

Swimming pools could get £1m new look

Up to £1 million could be spent on transforming the swimming pools at Breckland Leisure Centre, Thetford.

Several extra facilities could be provided at the pools to attract more visitors, including a waterslide, flume and large spectator area.

Essential repair work is needed on the two pools, and on Monday Breckland councillors will consider three options to overcome the problems:

- Repair work - costing £100,000, which needs to be completed within eight months

SUMMARY

- Revamp option for town pools
- Waterslide among possibilities

— including replacing filtration vessels, pipework and tiling;

- An £850,000 redevelopment scheme including new poolside terrace, shallow water area for toddlers, bubble spa, waterslide and 50-seat spectator area;
- A £1 million redevelopment scheme, similar to the second

option but with a 100-seat spectator area and flume.

In a report to Monday's meeting, council officials say Breckland Leisure Centre would be "elevated to a major leisure/recreational facility within the region" if redevelopment took place.

The pools would be shut for about nine weeks for work to be done.

Meanwhile, a £200,000 facelift for the leisure centre will be completed in the next two weeks.

A new health and fitness suite with the latest gym equipment plus saunas, steam rooms, sunbeds and luxury changing areas are being put in upstairs. There are separate facilities for men and women.

Downstairs a new cafeteria, shop and function rooms with separate bars have been developed.

The three-month building project at the centre should be finished by the end of next week and all the facilities should be open between March 8 and 10.

Breckland Leisure Management operations manager Mike Eyley said: "This is something the whole community can benefit from."

He said people now travelled to larger towns to use modern health equipment but they would have facilities on their doorstep.

The health suite will be open from 7.30am-10pm Mondays to Fridays, 9am-7pm Saturdays and 9am-9pm on Sundays.

Membership costs £130 per year and includes unlimited use of facilities. Other price offers are available.

Mr Eyley said there would be an increased menu in the cafeteria and the new downstairs function rooms would be accessible to more people, especially the elderly and disabled.

Councillors in swim pool plea

Watton people could be taking a dip in a new indoor swimming pool if determined town councillors get their way.

Their passionate plea to make Watton the site for future plans to build another district swimming pool is to be taken straight to the people who make the decisions.

The town's desperate need for an indoor pool is likely to be discussed as an emergency item at Monday's Breckland Council recreation and tourism committee.

Officers from Breckland Leisure Services were at Tuesday's Watton Town Council meeting to find out what local people wanted.

Janis Crabtree said: "There has been a lot of talk in the past of Breckland having a new district facility and Watton would make an excel-

lent site.

"We have a very good case for having the pool here. We've lost out in the past and we don't want to lose out again."

Bob Nunn, who has worked at Loch Neaton for 20 years, said the outdoor pool's days were numbered.

"The pool's been there since 1959 and it hasn't got many years left. We urgently need to replace it. We need a new indoor swimming pool."

Julian Sims, Breckland's public services officer, said Watton should no longer feel like the town people just passed through to get somewhere else.

"I'm extending an olive branch out to you. I can help you put your case forward and it's up to your district councillor to make sure your arguments are heard," he said.

CONCLUSION

The river pool's origin proved much earlier than its present condition suggests. Citizens aware of its association with Burrell's, assumed it was constructed by the unemployed following works closure in 1928. D. Osborne knew it was 19th Century but thought it was provided because nude bathers distressed Victorian ladies promenading in the First Staunth area. The Town Clerk's Correspondence definitely dates it as 1890, for reasons of safe swimming, and the Author believes she is alone in this knowledge. Although Thetford Grammar hardly ranked as a Public School, Reed was a progressive head, and probably influenced by provision at Eton and others, as well as the 1885 Cambridge University Bathing Shed. He may have been aware of Steedman's 1873 opinion that drowning was the commonest cause of accidental death, however the Author knows of only eight casualties over the period researched. Reed would have known of the 1846 Act and later amendments, but the important 1891 Board of Education Act, was just too ^{late} ~~early~~ to have been a contributory factor.

