

participation in professional boxing.[14] The ostracism of professional swimmers must have retarded English Swimming, and according to Terret, in the late nineteenth century amateur influence was sufficiently strong to force professionals abroad, which had the unexpected effect of developing swimming elsewhere in Western Europe.[15] As England rapidly lost its world lead, xenophobia created problems with international sport, as amateurism was even more rigorously applied to save face. Although FINA only banned professional swimmers, some countries and England in particular, introduced laws to exclude paid coaches and instructors from official positions. This action exacerbated decline and Wigglesworth aptly terms this diversification of sport, by concerns for social superiority and civil security, "cultural apartheid".[16] Unsuccessful attempts were made to form a professional organisation to rival the ASA, but in 1932 the National Association of Swimming Instructors, later Swimming Teacher's Association (STA), was founded by a splinter group at a meeting of the Southern Counties ASA. It focused on standardising instruction and had a strong professional following, which partially accounts for continued friction with the ASA.[17] Although, the amateur-professional divide persisted during the twentieth century, emphasis on social class declined and athletic ability began to take precedence, making sport less exclusive. Furthermore, the middle class was promoting working-class participation to safeguard national efficiency and as a diversion from undesirable pursuits.

9.2 Development of Swimming Clubs

Keil and Wix state that there is good evidence that swimmers formed clubs in some large towns during the first half of the nineteenth century, and suggest Huddersfield and Lockwood SC, which organised a gala in 1825, was the earliest. Unfortunately, they do not support their claims, except by reference to a letter published in The Amateur Swimmer (1926). Likewise, Peter Bilsborough says that during the second quarter of the

nineteenth century various groups of recreational swimmers gathered together to formalise their activities, including the St George SC of Liverpool, which in 1828 was using the nation's first municipally owned baths. However, in 1851 The Serpentine Bathing Club held its fifth annual meeting, and The Times proclaimed it the oldest.. It probably evolved into London SC, established 1859, because in the early 1870s members were giving displays and exerting pressure for a bathers' marquee at The Serpentine.[18] The late 1850s saw the emergence of the swimming club phenomena. Expansion is indicated by the increasing number affiliated to the ASA: 65 in 1888, 135 (1890), 300 (1894), 624 (1904) and 1409 by 1913.[19] According to Keil and Wix, development of transport, enabling competition, was critical in swimming's organisation and the growing number of clubs led to devolution into the ASA's current districts, based on spatial relationships and railway routes.[20]

By the early twentieth century there was a proliferation of generalised and specialist clubs and ongoing expansion, especially in large towns and cities. Nevertheless, there is little research relating to the socio-historical dynamics of sports' club structures. In The Evolution of English Sport, Wigglesworth devotes a chapter to "Club Fortunes" which, based on a wide range of primary sources, highlights many pertinent factors. Facilities are identified as largely responsible for inception and growth of activities, explaining the expansion of swimming clubs following the Baths and Wash-Houses Act.[21] Denis Molyneux's study of the development of physical recreation in the Birmingham District 1871-1892, reached similar conclusions. He classifies sports as: activities with large followings and early expansion such as football; those with early expansion followed by loss of support; and some, including swimming, whereby immediate development was impeded by particular problems of equipment, facilities or social conventions, but with major development during the 1880s.[22] Molyneux claims that Leander SC set a precedent in July 1879 by successfully petitioning for exclusive use of water time, and that the remarkable growth was consequent. Numerous clubs were established: Birmingham

Ashted (1880), Young Men's Christian Association (1883), Suburban (1884), Edgbaston Aquatic, Victoria and Telegraph Clerks (1885), Hearts of Oak, Wesleyan and Islington (1886), Westminster, Birchfield, and Small Heath (1887), Mutual (1889), Birmingham Ladies (1890), Wycliffe, St Mary's Early Morning and Severn Street Class 17 (1892).[23] Roy Rees found that by the mid 1860s two Liverpool clubs, Liverpool Swimming Association and Everton, had exclusive use of baths at certain times. Likewise, Birley considers swimming clubs were generally able to negotiate private sessions once or twice weekly, but this is questionable and not true in Birmingham. Its Baths and Parks Minutes are rather ambiguous, but whilst Leander's 1879 application for exclusive use was approved, it does not seem to have been implemented. The following year, Leander was refused use of Northwood Street Baths and the town clerk was asked to advise regarding the legality of granting exclusive use for any special occasion. His reply was negative.[24]

Club nights continued to take place during public swimming sessions, as shown by the 1897 regulations which stated:

> Members of swimming clubs are not permitted to interfere with the comfort and convenience of bathers, nor to unduly monopolise the use of the dressing rooms, or to request bathers to retire from the bath during the club practice.[25]

Molyneux's interpretation was clearly incorrect and, used as a comparison for Liverpool, biased Rees's study. Nonetheless, departmental endorsement was probably the critical factor in contemporary expansion of Birmingham's clubs, and elsewhere reserved sessions may have significantly contributed. Liverpool is renowned for leading swimming and bathing developments during the nineteenth century. At the end of the nineteenth century it possessed eight public baths, and a number of school facilities, only one of which was open-air. Birmingham, whose population was 21,000 less, adopted the Baths and Wash-Houses Act early and was well served compared with many towns, but still only had four indoor and two outdoor baths, so sheer lack of space may have prevented club

reservations.[26] Additionally, limited facilities would have reduced the number of people learning to swim and hence potential membership, thus delaying club expansion. The Birmingham Corporation Act 1903, included a clause enabling exclusive use of baths to be granted, for a maximum of six hours per day or two days a week. However, council and club reports from the early twentieth century suggest sharing of public sessions was still common. In 1908 water polo teams complained that matches were often delayed by having to wait until public use ebbed, and then the bath was drained during play. Subject to prompt departure, a later time was agreed for polo, but exclusive use denied. Recognised clubs had a designated, hour-long club night, but even when two of the oldest clubs merged in 1926, only a single session was granted.[27]

Shortly before the Second World War, club time was extended, and exclusive use made available from 1945. A sole exception had been made ten years previously for Birmingham Amateur Diving Club, because the divers and public were at risk, and membership of the city's only specialist club was declining. Pre-war, all clubs had to register, which required maintaining an average attendance. This was set fairly low so there were numerous small ones with membership which fluctuated according to the weather and local opposition, so many were short-lived. The system proved inefficient and costly, as clubs were entitled to a free annual gala, and it was suspected that some bathers joined solely to access concessionary rates. This latter is further suggested by average club attendances per week exceeding that of club nights. During the Second World War, lack of club or "splash" nights meant the regulations lapsed, and post-war the council became more amenable. Selected clubs were permitted exclusive use of baths, albeit with a higher minimum attendance, whilst others continued in public sessions. Reservations steadily expanded, with twelve granted in 1950, and by the early 1960s approximately half the 150-200 organisations regularly attending baths had them.[28]

Wigglesworth noticed many early clubs assumed the name of the establishment used, including Warrington where one was immediately formed following opening.[29] This was

rarely the case in nineteenth-century Birmingham, possibly due to lack of co-operation from the corporation, with which there was considerable friction and dissent. Local clubs repeatedly pressed for reduced fees and improved facilities, but few concessions were made. The combined subscription and baths entry charge was expensive, and in 1899 a joint deputation complained that six-month season tickets did not help club popularity, as they were also available to the public, and furthermore that club arrangements were less favourable than elsewhere. The corporation acceded to a new policy based on that of other towns. Albeit still restrictive, it gave reduced price season tickets valid for a specific night and time, and special winter tickets valid one night per week, both of which would promote club-night attendance; cheaper exclusive use for polo competitions one evening a month; and free annual sports provided club-night attendances averaged at least 15.[30] Over the years further concessions were made, yet friction continued until after the Second World War. The crux of the matter was that clubs held exalted opinions of their importance. Their activities did stimulate swimming, and concessions, including free annual galas, were granted in recognition of their public service, but the cost to the corporation was increasingly perceived to outweigh the promotional value of clubs. Members represented only a small proportion of bathers, and public interest in galas was relatively limited, especially as many occurred at the end of the season. The clubs complained as charges increased and new ones were levied, but overall they were comparatively well treated. In 1950 Birmingham Baths Department claimed to offer the best conditions, and in 1962 this was substantiated by evidence that elsewhere charges had long been made for galas - five guineas in Derby, and 12 guineas or £21 on Saturdays in nearby Smethwick.[31]

Swimming clubs were originally adult. Some had junior sections, but in Birmingham these were suppressed by corporation prices and regulations. Junior members did not count towards the stipulated attendance levels, and those under 14 attending first-class baths after 6.15PM had to be accompanied by an adult, family member of the same sex.

This was supposedly a protective measure following "cases of a serious nature", presumably abuse, but avoidance of disruption to non-members is more likely. In 1921 Birmingham Association of Swimming Clubs expressed concern about attempts to exclude junior clubs, and the implications for future, performance standards.[32] The following year, Aston SC claimed the city was losing its reputation for first-class swimmers and polo players, but this was refuted by both the ASA and Birmingham Corporation. The latter was not really interested in competitive standing, believing clubs should focus on the physical benefits of participation. It disapproved of over-emphasis on training and felt some officials pressurised competitors, often ruining their health, whilst paying little attention to the less talented. Withdrawal of support was threatened to those clubs solely concerned with racing.[33] Class discrimination may have been an integral factor as heavy training programs were not advised for gentlemen amateurs, and the corporation was against the very competitive, works clubs.

