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## SUMMARY

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Capita Symonds submitted a planning application to Blackburn and Darwen Borough Council (reference 10/06/1297), for the demolition and redevelopment of Darwen Leisure Centre, Green Street, Darwen, Lancashire (SD 67056 22282) (Fig 1). In order to satisfy planning conditions, the Council consulted Lancashire County Archaeology Service (LCAS), who recommended a programme of archaeological building investigation. In light of the disparate age of the original and later phases of development, the investigation comprised two levels of survey. The original construction at the front (east) of the building was to be investigated to English Heritage (2006) Level II type standard, whilst the modern extensions to the rear were to be recorded to Level I standard. The investigation was to include a rapid desk-based assessment, which would provide a broad historical background and detail the development of the building. In addition, an extensive site investigation was undertaken, comprising written descriptions, as well a comprehensive photographic record, and site drawings of the floor plan and a cross-section of the building.

The survey revealed that the baths was built in 1932, and was intended to be used as swimming facilities in the summer months, and as an assembly and dance hall throughout the winter. Aside from minor cosmetic changes, the building remained unchanged till the late 1960s, when it became apparent that the use of the baths as a dance hall was no longer sustainable, as public interest had waned in the preceding decade. Subsequently, the baths offered year-round swimming facilities, and during the late 1970s, was extended to its present size, in order to provide a range of sporting and social activities. Despite the building reaching its Golden Jubilee in 1993, it was clear that the building was in need of investment to survive. In response, money was received during the mid 1990s from both the National Lottery and the local council, which accounted for the modern refurbishment encountered during the survey.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) would like to thank Capita Symonds for commissioning and supporting the project. Additional thanks are also due to the staff of the County Record Office in Preston and the Local Library in Darwen. The images used in Plates 1 to 5 are courtesy of LET for use in the Cotton Town digitisation project.

Chris Wild, Karl Taylor, Pip Haworth and Chris Ridings undertook the building investigation, whilst Chris Ridings conducted the background documentary research. Chris Ridings wrote the report, and Mark Tidmarsh produced the drawings. Alison Plummer managed the project and also edited the report.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

- 1.1.1 Capita Symonds requested that Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) undertake a building investigation of Darwen Leisure Centre, Green Street, Darwen Lancashire (SD 69056 22282) (Fig 1), following the submission of a planning application (reference 10/06/1297) to Blackburn and Darwen Borough Council, for the demolition and redevelopment of the building. In order to satisfy planning conditions, the Council consulted Lancashire County Archaeology Service (LCAS), who recommended a building recording programme of English Heritage (2006) Level II standard for the original phase of construction and a Level I recording of the modern sections of the building. This included a rapid desk-based assessment, which would provide an historical background and detail the development of the building. In addition, an extensive site investigation was undertaken, comprising written descriptions, as well an extensive photographic record, and site drawings of the floor plans and a cross-section of the building.

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## 2. METHODOLOGY

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### 2.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 2.1.1 Following consultation with the client, OA North produced a project design (*Appendix 1*) to undertake the work. This was accepted by Capita Symonds and OA North was commissioned to undertake the building investigation. This was carried out over several weeks in September and October 2007.
- 2.1.2 The project consisted of a Level II-type building investigation (English Heritage 2006) of the original elements of the Baths, comprising a descriptive internal and external record combined with drawings and a detailed photographic record. The remaining modern extensions to the rear, were recorded to a Level I standard

### 2.2 HISTORICAL RESEARCH

- 2.2.1 A rapid desk-based assessment of the Baths was carried out in order to provide a general historical background for the building and identify any evidence that might date phases of building and rebuilding. This is not intended to be a comprehensive history, but is meant to provide a general context for the results of the building investigation and detailed information, where available, about the building.
- 2.2.2 *The County Record Office (Preston):* in light of the modernity of the building, it was deemed unnecessary to consult cartographic sources. Instead, architects plans and newspaper clippings, as well as any information relating to the commissioning and construction of the Baths was sought.
- 2.2.3 *The Local Library in Darwen:* similar sources were targeted in the local library at Darwen. Particularly useful were the copies of *the Official Souvenir Guide* that commemorates the royal opening of the building. In addition, relevant websites such as *www.cottontown.org* were consulted, for photographic or anecdotal evidence relating to the original Baths or later Leisure Centre.

