

MILL ROAD HISTORY PROJECT
BUILDING REPORT

Bath House, Gwydir Street, Cambridge

Gwydir House, 99 Mill Road (c.1850–1913[?])

Public Baths, Gwydir Street (c.1927–76)

Neighbourhood Centre (1978–present)



Julia Ewans

The Mill Road History Project was officially launched in 2013 under the umbrella of Mill Road Bridges¹ to study the heritage of Mill Road, Cambridge, its buildings (residential, commercial and industrial), institutions and community. It was supported by a two-year grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

First Edition – October 2015

Author: Julia Ewans

Cover picture: The Bath House (photograph by Malcolm Mitchell of the Bath House Association)

¹ 'Mill Road Bridges seeks to grow and maintain the community spirit, heritage and rich cultural diversity of the Mill Road area by improving the flow of information between and about individuals, businesses, voluntary organisations and local stakeholders.'

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Abbreviations

CA	Cambridgeshire Archive in Shire Hall
CC	Cambridgeshire Collection in the Central Library
CDN	<i>Cambridge Daily News</i>
CEN	<i>Cambridge Evening News</i>
CN	<i>Cambridge News</i>

NOTE

This report investigates the building now popularly known as The Bath House, which stands on the corner of Mill Road and Gwydir Street. Belonging to both streets, the site up to 1913 bore the postal address '99 Mill Road'; in 1914 it was redesignated as '[unnumbered] Gwydir Street'. The site has been occupied successively by two buildings: Gwydir House to c.1913, and the present building since c.1927.

The present building, formerly providing public baths to the local population, has since 1976 been a community centre. Although not a listed building it is considered to be a 'building of local interest' (BLI) and a 'focal building' within the Mill Road Conservation Area.²

This report has been compiled by Julia Ewans with the assistance of Robert Turner, Suzanne Longhi, Malcolm Mitchell, Caro Wilson, Ian Bent and Lucy Walker, and photography by Peter Bridge.

Current postal address:

[194] Gwydir Street

Cambridge CB1 2LW

Location

corner of Mill Road and Gwydir Street

National Grid reference:

Map ref: TL 46254 57879

Latitude: 52 199743 N Longitude: 0 13859242 E

² *Mill Road Area: Conservation Area Appraisal* (Cambridge City Council, June 2011), p. 28.