Sports clubs have a multiplicity of origins but many early swimming ones were formed in first-class baths, effectively excluding working men. Subsequently, clubs instigated for or by those excluded, and generally associated with factories, offices and churches, met in second-class baths. In Birmingham, they received little encouragement and more often resistance. A similar discriminatory effect is seen in cricket. By 1875 a large number of companies nation-wide, especially railways, had cricket teams. Birmingham had 26 clubs by 1880 and was home to the world's first league. However, between 1888 and 1988 only two affiliated clubs were associated with local companies and another was church based.[34] In 1920, the Midland Welfare Supervisors Association appealed to the Baths and Parks Committee to help works' swimming clubs, saying this would become a healthy movement and increase bather numbers. Many had been established during the war and, although 20 were operational, attendance was now exceptionally poor, averaging below ten. This was blamed on high prices: 6d for members and 8d for non-members, and allegations of profiteering and excessively stringent

regulations were made by companies, including four of Birmingham's largest manufacturers. The official response was that the city's club policy matched that elsewhere, and charges were in line with the Baths and Wash-Houses Acts. Nevertheless, provision was guilty of discrimination, because it failed to comply with the latter's requirements for two-thirds of baths to be labouring-class. Birmingham corporation was adamant that works clubs would not prove successful, and felt attending baths dirty from work should be discouraged. The latter was preposterous considering the original object of public baths was to cleanse the working class. There was disinclination to award concessions, and suggestion of returning to pre-war policy of refusing registration to works clubs. In 1926, Swimming Times was launched, edited by Captain Cummins who noted that clubs in business houses, churches or social groups had to fight great odds and suggested well-established clubs should foster them. However, in Birmingham, additional opposition came from the ASA affiliated clubs, who considered themselves the mainstay of public baths.[35]

One dissenter was Kings Heath SC, established in 1923 when new baths opened in the prosperous district. Its standards were high, especially the ladies' section, and the annual reports indicate the predominant social class of members; in 1932 the patron was knighted and its president became Lord Mayor. Well-supported social activities included hotel supper dances, and the sizeable profits, regularly exceeding £50 a year, were donated to local causes.[36] Wealthy sports clubs often raised money for charity, and evidence of this in cricket and athletics is given by A.E. Davis and Sharlott respectively. Despite resistance, second-class clubs thrived and made a major contribution to community health and recreation.

There is strong positive correlation between local provision, number of clubs and standard of swimming. Good facilities promote activity and achievement, especially when combined with quality instruction. Consequently, swimming clubs and the ASA, repeatedly exerted pressure for new and improved pools. In 1912 F. Sachs noted, of the

large number of public baths, many were unsuitable for competition. Problems included irregular dimensions, lack of lane lines, impractical spectator and dressing space, and inadequate facilities for the growing number of female participants. By 1971 the situation was little changed as 55% of baths had been constructed pre First World War, and 60% of these in the nineteenth century.[37] However, the most important factor in raising standards was the availability of all-year-round, indoor facilities. England's climate severely limited the traditional bathing season, with open locations viable May to September at best. When Thetford's river pool was revamped in 1921-1922, the mayor said a council run "swimming and bathing club" would be a possibility, but nothing materialised. In 1967 when the attendant requested permission to form a club with exclusive use two nights weekly, the matter of reservations was referred to the Parks and Pleasure Grounds Committee for further consideration, but the river pool was hardly ideal for training.[38] In the same year, a club developed at the secondary modern school, shortly after its indoor pool opened. The club progressed rapidly becoming Thetford Dolphins Amateur SC when the town's 25m indoor facility opened four years later. At this time, there were only five ASA clubs in the county and ten in the entire eastern region.[39] Those in nearby Stowmarket and Sudbury were poor rivals until the mid 1980s, when their indoor baths were built. In contrast, Birmingham had public indoor pools from the mid nineteenth century and experimented with winter opening from 1854. Various initiatives sought to popularise the latter, and in December 1926, South Birmingham Ladies and Westminster-Handsworth held Birmingham's inaugural winter gala, claimed to be the first in the midlands.[40] However, clubs were not recognised in winter, a season of limited demand until after the Second World War, and even then few trained until the 1958 introduction of exclusive use. Subsequently, winter gala hire was offered at half-price, and by the late 1960s about a quarter of organisations were active all-year.[41] A few of Birmingham's older clubs continued to be based at outdoor locations.

Birmingham All the Year Round Bathing Society, Edgbaston Reservoir, Christmas Morning 1902. (Photograph donated by Roy Graham).

Both the Birmingham All-Year-Round club, based at Edgbaston Reservoir, and Boldmere SC, which met at Keepers Pool in Sutton Coldfield, held chilly Christmas Morning Dips. (See photograph on previous page).

Douglas Booth's study of the history of swimming, surfing and surf-life-saving in Australia found bathers often joined clubs to access facilities.[42] The key membership benefits of an English club were specialist instructors and discounted admission. Although there was usually a competitive element, the primary motive of learning to swim was exploited to attract new members. Birmingham Dolobran boasted the services of Professor Dugmore and its 1935 gala program urged holders to "Learn to swim. Join the Dolobran Swimming Club". Galas and the press were principal means of exposure, and in 1914 Birmingham SC had employed aggressive tactics, "Why drown? When you can learn to swim by joining the Birmingham Swimming Club". Its attractions included all-year operation.[43] Many clubs offered instruction in life-saving, diving, water-polo and ornamental swimming. During the early twentieth century, there was strong emphasis on polo and life-saving in Birmingham, and in 1913 when Warwickshire County Swimming Association was formed, it considered the Royal Humane Society Award the ultimate accolade - more important than winning speed championships.[44] The Swimmers Life Saving Society, formed in 1891, became the RLSS in 1904. It aimed to compensate for ASA focus on competitive sport and promoted swimming instruction as well as life-saving. During the late 1930s, the Birmingham and District Branch urged inclusion of classes at clubs and gave free public instruction at Woodcock Street. These efforts were rewarded in 1951 when facilities were provided free for RLSS training.[45] The development of school swimming, often with emphasis on water safety and life-saving, together with national "Learn to Swim" campaigns during the 1920s and 1930s, would have aided club expansion, especially works-based ones. Swimming was a very popular club at Lucas, patronised by Mr Waring, a company director, and his wife. The sports club had a women's swimming section from 1927 and a men's from circa 1930. The

emphasis was on learning to swim, and Lucasite magazine reports suggest a friendly, open atmosphere. By November 1932 the club was very active, holding annual galas, inter-departmental team races and competing against other local firms such as Dunlop.

Competition stimulated and sustained growth. The earliest record of competitive swimming in Birmingham is a match on 13th June 1859.[46] By 1892 the corporation recognised approximately twenty clubs, and in 1895 principal swimmers formed an organisation, ostensibly to encourage attainment of personal survival and life-saving skills. Interestingly it was promoted as a water polo league. Leander had played a crude version from 1877 and Birmingham clubs were significant in its development. By the time the league was inaugurated, polo appears to have been widespread. In 1891 The Times reported a match between Cambridge University and Otter SC, and a year later covered the ASA Championship final.[47] By 1913 Birmingham and District Swimming Association and Water Polo League had twenty-eight teams in three divisions, and as a result of early club and competitive initiatives, Birmingham-based groups dominated the new Warwickshire County ASA. In 1920, of 24 clubs only three were from elsewhere, and in 1932 Birmingham peaked at 45. Beyond city limits, facilities and hence clubs were sparse, with expansion lacking momentum until the 1930s. 23 "outsiders" were affiliated by 1937.[48] Clubs were clearly more popular than these statistics suggest, because a significant number, those small or lacking competitive aspirations, would not have joined the ASA.

9.3 The Changing Nature of Clubs

Prior to the Second World War, only a small proportion of members were serious athletes, and participation in the club scene was primarily a source of healthy recreation. Birmingham Tubes & Co. organised popular trips to local lidos but apparently held just one competition, in 1935. In keeping with nation-wide developments and the possibility

of war, there was strong emphasis on fitness. The National Keep Fit Campaign had been launched with the prospect of rearmament, and its importance was highlighted by the Berlin Olympics, where Germany swept the board and projected a powerful national image. Industrial sports clubs were an obvious means of implementing British government strategy, and their activities promoted team work, which would be vital in wartime. This may explain the 1932 inception of the long-awaited Tubes sport and social club. The following summer, its magazine drew ladies' attention to the healthful and invigorating effects of participation, including the slogan "swimming is slimming".[49] During the nineteenth century, outdoor recreation became popular especially with the advent of day-trips and increased sea bathing. Club outings provided cheap access to the countryside, greatly benefiting urban dwellers, and river-based activities were a common choice for swimming clubs. In 1928, 60 members of Kings Heath SC went to Evesham for an afternoon of racing, polo and punting, followed by tea at the riverside gardens, and in 1930 its annual outing was held in conjunction with Stratford's swimming and boating clubs.[50] Severn Street SC went to the canal at Catherine-de-Barnes or camped by the River Avon. An annual river race was often incorporated in such outings, and from the 1930s Birmingham Municipal Employees SC held theirs at Upton-on-Severn. However, as the health and fitness movement accelerated, there were conflicts of interest with land owners, who increasingly restricted access to the countryside. According to S.G. Jones, the British Workers Federation for Sport, which formed in 1923 and offered men and women a variety of activities including swimming and rambling, was a militant organisation. It promoted the rights of workers to play on Sundays and the open-air movement, and led the mass trespass onto the estates of Lord Baden-Powell.[51]