### 2.3 BUILDING INVESTIGATION

- 2.3.1 *Descriptive Record:* written records using OA North *pro forma* record sheets were made of all principal building elements, both internal and external, as well as any features of historical or architectural significance. Particular attention was also paid to the relationship between the earliest and latest parts of the building, especially those that would show their development and any alterations. These records are essentially descriptive, although interpretation is carried out on site as required.
- 2.3.2 *Site drawings:* architects 'as existing' drawings were annotated to produce a ground floor plan and a section of the buildings. These were produced in order

to show the form and location of structural features and/or features of historic interest. The hand-annotated field drawings were digitised using an industry standard CAD package to produce the final drawings.

- 2.3.3 **Photographs:** photographs were taken in both black and white and colour print 35mm formats, as well as high resolution digital format (10MP). The photographic archive consists of both general shots of the Baths, and shots of specific architectural details.

## 2.4 ARCHIVE

- 2.4.1 The results of all archaeological work carried out will form the basis for a full archive to professional standards, in accordance with current English Heritage guidelines (*Management of Archaeological Projects*, 2nd edition, 1991). The original record archive of project will be deposited with County Record Office at Preston.
- 2.4.2 The Arts and Humanities Data Service (AHDS) online database *Online Access to index of Archaeological Investigations* (OASIS) will be completed as part of the archiving phase of the project.

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## 3. BACKGROUND

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

3.1.1 The county record office at Preston and the Local Library in Darwen were consulted for any relevant source material, such as architects' plans and newspaper cuttings, whilst relevant websites have similarly been examined for anecdotal or photographic evidence. The most significant source of information was, however, a commemorative guide (N78), issued to celebrate the opening of the Baths by HRH, Prince George. This guide, although not exhaustive by any means, is still extensive in the information it records. The majority of factual information outlined in the following sections was obtained from this source material.

### 3.2 PEEL BATHS AND THE NEW BATHS

3.2.1 From the mid-nineteenth century (1853) onwards, the residents of Darwen were served by Peel Baths at Church Street, which was significantly expanded in 1883 (Shaw 1889). However, by the turn of the twentieth century, a 'New Baths' at Shorey Bank was considered, suggesting that the existing facilities were inadequate to cope with the demand from the general public. While this new facility failed to materialise, building a further swimming baths in Darwen remained a consideration. So much so, that in 1928, the Council Health Committee appointed a sub-committee to enquire and report on several issues relating to Darwen's swimming facilities, including the viability and financial practicality of building a new baths. By August of the following year, a report was presented concluding that the building of new facilities was the suitable option. Pursuant to both the Council's and Ministry of Health's approval, groundworks for the building began on 15th June 1931. The 'New Baths' at Green Street, which were designed by S E Eaton, would cost £36,000 in total, with the majority of manual labour carried out as part of an unemployment scheme, financially assisted by the government. Although, JAS Whittaker & Sons Ltd of Blackburn were the main building contractors on site, a further twenty-six companies from all over the NorthWest were involved in the construction.

3.2.2 In under two years, the building was completed and received an official opening by HRH, Prince George (later Duke of Kent), the youngest son of King George V, on 29th March 1933 (Plates 1-3). It covered an area of 3,350 yards<sup>2</sup> (2801.03m<sup>2</sup>) and included both a large and small swimming pool, children's dressing and spray rooms, slipper baths (Plate 4) and Russian Bath, as well as a superintendent's house, boiler and purification rooms (Plate 5), cloak and dressing rooms, laundry and a kitchen (Fig 2). In its first year, it attracted 504 members (*Darwen Citizen* 24/061993), notwithstanding the fact that the swimming facilities were open only part of the year. As 'an example of the endeavour to furnish the maximum of utility with a reasonable economy of expenditure', the swimming facilities were used only throughout the summer months, whilst for the remainder of the year, the large pool was used as an assembly and dance hall. This was achieved by laying a maple boarding



floor, (divided into sections for ease of storage and laying), which, when in place, provided a dancing space measuring 88' 6" (26.97m) by 38' (11.58m), with a seating capacity of approximately 1000. Aside from the royal opening, this seems to be the other memorable aspect featured in anecdotal evidence ([www.cottontown.org](http://www.cottontown.org)) concerning the building. While bookings for the assembly and dance hall were regular, the baths continued to operate on this seasonal basis. However, the changing attitudes and lifestyles of society during the 1960s, prompted a significant decline in bookings for the hall and by the turn of the next decade it was decided that the baths should instead provide swimming facilities all year round (*Darwen Advertiser* 14/02/69).