The re-organised 1922 facility proved a popular and valuable amenity, and was extremely popular amongst the young. The schools had swimming lessons, and some people used it for cleanliness - possibly why in the 1930's the Boys' Council School insisted on the weekly dip. However it was only the river, with one side exposed to the flow. Thetford remained poor until the 1950's so the free bathing elsewhere, popular since Charles II reign, continued, contradicting Henry and Sinclair's complaint that river bathing had seriously declined since the 1846 initiative. Group male bathing persisted until the Second World War years, for both pleasure and hygiene, and their nudity until at least 1909, later than most places. There is no proof of females bathing before 1922, although the Girls' Grammar

almost certainly did. The Town Guide's claim of 1985 was correct, indeed popularity of river bathing at Two Mile Bottom increased in the 1950's and early 1960's. The town continued to use the river pool but awareness of health, safety and hygiene was increasing, and it failed to meet approval of many Londoners. There was enthusiastic support for the pool campaign until people were discouraged by delays, becoming anti both committee and council. Few had attended the original public meeting, so possibly unaware the pool was intended to be vested in the council, who were bound by ever increasing Government directives.

Thetford Spa was typical of the period, and basically a commercial enterprise, although Accum extolled the numerous benefits to health and hygiene. H.D.W did not find the baths accessible to the poor as suggested by Hunt. With the river facility and no baths until 1921 or purpose built pool until 1967, the Bath and Wash-houses Acts did not have the ubiquitous influence, even in small settlements, claimed by Henry and Sinclair.

In conclusion, over a long history of bathing the rivers have served Thetford well, both natural sites and the Nun's Bridges Pool. Participation has been predominantly for leisure, although some bathed for cleanliness, and children have always been encouraged to learn from an early age, with school swimming from at least 1922. River bathing has almost ceased, probably as a direct result of recent publicity of Weil's disease. The 1967 and 1972 indoor pools continue to be important for teaching and serious sport but Thetford's provision for leisure bathing is sub-standard. Currently a million pound remedy for the Sports Centre Pool is being discussed.

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APPENDIX.

The London Times,
The Standard, Morning Post,
The Sun,
The Morning Post.

The Sun.

These are the names of the newspapers which are the most influential in the country, and which are the most widely read.

The London Times is the most influential newspaper in the country, and is the most widely read. It is the only newspaper which is published every day, except on Sundays and public holidays. It is the only newspaper which is published in the country, and is the only newspaper which is published in the country.

The Standard.

The Standard.

The Morning Post.

The London Times, The Standard, Morning Post, and The Sun.

Appeal to Newspapers

10 NUNNERY DRIVE,
THETFORD,
NORFOLK IP24 3EN.

The Letters Editor,
Thetford and Brandon Times,
King Street,
Thetford.

Dear Sir,

As part of my sport and recreation degree at the University of Birmingham I am researching the development of swimming in Thetford and hope that some of your readers may be able to help me.

Any information or loan of photographs, concerning the use of the river for swimming, especially the old Thetford Pool at Nuns Bridge is of particular interest. Similarly any details of the towns-people's active involvement in the movement for providing a new pool, would be welcome. I should be very grateful for any comments relevant to the provision of swimming in the town.

Yours sincerely,



Sarah Batstone

This letter also sent to the 'Eastern Daily Press' and the 'Bury Free Press'.

Newspapers appeals to readers

Bury Free Press, August 20th, 1993

History of swimming

A THETFORD student is searching for information on the history of swimming pools in Thetford for a sport and recreation degree.

Sarah Batstone, of Nunnery Drive, wants to hear from anyone who has information about people swimming the river and especially the old Thetford pool at Nuns Bridges, for her course at Birmingham University.

Any details about people in the town taking an active involvement in providing a new pool will also be useful.

Sarah would also welcome any other comments on swimming provisions in Thetford.

Eastern Daily Press, August 5th, 1993

Pool of information

Sarah Batstone is appealing to EDP readers for information and photographs about the development of swimming in Thetford to help with research for a sport and recreation degree at the University of Birmingham. She is particularly keen to gather details about the old Thetford Pool at Nuns Bridge. Anyone who can help should send information to Sarah at 10, Nunnery Drive, Thetford (Telephone 753856).