The notion linking a healthy mind and body developed in the nineteenth century. Religious groups began to use sport and recreation as a means of maintaining the congregation, and diverting it from undesirable pastimes. Despite the underlying motives, provision successfully stimulated clubs, particularly in football. Aston Villa was

established by Villa Cross Wesleyan Chapel (1874), and Birmingham City as Small Heath Alliance, Trinity Church, (1875). By the 1880s about a quarter of Birmingham's football clubs had a religious connection. The promoters, usually ex public school, are often termed "sporting missionaries", but John Golby and William Purdue's description of "sponsors" is more apt, as the ideology was tolerated rather than accepted.[52] Swimming clubs practising at Aston Baths in 1899 included Christchurch, Christchurch Ladies and St Silas, and classes were requested for All Saints Sunday School. Around the turn of the century many youth organisations with religious connections were founded, and by 1909-1911 Aston-based clubs included Friends Hall, St Mary's Church Lads' Brigade, and the 1st and 18th Birmingham Company Boys' Brigades. In the 1923 summer season, Birmingham Girl Guides were the city's most active club, averaging 77.6 attendances on club night and 92.5 per week. Professor Dugmore, influential in swimming throughout Birmingham for many years, was a Wesleyan.[53]

The Quakers, firm believers in the values of healthy exercise, led by example. Friends Halls all over Birmingham ran activity programs with an open access policy:

> You weren't expected to go to the meetings.....religion was not thrown at you at all, but everybody wanted to because we had such a damn good time. It was wonderful, there was no time to spare.[54]

Severn Street SC, based at Kent Street from 1892, was part of the Quaker controlled Midland Adult School Union, but provision was only for men until after the First World War. Senior members taught and encouraged juniors, and a woman, born circa 1915, recalls learning to swim at an early age. Her mother and aunts, of the Hands family, were successful swimmers and instructors. By the inter-war period instruction was available in most aquatic disciplines and after club sessions, and for prize-givings, members met at the Friends Hall in nearby Gooch Street.[55]

Many large business families were Quakers, and from the late nineteenth century progressive employers were recognising the benefits of rational recreation, with industrial

welfare schemes developed to limit health hazards. Recognition of the need and moral responsibility were partly accountable, but management also sought to enhance production and company allegiance. Welfare provision included medical services, canteens and sports facilities, often of a high standard and either free or subsidised. Cadbury's at Bournville, is renowned as an early and excellent example. Progress was slow, but by the inter-war period many companies had social sections, including sports clubs. Edward Royle considers sports mainly appealed to working men when attached to a public house or works, and as both were numerous in the industrial midlands, this may partially explain the proliferation of sports clubs compared with rural East Anglia.[56] Similarly, analyses of football in society by Nicholas Fishwick and Wigglesworth show correlation between industrial demography and development of regional sports associations and leagues. Wigglesworth specifies the working class and their employers as the grass roots of football clubs, and identifies the impact of company sponsorship which equally applies to other sports including swimming.[57]

Birmingham was fortunate in having a number of enlightened employers, many sharing Quaker motivations, who led the development of industrial welfare. It was also at the heart of a parallel development, the socialist sporting tradition. In 1894, three years after the launch of the Clarion Socialist Paper, the Clarion Cycling Club was formed at Birmingham Labour Church. Its activities included swimming and by 1905 there was a National Clarion SC. In 1928 Birmingham hosted the first National Congress of the British Workers Federation for Sport.[58] Consequently, works-based clubs developed early in the city, and thrived during the inter-war period. Terence Monnington cites members' oral evidence that these were the best years with strong crowd support. Significantly, he also states that contemporary proliferation was not due to new companies.[59] Compared with Birmingham, development in Leicester was delayed, with works clubs from the 1920s and the greatest interest 1935-1968.[60] In Birmingham, the Post Office was one of the first companies to swim, although in 1882 the post master's

request for reduced rate tickets was refused.[61] The earliest employment-related, swimming club found in The Times is City of London Police, established 1886. By the early 1890s it was thriving and held competitive events for officers and their children.[62]

Although works-based clubs were popular, intervention was not necessarily philanthropic. Patronage could constitute containment and control, often intentionally maintaining class separation and exclusivity. S. Bannerman found that in those formed soon after the First World War, membership was often a condition of employment.[63] Furthermore, philanthropists had set ideas and, believing these should become normative in lifestyles beyond the factory, imposed them on the working classes. Messrs Cadbury's developed the Bournville Village Trust, providing housing and amenities including open spaces and gardens. Rowntree was even more paternalistic and staunchly opposed to gambling and drinking. Astute businessmen and politicians recognised that implementing rational recreation made economic sense and good publicity. Sporting success projected an image of community prosperity, raising morale and benefiting local industry. Hence, in the early twentieth century, athletic talent could help secure employment. Mitchell's and Butler's Brewery had a strong cricket team and would find work for a good player. Likewise, in 1927 jobs when were scarce, a Birmingham man discharged from the army was taken on at General Electric Company, Witton, because of sporting expertise. He was a successful swimmer and formed a water polo team. Dunlop attempted to poach him but he bargained with Birmingham Transport for a position with a house, and largely furnished it with his prizes.[64] Large companies often supplied prizes in the form of household goods or shopping vouchers, or gave the committee funds to chose suitable items, thus avoiding winners' expenditure on alcohol and gambling, and ensuring their families benefited. A former Mitchell's and Butler's swimmer possesses a cabinet crammed with cut glass and other valuables won at club sports from circa 1915.[65] Such benevolence seems to have been appreciated and helped foster employee relations.

Gold and silver medals won by E. Cutts, of Mitchell's and Butler's SC, at club and district championships during the inter-war period.

Sport increasingly became a political symbol, and prowess engendered pride and citizenship at civic and national level. Local politicians' support for sport served their private business interests and, according to Peter Bailey, gained community prestige useful in election campaigns.[66] In Nineteenth Century, 1879, G.J. Romanes makes a revealing statement about the use of recreation for personal power.

> Recreation is, *or ought to be*, not a pastime entered upon for the sake of pleasure which it affords, but an act of duty undertaken for the sake of the subsequent power which it generates, and the subsequent profit which it ensures.[67]

David Bowker's study of Ashton-under-Lyne found that inter-war there was corporation awareness of the importance of a successful football team, but suggests recognition was not extended to other sports:

> Football with its national following and press coverage was one thing but, it seems, the more modest image of swimming was another.[68]

Although the local swimming club was very successful, the sport lacked massive spectator following.

By the 1930s the proliferation of works-based clubs and societies, was viewed very negatively by socialists. They saw industrial welfare schemes as a means of duping workers, leading to rationalisation and speed-ups solely in company interests. The Fan stated provision was "a soothing syrup to mitigate the growing discontent that the continual worsening of conditions is procuring".[69] Whilst sport was definitely deployed as a management strategy, this does not define it as detrimental. In fact by the 1920s, when industrial welfare was expanding, a strong socialist tradition and worker-sport movement had developed. As Jones states, it is impossible to distinguish this from the effects of exposure to commercial patronage and control, but frequently activities and clubs evolved within the work-force.[70] Organisation was sometimes independent but more often quasi-autonomous. Clubs and societies provided individuals with opportunities to exert greater

control over their existence and a collective identity, need for which was created by industrialisation, which brought social change, insecurity, and a tendency to anonymity. Davis blames urbanisation, and Wigglesworth the factory system.[71] Industrialisation also created new recreational needs. Traditional activities and commingling of work and leisure declined, whilst the latter's necessity was augmented by poor living and working conditions. The need to belong is backed by Hugh Cunningham's finding that leisure was sought in occupational groups with distinct sporting sub-cultures. Monnington agrees that prior to the Second World War people of similar backgrounds gravitated to similar occupations, and employment strongly influenced leisure choices and behaviours.[72] Despite greater emphasis on the social and health benefits of participation, competitive success was the foundation of group esteem, and increasingly costumes, badges and hats were employed as symbols of affiliation. Colleagues, friends and family benefited by association and were involved as spectators. During the inter-war period a large number of companies entered competitions such as Birmingham Business Houses League and some also organised sport at departmental level. The Lucas 1934 annual gala report stated:

> The building was once again packed with enthusiastic spectators....the ladies and men's inter-department relay races roused to the full the partisanship of the keen supporters.[73]

The Municipal Employees Sports and Recreation Club, Swimming Section, was founded in 1928 to encourage the "espirit de corps" amongst all grades of employee, and stimulate interest in this "splendid and healthy sport". From the outset, there was a sizeable proportion of female members, and subsequently family membership led to a junior section. The organisation was both social and competitive, and flourished until the Second World War. Revived in 1947, it offered free instruction in swimming, diving, life-saving and water polo by Mrs Jakeman, an ex-Olympic coach. The 1949 annual gala was an outstanding success with 804 tickets sold, but in the 1950s support rapidly dwindled.