- 3.2.3 An early photograph of the large swimming pool shows that in many respects the pool has changed very little over the last 70 years. The most significant differences were the changing stalls lining the east and west elevations, which were the precursors of the purpose-built changing rooms of the 1970s. At the west end of the pool, there were several diving boards of various heights, behind which sat a Diocletian window, glazed with what appears to be stained glass. In addition, the east wall of the swimming pool was still an external wall at this stage in the building's development, as indicated by the three windows overlooking the changing stalls. Similar comments may also be made about an early photographic record of the small swimming pool, which apart from its decoration, appears to differ only in the presence of the changing rooms along the east and west walls, and the unblocked Diocletian window on the north wall.
- 3.2.4 The baths were designed to the latest standards and technology, and this was certainly evident in the filtration system (Plate 5). This consisted of three 8ft (2.44m) diameter pressure cast-iron filters, which processed the 115,000 gallons (522,800 litres) of water housed in both the large and small swimming pools. This volume of water was recycled every four hours by means of a 10 hp motor, which drew water from the deepest point in each pool. This was then strained and treated with chemicals, before entering the filter chambers, where it was passed through sand. The process then involved the water being re-heated, aerated and sterilised with chlorine gas, before it was reintroduced into one of the pools.
- 3.2.5 Heat was provided by steam using two sectional boilers, each of 1,580,000 BTU, and these were powered with fuel oil that was supplied by electric blowers to a fuel burner for each. The condensed water from the whole system was recycled to prevent wastage of water or heat. The hot water was supplied by a copper calorifier, that was capable of heating 1000 gallons (4546 litres) of water per hour, which was then circulated by means of an electric pump. A pair of 500 gallon (2273 litres) tanks within the main pool area, were used to mix this hot water with cold, in order to feed the pools and slipper bath areas.

### 3.3 DARWEN LEISURE CENTRE

- 3.3.1 During the early 1970s, the baths became an all-year facility and by the late 1970s, plans were made to improve the range of services. Subsequently, the groundworks for the modern extension at the rear of the complex began in July 1978 (*Darwen Advertiser* 27/07/78), with an official opening in

November of the following year (*Darwen Advertiser* 18/11/79). With this improved capacity and new facilities, the centre provided a wealth of sporting activities and classes, and successfully marked its Diamond Jubilee in 1993 (*Darwen Citizen* 24/06/1993), with a two month exhibition that was opened by Paul Brown, Mayor of Blackburn.

- 3.3.2 However, by the mid 1990s, the building was in desperate need of renovation and refurbishment, especially the ceiling over the large swimming pool. In response, significant awards from the National Lottery and Blackburn Council (*Darwen Citizen* 31/10/96; 11/11/96) allowed the very modern refurbishment, observed during the building investigation. Whilst most of the original decoration has been obscured or lost altogether, the original finishes of the main circulation areas were fortunately recorded in the 1930s. In the Crush Hall (the modern reception), the main entrance doors and reception office were framed in oak, whilst the floor was laid with black and white tiles, as were the adjoining corridors. In the large pool, the surround was laid with small white hexagonal tiles of ‘mosaic type’, whilst the woodwork of the windows and dressing boxes was finished in teak. The surround of the small swimming pool, as well as the Children’s Dressing and Spray Rooms, and most of the Russian Baths were finished with ribbed red tiling, whilst the floors of the Slipper Baths and the Cooling Room (within the Russian Baths) were laid with plain red tiles. In addition, all of the dressing boxes within the small pool room were made from pitch pine, and this was the material employed on most of the wood work throughout the building.