Bury and Norwich Post - 16th August, 1892

TOWN COUNCIL

The Quarterly Meeting of the Town Council and Urban Sanitary Authority was held on Tuesday. Present the Mayor (Mr C. Burrell, jun)

A letter from Mr Sutton, asking that some regulations should be adopted to control the bathing at the staunch to certain hours, as it was now quite impossible for ladies, with boats on the river to anything like approach the staunch, was read. The writer did not think the bathers should monopolise the whole of the stream, and maintained that steps ought to be taken to prevent the existing nuisances. The Mayor and others concurred that the bathing was a great nuisance to boaters, but could suggest no practical remedy. It appears that the bathing place on the Common was only fit for boys, the water not being sufficiently deep for adults, and some members thought there was a great deal of sentimentality introduced into this matter. Others thought that a special bathing pond should be made and properly fenced in so as not to in anyway obstruct the free use of the river by those in boats, and as the distance was more than 100 yards from a public road, it would be difficult to obtain any bye-law that would prevent bathers using the river at this particular place. It was, however, that bathers would in future try and behave themselves decently, so as to remove the cause of complaint as much as possible. It was thought that adults might if possible bathe early in the morning and late in the evening, so as to put no obstacle in the way of ladies enjoying the river at proper hours of the day. The whole matter was ultimately submitted to the Navigation Committee for consideration.

JOHN HOUGHEN,

Town Clerk

BOROUGH of THETFORD.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN

That on the 23rd day of July, 1907,
additional

BYE-LAWS

For the good Rule and Government of the Borough,
Were made by the Council of the Borough, and
which Bye-laws are now in force, and of which
all persons are required to take notice.

SPECIAL ATTENTION is
called to those Bye-laws relating
to "**LIGHTS on VEHICLES,**"
"Indecent Language," "Refuse,"
and "Bathing."

Copies of such Bye-laws may be seen at my
Office, London Road, during official hours.

By Order,

JOHN HOUCHEN,

Town Clerk's Office,

Town Clerk.

Thetford, 14th September, 1907.

J. W. CLARKE, PRINTER, THETFORD.

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.

Copy of letter on Town Clerks Correspondence file

May 30th 1889

Dear Mr Mayor,

The recent sad case of a youth being drowned in the river whilst bathing seems to demand that some action should be taken by the proper authorities to provide a suitable place for both boys and adults to bathe. As I am personally a very interested party in this matter, having a number of young gentlemen in my care, and whom I should like to see all good swimmers, they ask you to be kind enough to read the accompanying application and suggestions to the Council at the next meeting. I feel sure of your hearty support, and I do most sincerely trust the baths may soon be a reality.

With kind regards,

I am

Yours faithfully,

Benj. Reed

R.G. Burrell Esq.

Copy of letter on Town Clerks Correspondence file

Public Bathing Station

To the Mayor and Corporation of the Borough of Thetford.

Gentlemen,

I hereby respectfully submit to you the following considerations respecting the desirability of the formation of a fixed and suitable bathing station for the use of the residents of the Borough, and I think that it is to you that such representations should be made for the following reasons:- 1. Because as a Corporation it is in your province to attend to needs of an essentially public matter; 2. because this is a matter that greatly affects the health and safety of your constituents; 3. because your Council is (I believe) the legal custodian of the navigation of the river; 4. because whatever is done to the river bed must only be by your order and sanction and whatever building may be erected will fall under the control of the Council.

The following is a rough description of what seems to me to be feasible.

Baths

With regards to the Baths I think that lengths of the river bed, say 20 yards each, might be levelled, so as to leave the depths of 3', 4' and 5' respectively. Each of these separate lengths should have a painted board with the words "3 feet", "4 feet" and "5 feet" in white letters on a black ground. To each length there should also be stone steps with hand rail.