The club became predominantly social and from 1955 only the annual river race was held. Decline was attributed to nationalisation of large departments and delay in reforming post-war. Some departments, including the police, had started independent clubs which were joined by former members returning to corporation service, who then tended to poach others with potential. These factors undoubtedly affected membership, but decline was widespread and symptomatic of general apathy. Events in conjunction with the West Midland District of the National Association of Local Government Offices, failed to materialise because outside Birmingham, local authorities lacked interest in competitive swimming. Sport was not a priority as the nation focused on rebuilding and regaining economic prosperity. Matters were compounded by the increased costs of instruction and travel to away matches, making many clubs financially unsustainable. The heyday of works clubs was over.

Monnington's social history of industrial sports clubs indicates post-war decline as a nation-wide problem. He attributes it to changing attitudes towards work and leisure, and management techniques. As society became more materialistic and worker orientation increasingly focused on pay structure rather than intrinsic benefits, employees, especially unskilled and semi-skilled factory operatives, were reluctant to associate outside contractual hours, compartmentalising work and leisure. R.J. Morris's work enlightens this situation, stating that larger incomes and the welfare state displaced collectivist power. There was breakdown of the long-standing labour movement, in which political and work-place groups had been central, because the Labour government's welfare socialism was based on state organisations. Furthermore, emerging youth culture was centred around consumption, rather than any characteristic set of associations. Workers were also isolated by changing urban geography, with slum clearance and resettlement programs, or by moving employment for higher wages. Hence, there was increased interest in kinship. Industrial clubs failed to modify recreational provision to meet contemporary needs and demand, and despite the popularity and continued growth of

swimming, due to high costs few firms possessed or hired pools. There was a shortage of public sports facilities, and proposals of dual usage, mixing friends and families of workers with the community, would have narrowed the work-leisure divide. However, this posed difficulties and was rarely implemented, although some facilities were leased or passed into the public domain. As employees no longer valued sports and social amenities, management interest and funding declined. Whereas in the past, industrial welfare had been an inexpensive means of goodwill and increased productivity, post-war a more remunerative and calculative management approach found the necessary outlay unjustifiable. Industrial facilities had been considerably subsidised, so rising costs exacerbated decline.[74] Contemporary changes in the nature of clubs were also reflected in sports' management. Sharlott noted the changed background of Leicester County Athletics Presidents, now club officials or athletes rather than businessmen.[75] Presumably, withdrawal of business houses from the national competitive structure hastened decay, because keen athletes would defect to clubs offering serious training and competition, lowering company standards and spectator appeal.

The development of youth sport was probably the final straw. It was triggered by 1930s developments in sport, recreation and physical education, and initiatives including the 1937 Physical Training and Recreation Act. Birmingham held youth swimming championships from 1938, although the early response was poor and dominated by pre-service organisations.[76] The post-war need for nations to re-establish international identities strongly influenced a new approach to competitive sport. Based on elite performance, this led to youth-dominated clubs with intense training. In 1950, the objectives of the ASA, STA and RLSS National Liaisons Committee included development of youngsters' training opportunities, and limiting the number of serious clubs per bath, encouraging larger organisations representing their locality.[77] Birmingham had a coaching scheme as early as 1928, but there was now growing demand for a sophisticated program of instruction, land drill and practice. The city's strong club

tradition was largely orientated to teaching and social activities, and had produced few national or international swimmers. The corporation now pledged its support, and clubs focused on expanding their junior sections. Previously, these were inadequately catered for during public sessions, so there was pressure for earlier pool reservations. Unfortunately, adult membership declined and by the 1960s juniors outnumbered them by four to three. Clubs struggled because only adults counted towards the required minimum attendance, and by the 1980s, as a direct result of the transformation, works clubs had largely ceased. Other factors accelerated the dissolution. For example, in the 1960s Municipal Employees SC suffered because adult education classes clashed with club night. Its river swim was abandoned in 1962 and records cease three years later.[78]

9.4 Club Fortunes

War has major impact on sports' participation. Prospect of conflict repeatedly promoted provision and participation of physical training. Wigglesworth noted nation-wide discontinuation of sporting activity in the First World War whilst, apart from initial panic, dogged determination to continue characterised the Second.[79] The trend in Birmingham was the opposite, with major expansion and curtailment respectively. According to Monnington, the drive for increased industrial output during the First World War raised awareness of the social and economic needs for welfare provision, and gave impetus to the industrial welfare movement. Government directive came via the appointment of Rowntree as Director of Welfare in the Ministry of Munitions. His factory-welfare methods had, by 1904, 32.3% of female and 82.9% of male employees participating in at least one sport or social club, and his task was to implement these in order to develop national standards. This proved successful. Between 1913 and 1920 some 115 clubs were registered in Birmingham and by 1918 a national society existed. Despite unemployment and shortages, development was sustained post-war.[80] Jones also considers the First

World War a watershed in leisure history, with rational recreation officially linked to war effort, promoting increased productivity by aiding recovery from industrial fatigue. This was essential in Birmingham, and a major contribution to welfare and morale was made by the baths, especially the winter halls' program. There was general expansion of swimming which boosted clubs, and for the 1915 bathing season 21 women's and 41 men's applied for registration, increases of 10 and 17 respectively.[81]

The Second World War brought disruption. By the end of 1940 only some of Birmingham's washing departments and a few swimming baths remained open. Danger from bombing made it inadvisable to use those centrally located, and during November and December 1940 considerable damage was sustained by department buildings. Most was caused by incendiaries and blast from nearby high explosives, but Kent Street Baths received a series of directs hits: on 26th October the baths attendant and four first-aid workers were killed, and on 3rd December it was destroyed. The cottage baths in St George Street were also demolished.[82] There were shortages of fuel and staff, as workers were channelled into war-time occupations. Professor Dugmore was retired from swimming to return to his original trade, engineering.[83] Many baths were requisitioned for purposes including rest and recreation clubs, hydrant centres and first-aid posts, and although efforts were made to maintain washing facilities with free use for those bombed out, swimming largely ground to a halt. The Baths Committee Minutes make no reference to club activity between February 1940 and June 1942. Until April 1946 it was seemingly restricted to the annual "Stay at Home" holiday scheme, and a Victory Aquacade. Other sports were similarly affected. In the Birmingham area, cricket had a much reduced program because players, equipment and grounds were in short supply. Mitchell's and Butler's was requisitioned for storage, Stourbridge Pavilion commandeered by American Forces, and Moseley's ploughed for agriculture.[84]

Social emancipation precipitated by the wars exerted positive influence on women's swimming. During the First World War there was a surge in participation. By 1917-1918,

the membership of Bolton SC, despite being free to servicemen, was 40% female. Wigglesworth attributed this to conscription, which would bias the balance of both remaining and prospective members.[85] However, Birmingham companies, especially those in munitions, directly promoted the sport to women. In 1918 the Baths Committee reported an unusually high number of club applications due to almost all welfare departments of munitions factories forming women's clubs, and more evenings had to be reserved for them. By the following year there were 50 first-class and seven second-class women's clubs, compared with 25 and 15 for men, and the corporation came under great pressure from firms such as Dunlop and GEC, to further expand and improve women's facilities. Despite post-war decline, in 1924, 15 of the 43 clubs were women's.[86] The Second World War brought further social change and significantly acceptance of mixed club bathing. After the war, many ladies' clubs failed to reform or were short-lived like Lucas Ladies which merged with Lucas in 1950. Small Heath and Sparkhill Ladies' SCs were affiliated to Warwickshire ASA from 1928 and 1932 respectively, but not post-war, having presumably amalgamated with Small Heath Harriers and Sparkhill SCs.[87]

Financial issues fundamentally affect sports clubs. Membership reflects the prevailing economic climate, due to dependency on people having sufficient time, money and energy to participate. Wigglesworth noted that lapses of rowing regattas in the Lancashire area coincided with periodic failures in the cotton industry.[88] Conversely, Molyneux and Monnington both found that industrial prosperity caused expansion of sports organisations in Birmingham during the 1870s. Working-class conditions had improved in real terms and there was agitation, including a press campaign, for reduced working hours and a Saturday half-day. A few companies, including Cadbury's, had adopted this during the previous decade and it was now widely and voluntarily accepted in Birmingham, boosting leisure participation.[89] Government legislation followed later, presumably with similar impact nation-wide.

Commercialisation can enable the survival and development of activities, but in the voluntary sector fund-raising has always been important. During the early 1930s many Birmingham swimming clubs struggled. Kings Heath's social program ground to a halt and by 1932 Westminster-Handsworth SC, in its 45th season, was in financial trouble. Its accounts show a loss of £27/18/0, primarily due to much reduced profits from functions. Its annual reports blame the continued industrial depression, exacerbated by local development providing new, alternative entertainments. Similarly, Wigglesworth documents failure of rowing clubs during the 1930s.[90] Competition is an important factor in commercialisation, and in a leisure context can operate from organisations offering similar or completely different services. In the 1880s cycling was a major spectator sport and, according to Sharlott, as popular as football, but over the next decade support declined as other activities, including swimming, saw major growth.[91]

Amalgamation was a common solution, making it difficult to trace the progress of early clubs. Birmingham and Leander SCs, among the first established in 1862 and 1877 respectively, became Birmingham Leander in 1926, which affiliated to Warwickshire ASA until at least 1962. Likewise, men's and women's sports clubs merged and Wigglesworth demonstrates this in hockey as early as 1900. However, mixed bathing was prohibited under the Baths and Wash-Houses Acts so this was not an option for swimming, although some men's and women's clubs, including Kings Heath and Lucas, combined for socials.[92] Mixed bathing facilities were rare until the First World War, and even then required additional legislation. In 1909 when the issue was first raised in Birmingham, only one or two cases existed nation-wide. An enquiry by Manchester Corporation in 1914 found 18 liberated pools in London, and 26 provincial ones which did not permit mixed bathing. To avoid falling behind the capital, Manchester introduced it, and in 1915 Birmingham followed suit.[93] Whilst the latter tolerated mixed bathing, it prohibited mixed clubs.