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## 4. BUILDING INVESTIGATION RESULTS

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### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

- 4.1.1 Darwen Leisure Centre is a neo-Classical inspired, two-storey municipal building, built from red brick and sandstone, that has been developed over several phases from the 1930s onwards (Plates 6-9). Whilst the earliest phase at the front of the Baths is characterised by this attractive build, the modern extensions to the rear are built from red brick with steel cladding. Subsequently, in light of this modern, utilitarian appearance, the investigation understandably focussed on the front of the building. These modern rear extensions will still be included within the text, but only where relevant and only in brief.
- 4.1.2 For security, and health and safety reasons, the Leisure Centre has been surrounded by timber hoardings some seven or eight feet high, since it was vacated in December 2006. Unfortunately, these hoardings have precluded a comprehensive survey of the exterior of the building, and much of the descriptions of the external detail rely on what is visible on the first floor and above, and what can be gleaned from the interior of the building. This in conjunction with the blocking of all external doors, and windows, has meant that a detailed survey of the roof(s), as well as discovering the relationships between the various parts of the building was difficult to ascertain.
- 4.1.3 Although the Leisure Centre is actually aligned north-west/south-east along its main axis, for the purposes of this report, the building is assumed to run north to south, with the front entrance and portico lying on the east elevation of the building. In addition, while it is standard OA North practice to ascribe a number to every room for ease of reference, it was felt that this system was excessive for the building, and that ascribing area numbers covering groups of similar rooms (eg the changing rooms) was sufficient (Fig 3-5).

### 4.2 THE LEISURE CENTRE EXTERIOR

- 4.2.1 The original phase of the leisure centre is built from red brick laid in an English Garden Wall Bond (three to one), whilst ashlar sandstone has been employed in the dressings and margins (Plates 6-9). The most striking aspect of the building is undoubtedly the sandstone portico on the east elevation that features a plain, stepped pediment. This design eschews the traditional raking cornice, whilst the horizontal cornice forming the bed of the pediment is rather plain. Beneath this is a sparsely decorated frieze featuring three metopes bearing the date of the construction of the building: 'Baths AD 1932', whilst a dentilated cornice outlines the base of the frieze. This rather stark entablature is supported by more traditional ionic columns, which are arranged in pairs with a pair of flanking, engaged columns completing the portico.
- 4.2.2 Despite the presence of hoardings around the perimeter of the building, it would appear that English Garden Wall (three to one) bond in red brick, is

used throughout the rest of the original phase. In contrast, the modern extension is also built with red brick, but the upper reaches of each elevation are clad with steel sheeting.

- 4.2.3 A stepped brick gable, topped with stone dressings is visible to the rear of the portico, and behind this, sits the roof of the large swimming pool (Plate 6). This is pitched and laid with slate that rises to a central glazed pavilion roof. Despite the presence of a concave parapet of dressed stone either side of the portico, both the roof of the small pool (16), and the slipper baths (3, 7 and 8) appear to be of similar design, whilst the roofs over the two-storey sections at either end of the east elevation are hipped with regular slate coursing and red ceramic ridge tiles (Plates 7 and 8). The hipped roof at the south end features short brick chimneys with stone oversailing and ceramic cylindrical pots, whilst a substantial brick chimney stack with sandstone banding and large ceramic cylindrical pots stands on the hipped roof above the boiler house (10). In contrast to this ornate arrangement, the modern extensions at the rear of the building have flat roofs.
- 4.2.4 Whilst many of the windows have been boarded for both security, and health and safety purposes, those on the front (east) elevation offer some indication of the general design throughout the building. These have flat voussoirs detailed in brick, with exaggerated keys, projecting sills and aprons in dressed sandstone. The majority of these windows are modern, as the original timber frames have been replaced with UPVC ventilator casement frames, but leaded and stained glass has been employed to approximate a similar style to their original appearance. A pair of windows on the rear of the Russian Baths (18) have been brick blocked, but these would appear to be of similar design to those elsewhere, whilst a substantial Diocletian window on the west elevation of the small pool (16) has been blocked with rendered brick.
- 4.2.5 Access to the building is now restricted to a pair of fire doors leading into the maintenance and boiler rooms in the modern rear extension (18), and all other entrance points have been boarded over. Further pairs of fire doors are located on the north elevations of the boiler house and the purification room (10 and 9). At the south extent of the front elevation, there is a UPVC door, which acts as the front door of the self-contained superintendent's accommodation, whilst a further pair of fire doors are situated on the south extent of the adjacent corridor. A further set of modern fire doors are situated on the west elevation of the small pool (16), and the corridors relating to the toilets and changing rooms (13 and 14), and the squash courts (20 and 21). Three doors are also located on the north, south and east elevations of the sports hall (23), whilst open-tread cast-iron fire escapes provide exits from the gymnasium changing rooms (F6) and the gymnasium on the first floor (F7).