Dressing sheds

On the bank there might be erected a covered dressing shed or several sheds. The control of this building (or buildings) would either be in the hands of the police or of a curator during the summer months, and the building (or buildings) entirely closed in the winter months.

Site

One site I venture to suggest is below the first lock or staunch.

In conclusion, I hereby most earnestly ask the Council to take this matter up warmly and act with as little delay as possible; and I am sure I may rely on the indulgence of all in . . . to introduce such a vital question.

I beg to remain

Yours faithfully

Benjamin Reed BA

Headmaster of the Thetford Grammar School

Letter from Mayor to Town Clerk re proposed bathing place

ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO BE ADDRESSED TO THE COMPANY

TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESS, "BURRELL, THETFORD"

CHARLES BURRELL & SONS,
LIMITED.
Engineers.
Manufacturers of
COMPOUND SURFACE CONDENSING MARINE ENGINES.
PORTABLE & FIXED STEAM ENGINES.
TRACTION ENGINES, THRASHING MACHINES &c.
STEAM PLOUGHING & CULTIVATING
MACHINERY.



Saint Nicholas Works
Thetford Norfolk
July 8th 1889

John Houchen Esq
Town Clerk

Dear Sir
I have got plans of Bathing place
ready & shall receive rough estimate of
Cost of the same by Wednesday morning.
Would it be convenient to the Committee
do you think to have a meeting either
at 3 or 5 O'clk on Wednesday
afternoon as I have to go from
home on Thursday & Friday —

Yours truly
Robert Burrell Esq.
Mayor.

BOROUGH OF THETFORD.

BATHING.

NOTICE.

A

PUBLIC MEETING

Of Householdors within the Borough, will hold at the

TOWN HALL,

ON

TUESDAY, the 20th day of May,

INSTANT,

For the purpose of taking into consideration the desirability or otherwise of carrying out the proposed erection, by the Town Council, of a **PUBLIC BATHING SHED, &c.**, on the Common near the Nuns' Bridge.

CHAIR TO BE TAKEN AT EIGHT O'CLOCK, P.M.

Robt. G. Burrell,
MAYOR.

Thetford, 10th May, 1890.

B. GALLEY, PRINTER, THETFORD.

BOROUGH OF THETFORD.

NOTICE

Is hereby given, that anyone

COMMITTING A NUISANCE

IN,

OR DAMAGING

THIS

BATHING SHED

will be Prosecuted according to Law.

BY ORDER,

JOHN HOUCHEN, Jun.,

TOWN CLERK.

Town Clerk's Office, Thetford,
June 4th, 1897.

J. W. CLARK, MACHINE PRINTER, THETFORD.

Bury and Norwich Press, 4th November, 1921

THETFORD TOWN COUNCIL

Bathing Sheds to be improved

Special Meeting of the Town Council at Guildhall on Friday Evening.

Hours and Wages

Unemployment Committee had received letter of complaint from Thetford Trades and Labour Council re hours worked and wages paid to men engaged by Council to clean out river. Committee resolved that Council should be told they saw no reason to change these. Resolved Surveyor be empowered to engage additional labour, married unemployed men to have priority and single men without dependants to be not engaged. On reconsideration it was resolved that the west side of Gallows pit to be shored up and banked to path width and river to be cleaned out at the outfall opposite Fisons Maltings No 9.