Despite emancipation, and the boost to women's swimming consequent of the First World War, issues of femininity and decency continued to be problematic. In 1922 there

was concern regarding the growing popularity of ladies' water polo, but the suggestion that impacts could cause malignant growths, implying breast cancer, was absolutely refuted by the ASA.[94] Development of women's swimming created demand for good instructors, and there was uproar in Birmingham when a few ladies' clubs appointed men. Public objections of immodesty, inadequate dressing facilities, and that costumes of regulation dimensions were not required for ladies' only bathing, were backed by the terms of Baths and Wash-Houses Acts. The debate hinged on the legality of members of the opposite sex being on pool-side, hence it is difficult to conceive how mixed spectatorship, and ladies' events at men's gala, had long been permitted. According to R. Thomas, ladies were first admitted as spectators in 1861, to an exhibition by London's Illex SC, at which drawers and vests were supplied, and the performers instructed not to change in public.[95] Birmingham Corporation eventually reached a compromise, revising bathing bye-laws to authorise one male instructor, and for galas the ASA officials, who were all men. Society, and public school origins, effected male dominance in sports' governing bodies, and even today a disproportionate number still hold key roles.

The prudery rife in swimming is understandable given the revealing nature of wet costumes and that sexual encounter is a key function of leisure. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Birmingham Corporation repeatedly refused applications for mixed clubs, despite ASA approval and the existence of a good one at Cheltenham. Its suspicions, that membership was motivated by social prospects rather than developing swimming skills, were well founded. Bowker linked the introduction of mixed bathing and a mixed club at Ashton-under-Lyne with a threefold increase in swimmers during the inter-war period. In 1961 Small Heath SC transferred to the new Stechford Baths because its old base was unsuited to mixed bathing, adversely affecting senior membership.[96] Mixed clubs in Birmingham were the product of changes instigated by the Second World War. Its outbreak saw an immediate, marked increase of time allocated to mixed bathing, and in February 1940 following requests from 50% of clubs, meeting during these sessions was

finally permitted. Incongruously, in 1928 club discounts had applied to mixed public sessions and concession was made for Birmingham Amateur Diving Club. Diving was not perceived to endanger morality and decency, because its nature reduced the likelihood of opposite sexes coming into close proximity in the water.[97]

Diversification was another means of ensuring club viability. According to Wigglesworth many offered other activities to subsidise their main sport. He gives the example of Netherfield SC, Kendal, which offered gym equipment from 1877. Sharlott gives another perspective, suggesting athletics clubs were often used for fitness training for a primary sport e.g. rugby.[98] In this respect diversification could be patronage, but although most Birmingham swimming clubs offered a range of aquatics, no comparable evidence has been found.

Commercialisation of sport and recreation was facilitated by enclosure of sports space and facilities, and is partially accountable for development of swimming clubs following the 1846 Baths and Wash-Houses Act. Gate money was an important source of income for sports' organisations, as were deals with program printers and business sponsors. Wigglesworth found evidence of this in the Warrington SC's 1880-1890s Minutes. In 1931 Birmingham Dolobran's annual sports were supported with donations from Lucas Ltd and Ansell's Brewery, and there are numerous adverts in swimming gala programs of the first half of the century.[99] Many promoted sports equipment and clothing, and the medals and trophies for which Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter was famous. The latter's advertisers included Turner and Simpson Ltd, in the 1923 Warwickshire County ASA (WCASA) Handbook. Others placing advertisements include breweries, and tobacco and food manufacturers, who generally sought to capitalise by suggesting links between their product and enhanced health or performance. Cadbury's, in 1881, claimed that Professor Cavill had found their Cocoa Essence the most sustaining beverage during his channel swim.[100] Twentieth-century examples can be viewed on the following pages.

Increase your Staying-power—

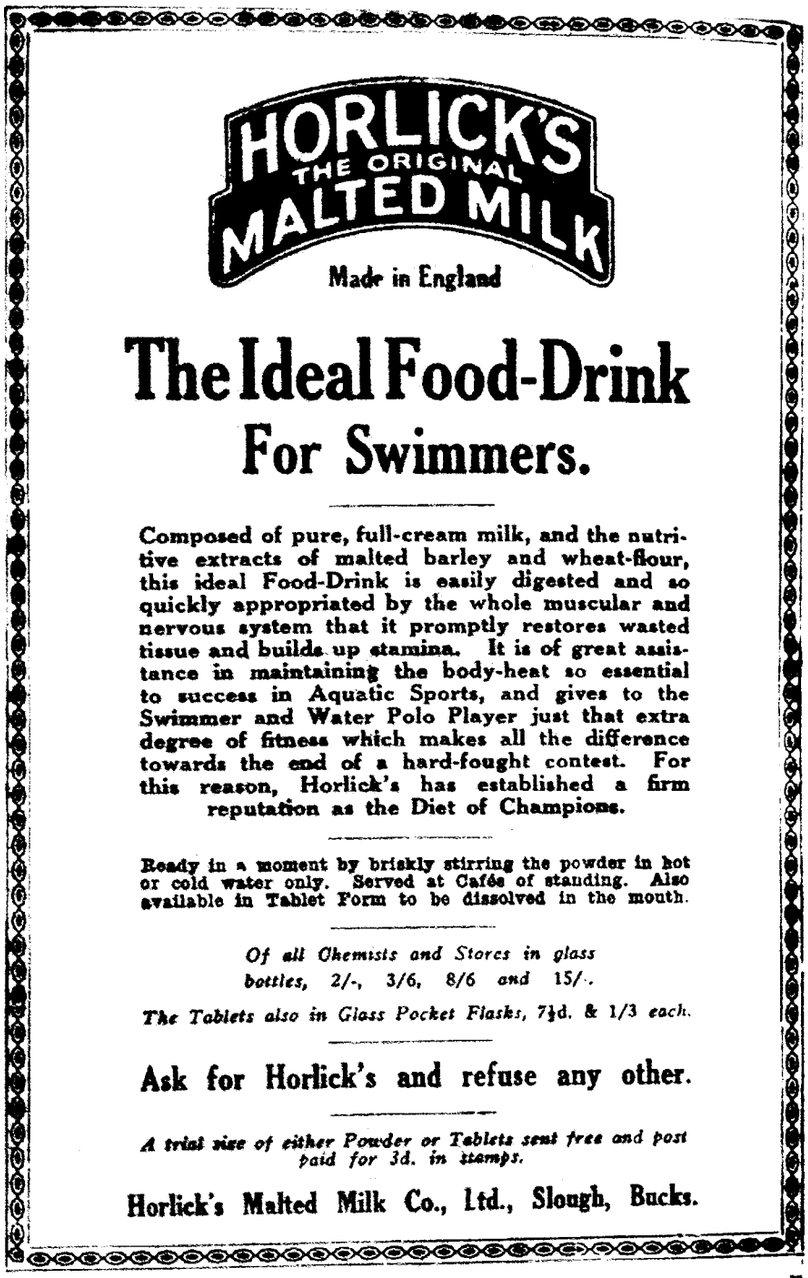
To build up stamina—to develop strength and muscle—to withstand the strain of strenuous exertion—train on Oxo.

A steaming cup of Hot Oxo after a swim quickly restores warmth, strength and vitality.

OXO

It's Beef that counts

Advertisement in programme of Highgate SC's 15th Sports, 1930



HORLICK'S MALTED MILK—The Original—will be served free to all Officials and Competitors at this Meeting by the Representatives of the Company from their stall in the Dressing Rooms.

Advertisement in the programme of Birmingham's first winter gala, (1926).

Advertisement in souvenir programme of the 11th Bologna Trophy Championship, between England, Scotland and Wales, 1949.

In the 1927 WCASA Handbook, the vitamins in Scribbens Purity Bread were supposed to give the will to win and reduce energy expenditure, and in 1930s editions Oxo promotions were common. Horlicks, proclaimed "the diet of champions", was served free to competitors and officials at Birmingham's inaugural winter gala of 1926.[101] Examples can be viewed on the following pages.

Such persuasive marketing would be hard to resist. Similarly, Birmingham Baths Department seized the opportunity to encourage swimming. A 1937 advertisement proclaimed "Swim and keep fit" with special week-end mixed bathing sessions. Ten years later, the slogan was "Swim your way to health", promoting all-year-round facilities. These efforts reflect the developing interest in health and fitness, and mark the beginnings of sport development policies which subsequently brought Birmingham to the forefront of national sport, especially in swimming.

Sponsorship and advertising relied on a target audience, and prior to the Second World War large crowds were attracted to sports events. Alternative entertainments were limited, and the strong sense of community bound spectators. Celebration or commiseration often followed at a public house, the traditional focus of community recreation, and some breweries and publicans actually organised sports to attract business. Around 1920 Mitchell's and Butler's water polo team went for a couple of pints with cheese and onions after matches, and Westminster-Handsworth SC held committee meetings at a Lonsdale Road public house.[102] Gambling gave an added dimension to sports' spectators and was prevalent at early open-water races. Despite lack of hard evidence it almost certainly continued, albeit illegally, after the enclosure of swimming. In the early twentieth century gambling was a growing problem and the subject of great concern and parliamentary debate.