### 4.3 THE LEISURE CENTRE INTERNAL ARRANGEMENT

- 4.3.1 The portico entrance leads into a large foyer and reception (Figs 3 and 6) (1) with a transverse corridor affording access to both of the swimming pools (2 and 16) via a set small set of dogleg stairs on the west wall, and also, the rooms adjacent to the foyer and reception area. To the left of the reception,

there is a patrons' cafeteria (3), kitchen (4) and staff rooms (5), whilst the first floor of the south-east corner houses the self-contained caretaker's accommodation (6 and F1-4) (Figs 4 and 6). Similarly, to the right of reception, there is a pair of administration offices (7 and 8), whilst the north-east corner of the building houses the boiler room (10) and purification room (9) for the pools, as well as the Tower Lounge (11) and its associated toilets (12). As at the south-east of the building, the corner is two-storeys high and has a laundry above the purification room (F5).

- 4.3.2 From the transverse corridor, there is a small flight of stairs leading to the large pool, whilst a further pair of corridors offer access to both the large and nursery pools (2 and 16 respectively) and smaller ancillary rooms. The south corridor affords access to the jacuzzi and sauna room (18) to the left, and the weights room (15) to the right, whilst the north corridor allows access to public toilets (13) and the various changing rooms (14).
- 4.3.3 The modern extension of brick and pressed steel sheeting houses a maintenance room, in addition to several boiler and meter rooms (19), but the majority of this section of building consists of a substantial sports hall (23), practice hall and basketball court (22), and two squash courts (20 and 21).
- 4.3.4 The basement (Fig 5) is accessed by a pair of staircases that flank the east end of the large swimming pool. The basement was found to match the extents of both pool rooms above (2 and 16), whilst a transverse corridor comparable with that on the ground floor, provides the main access for pipes and personnel between the pools, and the boiler and purification rooms (9 and 10 respectively). Moreover, a large space was found beneath the Tower Lounge (11), but this could only be observed through a small gap in the north wall of the large pool.
- 4.3.5 The remaining rooms of the first floor are a pair of changing rooms (F6), which are adjacent to the sports hall (23), and the modern gymnasium (F7), which is nestled between the sports hall and the large pool (2). These are accessed via a set of stairs adjacent to the squash courts (20 and 21), as well as via a set of stairs on the corridor to the north of the large pool (2).

#### 4.4 THE LEISURE CENTRE INTERIOR

- 4.4.1 The walls are lined with a variety of materials based on the function and purpose of the room or space. The facilities and circulation areas used by the public are invariably painted plaster(board) or painted plaster(board) and modern ceramic tiles (Plates 10-15). This is true of all the corridors, pool areas and changing rooms in the original phase (east extent) of the building. Only the superintendent's house (F1-4) and the original gent's cloakroom (within 18) have papered walls. Elsewhere, the basement is mainly concrete with occasional brickwork evident (Plates 16-17), whilst both the boiler room (10) (Plate 18) and the purification room (9) (Plate 19) have original bare brick. The series of later maintenance and/or boiler rooms at the south-west corner of the building (19), as well as the children's play area and storage room of the

modern extension, have been left as bare clinker block, whilst the large sports hall and the practice hall have been painted (**23** and **22** respectively).