Bathing Sheds

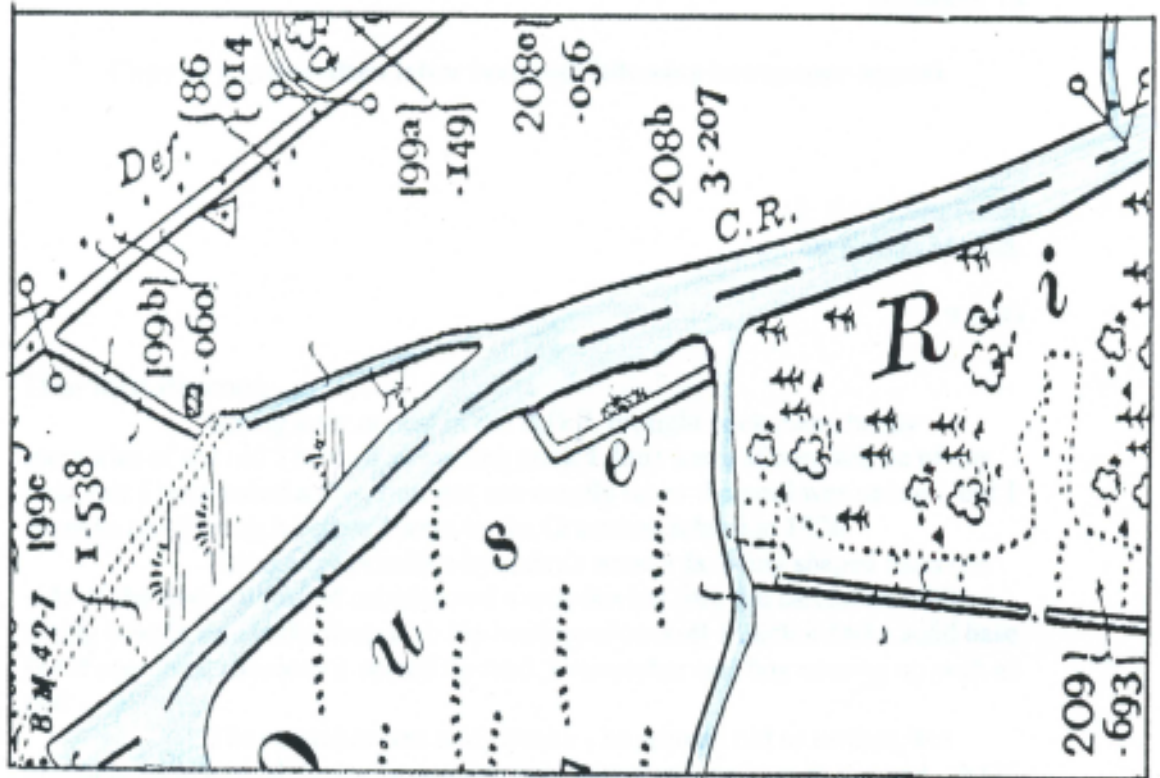
Committee at a subsequent meeting recommended the Council to consider the question of enlarging and carrying out certain needed improvements at the public bathing shed with a view to the utilisation of further unemployed labour. Alderman Oldham said the question of improving the bathing sheds was discussed at last meeting of the committee and it was decided to recommend the Council to make considerable repairs to absorb some of the unemployed labour.

The Borough Surveyor said the existing shed was 120' by 15' and intention was to enlarge this and make it 150' by 36' with improvements. Alderman Oldham said that the committee felt that certain people would pay for a bathe, and they thought, the Mayor especially that there was a desire on the part of schools to co-operate with them if they could keep a proper place. As it was at present it was just used as a playground and to use plain language, boys played the very devil with it.

The Mayor said he felt the need for a proper bathing place had been the cry for a long time, especially where schools were concerned, as there was nothing they could really advertise in the way of bathing facilities to induce pupils to come to Thetford. If they could substitute a respectable place for the present one it was likely to get taken care of, and there would be no difficulty in getting the committee to start a swimming and bathing club. Then they could take subscriptions from private members and the subscriptions should go towards paying an attendant. he suggested subscribers should be given preference on certain days. At the present bathing shed the bank came out into the river and the idea was to grade the bottom from 2' to 2'6", to about 6' to 7' deep. Cubicles were to be made, floors were to be provided and bank strengthened with cement where the piles now were. Thet would then have a very serviceable place which would be a great acquisition to the town.

Councillor Aspland asked whether the entire work should be done by the unemployed of the district. The Mayor: That is the idea. Coun. Aspland: I mean the Council are not going to put the work out to a contractor. Mayor: No. The work is to be done by direct labour.

Appendix 13
THE OLD RIVER POOL - Ordnance Survey 1905



THE OLD RIVER POOL - Ordnance Survey 1928