Galas were designed to be exciting and entertaining, with serious events limited and often handicapped for close finishes. Birmingham Dolobran's 1931 aquatic sports were typical, encompassing handicapped events, an invitational ladies' team race, obstacle race,

display of swimming and diving by Birmingham Ladies' SC, diving competition, squadron race and grand polo match. Novelty and comical events were frequently held for ladies, and at the 1934 sports, they had to swim a length balancing a ping-pong ball on a mouth-held spoon, and return blowing a balloon.[103] Although, it can be conjectured that fun events were intended to be socially acceptable, a central issue in women's competitive sport was the undesirability of physical exertion, and therefore inclusion implies that whilst resistance to women's swimming was limited, participants remained subject to satire. There was also sexual discrimination in competitive prestige and the awarding of prizes. Birmingham SC held All-England Open Championships in 1914. The third placed male received a marble time piece, compared with a mahogany one for the female champion. In 1921 a similar event hosted by Birmingham Post Office gave the first three men £4, £2 and £1, but the ladies only £3, £1/1/0 and 12/6.[104]

Programs usually incorporated a display by professionals or local teams. Ornamental swimming, also known as fancy, trick or scientific swimming, designed to demonstrate less common feats and initially performed by male swimming professors, was extremely popular. Interestingly, it developed into synchronised swimming which is almost exclusively female, often ridiculed and not perceived as a "proper" sport, despite the immense strength and fitness required. In 1892 spectators at Otter's gala were entertained by the club instructor, Professor Francis, and in subsequent years by his pupils.[105] The author of "Swimming in Birmingham in the 1890s" recalls many celebrated galas and contests at Kent Street, including seeing a one-legged man dive from the side balcony. During the inter-war period, Professor Dugmore and his daughter Jessie, both accomplished swimmers and instructors, gave exhibitions. Their speciality was singing underwater, with their heads in buckets. The family had long standing connections with Birmingham's public baths, and were well known.[106] New baths establishments often held elaborate opening galas to advertise their facilities. When Erdington Baths officially opened in May 1925, guest appearances included Miss Doris Molesworth, Birmingham's

only representative at the 1924 Paris Olympics and fourth in the World 400m Championship, and Miss Ena Morris, Midland Breaststroke Champion and third-placed swimmer in a five mile swim through London.[107]

Hosting prestigious events helped draw crowds, especially when local athletes were involved. Until well after the Second World War, county, district and national races were individually tendered, and in 1934 to host a county final at a club's annual gala cost approximately £10.[108] Higher level competitions, including minor internationals such as the 1926 England versus Scotland polo match at Woodcock Street Gala Baths were less common, and pulled bigger crowds. By mid century, co-operation between some authorities and clubs enabled such championships, thus stimulating local swimming. Birmingham's bids included £600 for the 1949 nationals, and £300 for the 1964 inter-county speed trials.[109] Galas regularly concluded with a water polo match. The sport had originated in the midlands as an aquatic variation of football and marketed as such, gained considerable following. The introduction to the first WCASA Handbook, 1913, stated,

> This splendid game has perhaps done more during recent years to popularise and cause an interest to be taken in swimming than any other branch of the sport.[110]

It was rough, fast and exciting to watch, but official opinion was adverse. In 1922 Birmingham Baths Committee described the All-England Championship won by Walsall, as a "foul and more or less a free fight". It felt the game was doing the department more harm than good, and advised the ASA that unless remedial measures were taken, it would be banned.[111]

The media had great impact on sport and spectatorship. Developments in printing technology produced cheaper papers, and coincided with improvements in education and literacy. In the Birmingham area, local papers devoted to sport included, Sport and Play (1876) costing 2d, Midland Athlete (1897) costing 1d, and Saturday Night (1882). Swimming-specific publications included The Swimming, Rowing and Athletic Record

(1873), becoming The Swimming Record and Chronicle of Sporting Events after a fortnight, and Swimming Notes (1884), which two years later became The Swimmer.[112] Reports increased the emphasis on winning and esteem for champions, creating sports personalities. Consequently, successful swimmers often turned professional, making their living from public performances. Probably the most famous was Captain Webb. In 1875 when he conquered the Channel, he was heralded a national hero and branded "superhuman" by the British Medical Association. He existed for three years on the proceeds of appearances, and writing books and articles, before returning to professional racing. Sadly, he drowned attempting to swim the Niagara Falls in July 1883.[113] Media coverage expanded people's horizons, and began to draw attention to international stars. In the 1930s, American Pete Desjardins, said to be recognised world-wide as the greatest diver of all time, gave displays. His appearance fee was £18 in 1934, and three years later he performed at the Lucas Annual Gala accompanied by Miss Marion Mansfield, a university beauty queen and member of the American Diving Team successful at the Berlin Olympics. The venue, Woodcock Street Baths, which accommodated 800 spectators with seating for 600, sold out, and reputedly could have done so four times over. It was jested that future events should be organised at Earls Court, London, where the bath was 100 by 200 feet with uninterrupted viewing for 20,000.[114] Contemporary spectatorism in swimming was apparently considerable. In 1929 when Birmingham Association of Swimming Clubs was consulted regarding the reconstruction of Woodcock and Kent Street Baths, it stressed the need for space for 2,500 spectators. It said the ASA was planning for 5,000 at the nationals, and would allow Birmingham to host most major events if a suitable gala bath was available, but for fiscal reasons the corporation declined. However, recollections of people being turned away stimulated demand for large seating capacities in post-war facilities, and in 1943 Birmingham was planning a suburban "supergala bath" accommodating 3,000.[115]

Spectator interest abruptly declined in the 1950s. In spite of an overall increase in club membership, the objectives and age structure were undergoing metamorphosis, and in particular works clubs were subsiding. Pre-war crowds had been dominated by colleagues, friends and family of competitors, and hence spectatorship was significantly affected by post war-urban development schemes, which tended to dislocate traditional working-class communities and the loss of the extended family. Additionally, the advent of television brought Olympic stars into the home, and increased affluence diversified entertainment opportunities, raising public expectations. In 1961 when Birmingham's swimming clubs protested the withdrawal of free gala hire, one commented that "rising admission charges and TV put cinemas out of business - don't let it happen to swimming".[116] To maintain spectator interest sports were forced to adapt, and catering for the needs of sponsors and media coverage often irrevocably changed their nature. For instance, one day matches and paid players were introduced to cricket in 1963.

However, as suggested by the Institute of Baths Management in 1971, it is debatable whether pre-war swimming spectatorship was immense. Firstly, most baths were built on a tight budget and had sparse space. Nechells in Birmingham, was typical, with narrow promenades and just two rows of seats in the gallery. Secondly, from the Public Health Act, 1890, increasingly stringent regulations limited numbers, necessary for safety and because crowd emotions often ran high creating a potentially volatile situation. In the 1890s there was trouble with supporters of Dudley Cricket Club, fighting, using bad language, and molesting players and officials. Statutory control operated in Birmingham as early as 1883 under the Birmingham Corporation Consolidation Act, and following a dangerously large crowd at a polo match, between Aston and Weston-Super-Mare SCs, in 1922, seating plans were required.[117] Thirdly, the actual extent of public interest in swimming is questionable. Even in 1914 the Birmingham and District Swimming Association Handbook considered it disproportionate to the number of clubs, and urged appointment of press officers to harness this relatively untapped resource.[118] The Baths

Department also noted lack of interest. It decided there were far too many clubs whose annual galas, sometimes as numerous as 50, caused the department huge financial losses and the public great dissatisfaction. Whilst recognising that hosting national and international galas was necessary, and subsequently encouraging and helping to finance this, in 1934 it complained about the dissipate income.[119]

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CHAPTER 10: OVERVIEW OF PART IV

Swimming clubs developed from the late 1850s, coinciding with the spread of amateur sport. Numerous factors influenced their inception and progress, leading to a strong tradition but, as Neil Wigglesworth concluded for rowing, availability and quality of facilities were most important.[1] The 1846 Baths and Wash-Houses Act was a watershed. Nation-wide its policy was rapidly adopted in large towns, and the consequent provision created interest and growth in swimming. This was closely followed by development of clubs, with local instructors frequently the instigators. In less populated areas, provision and development of swimming, and correspondingly clubs, were delayed. There is a direct link between quality facilities, and participation and performance. Relatively few clubs were based at outdoor or open-water locations, due to the short viable season. Meeting all-year-round at heated indoor baths had major benefits for maintaining membership and performance standards, but opening was limited and clubs not generally recognised during winter until post Second World War. Furthermore, exclusive club use of pool time had previously been a rarity due to legal restrictions and the reluctance of local authorities. The problems of shared use are axiomatic. It is impossible to teach or train effectively in such an environment. Additionally, clubs were usually restricted to one session per week. As club swimming expanded there was a corresponding growth in competition, and inadequate, unsuitable facilities caused difficulties.