- 4.4.2 Some rooms have been remodelled with plasterboard and this is particularly notable in the former gents cloakroom (within **18**), that has since become a massage treatment room with two ancillary rooms. Similarly, the women's slipper baths to the right of the foyer and reception (**1**) has been converted into a pair of administration offices (**7** and **8**), as well as a small toilet and ancillary reception space, through the addition of plasterboard partitions. The reception itself, on the right (north) of the foyer/reception (**1**) consists of a trapezoidal room fronted by a modern timber and glass partition.
- 4.4.3 As noted above (*Section 3.3.2*), most of the main rooms had rather opulent red tiled floors, whilst those in the Crush Hall (reception **1**) were black and white. Unfortunately, this original finish has been lost, and most of the modern floor coverings are more utilitarian than decorative. Plain tiles have been used in both pools (**2** and **16**), whilst marmoleum is used across the ground floor aside from the front of reception, the corridors at the front of the building, and the first floor of the superintendent's flat. In addition, rooms **9**, **10** and **F5** are all laid to bare concrete, as are all the rooms within the modern extension, whilst the Tower Lounge (**11**) is laid with modern floorboards.
- 4.4.4 The ceilings feature a variety of finishes and materials, but the reception is understandably the most attractive of the buildings. It has a vaulted, segmental arch ceiling overlying two trusses (Plate 20) that are supported by ornate scrolled corbels (Plate 21), whilst in the centre, there are a pair of timber-framed skylights with stained glass (Plate 22). The roof of the large swimming pool (**2**) is less ornate, but nonetheless impressive, featuring a similar shouldered, segmental ceiling with seven concrete and steel trusses, that rise to a glazed pavilion roof (Plates 23 and 24). The shouldered section of the ceiling is decorated with woodwork featuring a fish-scale motif, whilst the underside of these shouldered sections have wood panelling and plain concave architraves (Plate 26).
- 4.4.5 The small pool (**16**) has a pitched roof/ceiling supported by five composite, arched iron trusses (Plate 27). These are made of L-section iron beams, which are joined by riveted and bolted plates, whilst two pairs of diagonal braces, again L-section beams, provide additional support. The roofs of the former slipper baths (**3**, **7** and **8**), all have a similar arrangement, but these are partially obscured by a suspended ceiling of mineral fibre tiles. In addition, the ceiling in the laundry room (**F5**) (Plate 28), has a similar truss arrangement, but to accommodate the hipped roof, perpendicular and dragon beams have been added.
- 4.4.6 The majority of windows have been replaced with the UPVC windows that were previously noted on the exterior of the building (*Section 4.2.4*). However, some of the originals have been retained, such as those above the loading doors within the purification room (**9**), and those on the rear (west) elevation of the laundry room (**F5**). Aside from the materials employed, these originals appear to have little stylistic difference from their modern counterparts. Certainly, all have lark's tongue, bullnose brick surrounds, well-

cut stone lintels, and timber projecting sills. The exceptions to this common design are the Diocletian windows on the walls of the swimming pools (**2** and **16**). Within the former, there is a pair of Diocletian windows on both the gable elevations. The window on the east elevation is glazed with stained glass, whilst a further Diocletian style window was originally located below. This overlooked the short flight of stairs from the corridor and reception, but it has subsequently been boarded over on its eastern side and tiled-over on its reverse. The corresponding Diocletian window on the west elevation has been retained, in spite of the fact that the modern extension has been added to the rear of the building. In addition, there was a further Diocletian window on the west elevation of the small swimming pool (**16**), complete with a voussoir detailed with brick rubbers, but this has subsequently been infilled, though for what purpose is unclear.

- 4.4.7 The doors throughout the building are plain fire doors, some having a glazed panel and occasionally a light above. These are all most certainly modern and, similarly, the frames would appear to be later additions, rather than the original woodwork detailed above (*Section 3.3.2*).
- 4.4.8 Since the closure of the Leisure Centre, both the boilers and the majority of transmission pipes have been removed. However, sufficient evidence remains to show that the building has operated much the same as it did when it first opened (*Section 3.2.5*). Additionally, of particular interest are the drying racks housed within a cavity in the north wall of the laundry room (**F5**; Plate 29). These comprise five timber and iron, wheeled racks, mounted on iron runners, which can be pulled from the cavity for ease of loading and unloading. A flue or pipe arrangement (not visible) would allow heat to be transferred from the boiler house below.

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## 5. DISCUSSION

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### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

- 5.1.1 Due to its modernity and role as an important municipal building, an excellent record of the early structure has been compiled, and subsequently, the phasing of the building is relatively simple and may be attributed to several broad phases of development within the last seventy years.