Club fortunes, inextricably linked with local economy, are dependant on people having the time, money and energy to participate. Industrial depression, even on a temporary, local scale, greatly reduced membership and activity. Whilst amalgamation or diversification were obvious means of survival, their application to swimming was limited. Controversy regarding mixed sexes was an inhibiting factor, and swimming was not used as a training medium for other sports. Furthermore, corporation policies acted to

encourage small clubs, which proved costly and inefficient to all parties. Wealthy clubs raised funds for charity but most were heavily reliant on income from social events and gate money. Before the Second World War, galas were designed to be entertaining and succeeded in drawing comparatively large crowds. Team and handicapped events dominated but were interspersed with novelty races and displays, and the program usually concluded with a water polo match. Hosting prestigious events such as a county final was an added attraction. Alternative entertainment was limited and crowds were bound by ties of kinship and community. Drinking and gambling, widely associated with competitive sport, probably gave an added dimension to audience involvement. Spectators provided a target for valuable sponsorship and advertising deals, so programs frequently carried advertisements for a wide range of products and services, with most sports specific or consumable. Often these sought to capitalise by association with swimming's healthy image, or promised enhanced performance. However, swimming never became a major spectator sport, despite repeated demands for baths with larger viewing areas.

Club relationships with local authorities had implications for the use and cost of facilities. In spite of the economic and political benefits of local sporting success, authorities focused on major spectator sports rather than competitive swimming. Friction was frequent because clubs wrongly considered themselves the mainstay of public baths. Key areas of contention were allocation of pool time, charges and regulations, club objectives and training methods, and junior and mixed membership. Some were granted concessions in recognition of their role in promoting participation, and consulted on issues including planned new facilities. Nevertheless, swimming clubs remained relatively powerless, subject to authority whims and stringent regulations. Junior membership was discouraged, works clubs discriminated against and mixed ones prohibited. Repeatedly, decency issues caused problems, and furore ensued when ladies' clubs in Birmingham wanted male instructors, so it is difficult to understand how mixed spectating was permitted. Although swimming was a rational recreation, beneficial to health and hygiene,

and promoted to the working classes, their clubs faced discrimination. There was resistance to their formation in second-class baths and to those which were works based, and friction between types of club. This was partly a legacy of the amateur movement's middle-class origins and early policy, which effected distancing from existing professional sport and exclusion on basis of social class. Its long term impact inhibited the progress of English swimming.

The nineteenth-century rational recreation movement led to religious groups promoting sports, industrial welfare schemes, and the growth of a nation-wide worker sport movement. Hence, there is a strong relationship between the proliferation of industrial works and sports clubs, including swimming. Their origins were supposedly philanthropic, but generally motivated by the potential economic and political benefits. Management strategy was to foster company relations and worker health, and thereby increase production. Sporting success also boosted group morale and improved corporate image. Industrial welfare schemes were manipulative but not necessarily detrimental. Workers benefited by participation, physically and psychologically, particularly through opportunities to gain identity and assert control, and to a lesser extent economically in terms of enhanced employment prospects and prizes. Works clubs, many of which were established during the First World War, thrived in the inter-war period of major expansion, and women's opportunities were particularly enhanced. Emancipation contributed to this, but the government-supported industrial welfare movement in munitions was paramount. Whilst there was no apparent resistance to women's clubs, discrimination was perpetuated in terms of competitive prestige, with comical events frequently assigned to women, and blatant inequality in prizes.

Prior to the Second World War, clubs were predominantly social and recreative. The fashion for outdoor recreation encouraged annual outings which often encompassed a river race. Competitions stimulated participation, but there was greater emphasis on learning swimming and other aquatic skills, and promoting health and fitness. The latter

proved beneficial during the 1930s in preparing the nation for likely war, especially via works-based clubs. Outbreak of hostilities brought major disruption and discontinuation, but post-war the club scene was dramatically transformed. There was overall expansion, encouraged by co-operation from local authorities, but fewer, larger clubs, with reserved pool times. Some small groups continued to meet during public sessions but many failed to reform or were short-lived, due to changing social conditions and rising costs. In particular, women's clubs disappeared as mixed ones became the norm. The development of youth sport, which began in the 1930s, rapidly reversed the age structure of membership, and there was emphasis on training for elite performance. Growth of alternative recreations, especially the advent of television which raised entertainment expectations, accelerated change. Works clubs were severely affected, because of delays in reforming and membership no longer being a priority. Urban redevelopment and employment mobility caused dislocation of families and communities, and work and leisure became increasingly separated. Workers were more materialistic and management ceased valuing investment in sport. The consequent decline in standards and hence interest, created a negative spiral. Swimming spectatorship also abruptly declined. Despite all these factors and their changed nature, clubs thrived. Raising standards is a contemporary theme across all sports, and although swimming is the nation's leading physical recreation, its structure is focused on competition and the ASA increasingly steers towards elite performance. Clubs may provide recreation but this is no longer their prime function.

Notes - Chapter 10: Overview of Part IV

1 Neil Wigglesworth, The Evolution of English Sport. (1992), p.144.

CONCLUSION

During the eighteenth century, the spa movement rapidly expanded. The first bathing facilities were provided and immersion became common. Spas boomed in the first half of the next century with development peaking in the 1830s, and bathing widely accepted as a healthy, rational activity. In large urban areas, private baths establishments were inspired. Aping spas, their facilities usually included small plunge and larger swimming baths, catering primarily for the middle and upper classes. Concurrently, there was growth in bathing at outdoor locations by working-class males. The public baths movement arose circa 1840, but saw little action until 1844 when successful campaigns were launched in Birmingham, London and Edinburgh. Agitation resulted in the 1846 Baths and Wash-Houses Act, enabling local authority provision of facilities, primarily for working-class benefit. The resultant spread was rapid and further promoted participation. Public baths which included washing facilities and swimming pools soon dominated, causing decline of their predecessors, and they experienced sustained expansion. From mid century, advances in provision and participation instigated club formation and school swimming, which in turn encouraged developments. General growth also promoted outdoor participation.

Health issues were primarily responsible for developments in bathing and swimming. Until the mid nineteenth century there was strong medical support for spa treatments, with mineral waters considered a panacea. Patrons were recommended to take advice from resident staff, whose prolonged, holistic treatments frequently proved beneficial. Quaffing mineral waters has subsequently been proven to alleviate metal poisoning, and immersion to cause profound and beneficial physiological changes. Spas developed into health resorts, and taking the waters became fashionable whether or not a cure was necessary. That poor people would also benefit was recognised, and many centres made charitable provision.

By the nineteenth century there was growing concern for public health, especially with regard to the working class, and with advancing understanding of aetiology, a new preventative approach emanated. Action from above was essential, because the masses lacked political organisation and were inhibited by attitudes of suspicion, fear and resignation. Bathing for cleanliness was advocated, greatly expanding outdoor participation, especially amongst working-class males. Although this affronted public order and decency, it highlighted lack of opportunities, resulting in calls for proper provision. However, the baths and wash-houses movement itself, arose directly from the emerging public health debate. From the 1839 Sanitary Inquiry, reform gained momentum, and its first phase, the sanitary revolution, dominated progress throughout the century. Personal hygiene and sanitary infrastructure were key elements, and the Baths and Wash-Houses Act was one of the first in a series. Despite its permissive nature authorities made provision, and their facilities typically offered individual and swimming baths, and other health services including Turkish Baths and laundries.

In spite of widespread denial and parsimony, the baths and wash-houses movement gained support, largely as an acceptable reform choice, serving the interests of people with power and influence. Improving public health was a convenient justification for expenditure, financing other benefits including their own participation. Contemporary debate focused on working-class conditions and the associated moral effects, and provision formed part of the move towards rationalisation. Cleanliness was associated with godliness, and churches were influential. Bishop Blomfield and Rector Dukinfield of the London baths movement were largely responsible for the 1846 act, and two of the five petitions supporting the bill came from clergy. Later, sanitation including baths, became a crusade for supporters of the civic gospel, which was closely allied with religious idealism. Furthermore, there was demonstrable working-class support; despite threat of prosecution outdoor bathing persisted; and whole communities participated in baths' campaigns. Early provision proved the case, virtually obliterating opposition.

Although London's model baths at Goulston Square were intended as the blueprint, Glasshouse Yard provided strong supporting evidence for the bill, and the Baths and Wash-Houses Act was rapidly adopted nation-wide. Provision was according to local needs and correlated with housing patterns, concurrently expanding usage. Hence, baths and wash-houses were the most successful manifestation of the nineteenth-century health debate, aiding numerous people, long before other reforms, and greatly contributing to urban improvement.

From mid century, school swimming developed as a means of welfare, promoting physical and mental health, including discipline and academic achievement, and safety. A good health and safety record was vital to a public school's reputation. Accidents often stimulated bathing provision, but especially so in schools and small communities. The development of physical education had close links with the needs of the military, for which swimming was an essential skill. Naval disasters scandalised the widespread inability, especially that class-related, and helped promote the need for learning opportunities for all. Public school sport led state sector developments, but swimming, was so important that it attracted extensive public support and provision was little delayed. Swimming was soon popular in all types of educational establishments, including universities and girls' institutions, and it spearheaded the development of physical education in state schools. As the century ebbed, there was increasing concern about the poor condition of the working-classes, and its implications for military, and therefore imperial, and economic strength. Preventative emphasis progressed from sanitation, to more holistic welfare. This encouraged expansion of state school physical training and works' welfare programs, including swimming. Some churches and progressive employers were already promoting activities, and whilst such rationalisation did constitute control it was hugely beneficial, increasing opportunities and encouraging involvement. In the twentieth century's first decade, the school medical service assumed responsibility for state physical education, and this has retained a strong welfare emphasis.

During the world wars, welfare programs were essential for sustaining the war effort and morale. Birmingham Baths Department endeavoured to maintain sanitary services. During the Second World War, when public health faced increasing jeopardy, bathing was promoted as contributing to war effort, and a wide range of emergency measures were implemented. These included free baths for the bombed-out and water supplies. In the nineteenth century, baths had similarly aided public health by supplying public institutions and watering streets. During both world wars, baths were extensively used by forces personnel, for training, cleansing and recreation. Swimming saw massive expansion, especially in working-class and women's opportunities, when in the First World War, munitions factories were required to implement welfare programs. In Birmingham many instigated swimming clubs. Similarly in the 1930s, swimming provision accelerated as a result of government rearmament initiatives, intended to prepare the nation for another war. Additionally, baths were important in managing the effects of inter-war depression. Birmingham offered the unemployed free bathing, and nation-wide many baths were constructed or improved as relief schemes, further contributing to community welfare. During the coal strikes of the 1920s and 1950s, public bathing facilities were vital.

In the twentieth century, concerns for public health and safety gradually improved baths' standards. Water purity become a major issue inter-war, and pressure groups manipulated Ministry of Health action. Bathing regulations requisite under the 1936 Public Health Act resulted in implementation of testing procedures, closure of unsatisfactory baths, and continuous purification plants becoming commonplace. Although problems continued, with outbreaks of high bacterial and facael coliform contamination, usually blamed on bather habits or staff and plant failures, pool salubrity improved. Further pressure was exerted by rising public expectations, and the polio epidemic. From the 1950s Thetford, and 1970s Birmingham, temporarily closed baths found unsatisfactory. Water pollution, a long-standing environmental concern, increasingly encouraged sterile enclosure of swimming.

Similarly, growing litigation caused reassessment of facilities and staffing. Although the 1846 Baths and Wash-houses Act stipulated bather security, responsibility was frequently denied and prior to the 1980s serious consideration did not occur. Bather supervision was undertaken by police or attendants, who were usually lacking in training or qualifications and incompetent. Particularly in the nineteenth century, vigilance was affected by staff drunkenness, long hours and multi-tasking. Similarly, instructors were often poorly qualified. Standards of school swimming were particularly affected by the quality of opportunities: with restricted access, large groups, and limited instruction. From the 1920s increasing efforts were made to promote swimming for safety, and school teachers were offered specialist training. After the 1936 Public Health Act, staff adequacy was addressed and post-war more were trained or qualified. Additionally, there was increasing attention to ensuring facility safety, especially with regard to depths for diving.

Although the roots of public baths are entrenched in public health, and provision proved beneficial, the primary outcome for users was recreation. Leisure had been central to the spa experience and swimming pools rapidly became popular, more so than washing baths, although the latter's inherent luxury had recreational potential. Recreative use is indicated by patterns of demand and requests from all community sectors, especially women, schools and clubs. Public concerns for decency and safety encouraged provision, but its location and nature was strongly influenced by public campaigns. The rationalisation movement, initiated in the nineteenth century, promoted swimming for recreation, and proponents pressed for facilities. Although enclosure enabled control, the working class were calculative and imbued participation with their own meanings. Assisted by commercial forces, they increasingly led provision and took responsibility for their own leisure. Progress in swimming instruction, particularly through schools and clubs, extended access to recreation, by providing the necessary skills and interest. Especially beneficial were schemes offering discounted or free admission outside school lessons. Furthermore, swimming baths were significant for opening on the Sabbath from

an early stage, and in the twentieth century provided opportunities for socialising. Peripheral use of bath halls made another valuable contribution to community recreation, especially as alternatives were limited in winter. Birmingham's bath halls were extensively used and had thriving club programs. During the inter-war period the clubs were also open in the daytime as unemployed rest rooms. Despite origins in rational recreation, winter provision was responsive to community needs and desires, and hence successful.

England led the development of world sport, and competitive swimming evolved early. Clubs formed from the 1850s, with predominately adult membership and recreative orientation, offering opportunities in a range of aquatic disciplines. Competition was keen but generally of secondary interest, although local champions were an attraction at galas. These were entertaining and, with limited alternatives, well supported by the community. During the Second World War, Birmingham Baths Department sought club participation in morale boosting, aquatic entertainments. Unfortunately, the post-war leisure boom brought other recreations and apathy to swimming. Youth sport, with intensive training consequent of the new emphasis on winning, transformed club structures and spectatorship dissipated.

Women have swum mainly for recreation. Their opportunities were considerable, although prior to the First World War, working-class involvement was restricted. Overall, there was little opposition or encouragement, but costs, time and biological function were major restraints, and clothing hampered participation. Largely a matter of body control, women were constrained by concerns for purity, as much self-imposed for maintaining their already limited status, as due to male patriarchy. Decency issues aided enclosure and promotion of swimming, but impeded women's involvement. Schools' and works' physical programs were vital to expansion, and the world wars saw women's opportunities generally increase, and massively so in swimming. Clubs established during the First World War flourished, and the spread of mixed bathing improved accessibility, especially during and after the Second World War when it became commonplace. Post-war mixed

clubs became the norm, further expanding women's opportunities. Swimming is now one of the nation's top recreational pursuits, and more women than men participate.

Recurrent themes in the development of bathing and swimming are the effects of industrialisation, financial forces, and provision as a political tool. Industrialisation brought national prosperity and established the middle class. With concurrent growth in communication links, it empowered the nineteenth-century spa boom. Associated mass urbanisation was responsible for the shocking health and living conditions which created need for bathing, and instigated reform. Industrialised cities possessed the wealth and power to implement extensive public works, including baths. Society, and its leisure, became more commercially-orientated. The highly commercialised spa resorts had influenced establishment of private baths, and services offered by public baths establishments were also shaped by their remunerative potential. Equally, market forces were significant to the club movement, underlying the amateur-professional divide, increasing alternative leisure providers, and providing a source of income and material benefits from sponsors and advertisers.

Economics were fundamental to health reform, with sanitation an acceptable reform choice, but financial issues strongly influenced baths provision in terms of timing, location and nature of facilities. Solutions included dual provision with libraries, philanthropy, and public subscription campaigns, which in Thetford and Birmingham advanced provision. Additionally, authorities feared wasting money as even after extensive consultation with existing providers, they were often confronted by problems with the site, water supplies or construction. Nevertheless, once the case was proven, support was usually forthcoming for public baths, school swimming and bath halls programs. From the inter-war period, government finance became increasingly available through schools, unemployment relief and other sporting initiatives. Especially prior to 1890, finance was a major limiting factor for school swimming, but public support enabled its establishment. From 1918 authorities were encouraged to build school baths,

and often did so in the 1960s when provision could be sanctioned in lieu of additional gymnasia. Costs also considerably affected working-class participation, and even after public facilities were available many chose to continue free use of open-water locations.

Finances strongly influence sports club fortunes. Amalgamation, a common solution, was impossible in swimming prior to the acceptance of mixed bathing, but most maximised attendance by diversification. Authorities promoted use of facilities, and noted club contributions, but until well into the twentieth century, income was their primary concern. Friction with clubs, holding exalted opinions of their relative importance, has been a perpetual problem. Access to facilities is a limiting factor on performance standards, and hence the latter are closely allied with the level of authority support. As sporting needs increased, local swimming associations, backed by the ASA, exerted pressure for, and advised authorities regarding facilities.

Provision as a political tool is another trend. Industrialisation increased the class divide, causing withdrawal of already limited bathing facilities whilst simultaneously increasing the need. Tensions between social classes gave impetus to the 1840s health reform with its sanitary emphasis. Working-class unrest was expressed through the Chartist Movement and, with French Revolution horrors still fresh, the upper class and new middle class sought self-protectionism. Attempts were made to pacify and rationalise the working-class by encouraging suitable improving activities, including swimming, although club development was strongly resisted until the First World War. There was also opposition to extending women's facilities if male clientele, especially first-class, would be disadvantaged. Hence, the community functions of public baths helped promote class relations, but did not bring equality. Sanitary infrastructure was central to the era of the civic gospel and municipalisation, with provision of bathing facilities supporting the notion of citizenship, and projecting an image of benevolence and prosperity which enhanced business links.

This study's parameters are broad, and although much interesting and useful material has been revealed, many aspects could be pursued for further research. In particular, statistical analysis of the relationships between bathing provision and participation, and public health. The use of outdoor amenities and history of swimming as a competitive sport have been little investigated, either in this text or elsewhere, and there is need for investigation of sports' club structures.

In conclusion, the modern development of bathing largely occurred circa 1800-1970. Health issues were primarily responsible, especially the preventative approach which emerged with increasing scientific knowledge and concern for public health. A multiplicity of factors have influenced developmental processes, but the most important are the effects of industrialisation, and financial and control issues, the latter including decency concepts and class tensions. Baths, traditionally located in the heart of communities, have catered for local needs. Provided for welfare, they have played an important and diverse role, including crises management, but with recreation the primary outcome.

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Exhibitions:

- "Diving into the Archive", selected by Peter James and "Moseley Road Baths" by Tom Merrillon, Midlands Arts Centre, (13/6-2/8/1998). Photographic exhibitions detailed in Events and Exhibitions Guide, (June/July 1998).
- "Undress'd for the Beach", costume exhibition at Westbury Manor Museum, Fareham, (18/3-10/6/1995).