### 5.2 PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT

- 5.2.1 **Phase One:** a 'New Baths' was proposed as early as 1899, as a replacement for the existing Peel Baths, but the project never materialised, and it was a further 32 years before the groundworks for the building finally began in 1931. Within two years the building was completed and duly received a royal opening from HRH Prince George, son of King George V. This original phase of construction comprised approximately half (3350 yards<sup>2</sup>) of the modern Leisure Centre (Fig 2) and facilities included both a large and small swimming pool (2 and 16), children's dressing and spray rooms (15 and 17), slipper baths (3, 7 and 8) and Russian Bath (18), as well as a superintendent's house, boiler and purification rooms (10 and 9), cloak and dressing rooms (within 11 and 18), laundry (F5) and a kitchen (within 11). It is evident that some of these have remained practically unchanged for over seventy years, whilst others have been dramatically altered to meet the present needs and demands of the visiting general public. Indeed, by this point, there was no requirement for the changing rooms and toilets included on the ground floor plan (Fig 3) (13 and 14 respectively). The poolside changing facilities within 2 and 16 themselves were sufficiently adequate to cope with the volume of members at the time.
- 5.2.2 **Phase Two:** as such, the building remained unaltered for nearly forty years, (apart from cosmetic changes) and it was only the decline of winter bookings for the dance hall (the large swimming pool 2), which prompted the move towards all-year swimming facilities. Subsequently, the building of the large toilets and changing room block to the north of the complex (13 and 14), was completed, in order to accommodate the growing number of patrons. In light of this, the windows on the north side of the swimming baths were blocked with brick. The improved changing room facilities meant that the children's foot baths and children's dressing rooms could be altered, in order to create a space latterly used as a gym (15), as well as smaller changing rooms (17). At the same time, the former 'dressing room and supper room' was extended and had by this stage, become known as the Tower Lounge (11). In addition, the ladies cloak room was partitioned into three with plasterboard, to create a small rectangular room, latterly used as creche facilities (12), and a ladies and gents toilets (12) for the patrons of the Tower Lounge (11).
- 5.2.3 **Phase Three:** within only a few years (the end of the 1970s), the Leisure Centre was expanded to its present size, with the building of the brick and steel-clad extension at the rear (west) of the building. This provided squash



facilities, as well as a large basketball court/practice area, and large sports hall, thus greatly improving the range of activities on offer. This new build masked the Diocletian window on the west elevation of the large swimming pool, and this would appear to be the reason why its counterpart on the west wall of the small swimming pool was blocked at the same time. During the same years, the extension for the sauna at the south end of the complex (18) was added, and the windows, which lay on the west wall of the building were infilled, no doubt to accommodate the refurbishment within. In addition, the building appears to have undergone some significant remodelling around the reception area. The adjacent room, formerly the ladies slipper baths, was partitioned into two small office spaces (7 and 8) with plasterboard, whilst a further plasterboard partition was added to the former, in order to create the small office space to the rear of the reception booth. Similarly, the gents slipper baths was converted to a cafeteria (3), and as a result, suspended ceilings of mineral fibre tiles were added in all three rooms.

- 5.2.4 **Phase Four:** by 1993, the baths had reached its Diamond Jubilee, but it was clearly in need of heavy investment in order to repair and maintain the existing structure. The remaining phase involved the refurbishment of the building, utilising grants from both the National Lottery and Blackburn Council.

### 5.3 CONCLUSION

- 5.3.1 The building is an interesting mix of 1930s architecture and very modern design. This is particularly evident in the contrast between the original neo-classical elements at the front of the building, and the rather stark and functional steel-clad extension at the rear. The interior is similarly heterogeneous, with several sections of the building such as the boiler room (10), purification room (9) and laundry (F5), having changed very little in 70 years. These seem incongruous compared to the most recent elements of the building, but even those parts of the building which have received modern refurbishment, such as the pools (2 and 16) or the sauna (18), still retain both their function and their early character.

### 5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.4.1 The building investigation and desk-based assessment were intended as a lasting record of the structures and, as such, no further investigation is required.

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## 6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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