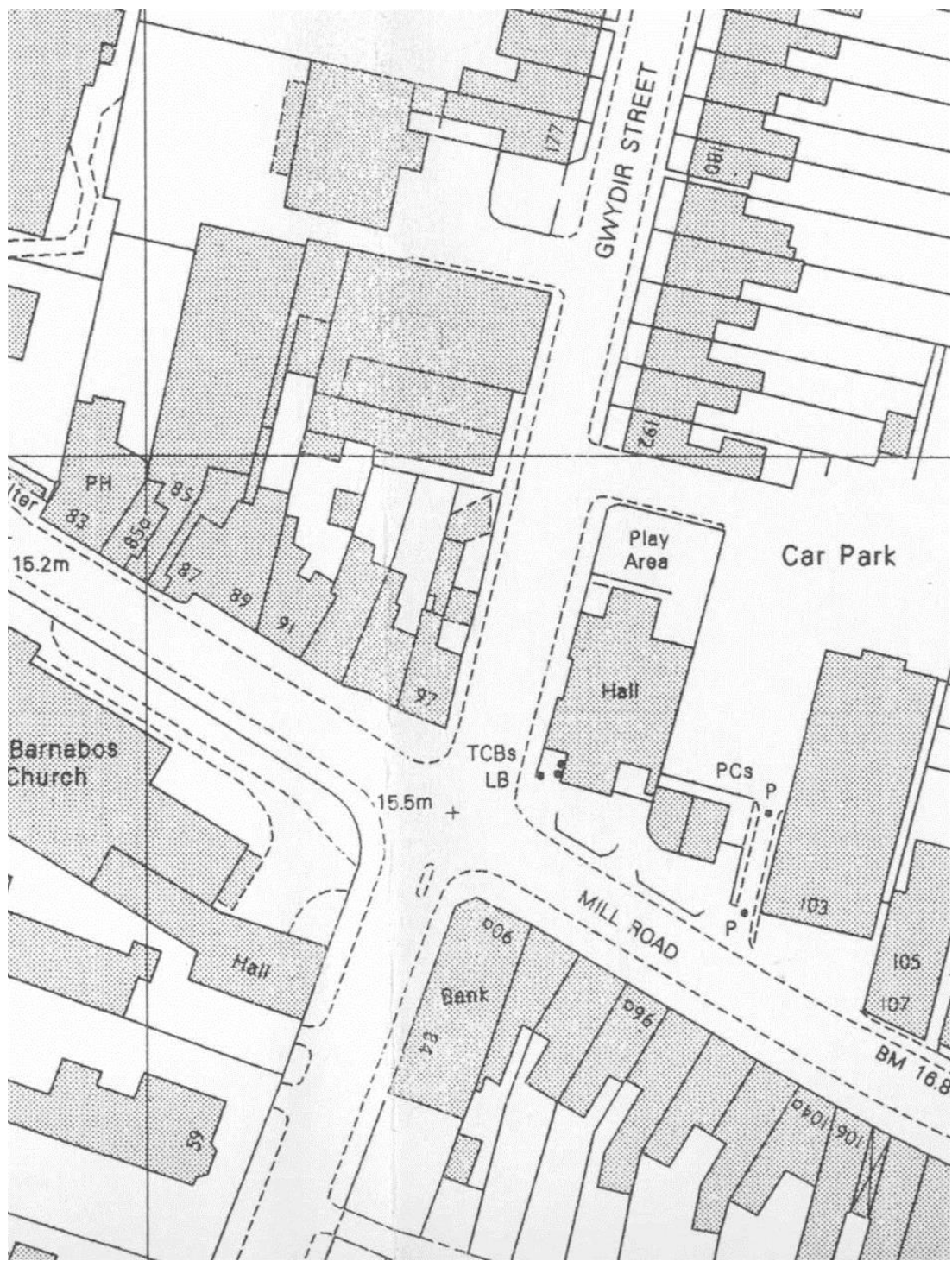


Figure 1 – Ordnance Survey map 1989 (detail)

1. THE SITE BEFORE 1913

The Bath House stands on the site of Gwydir House, which was one of the first houses to be built on Mill Road. Gwydir House was also known as 99 Mill Road and as 'The Doctor's House'.

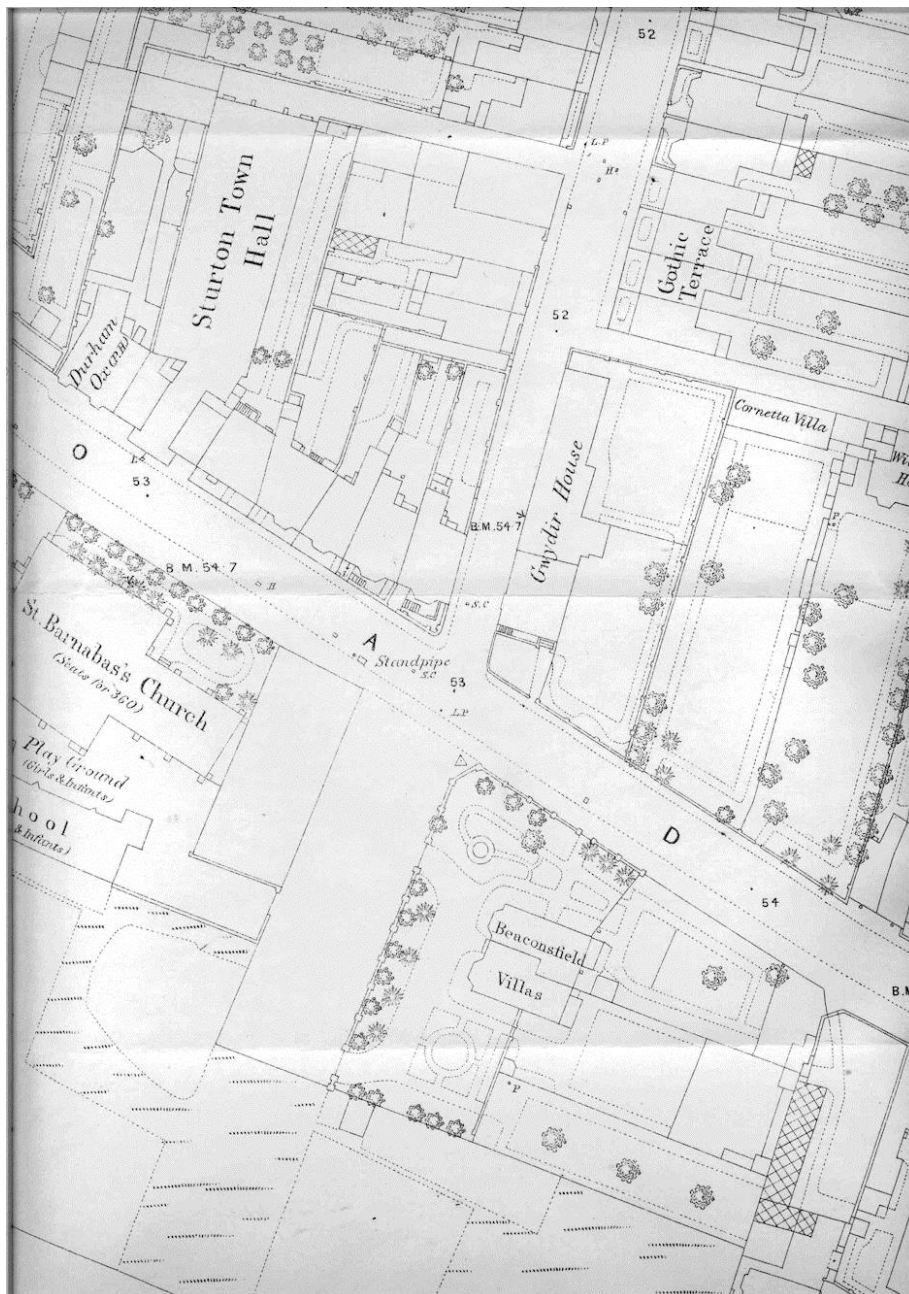


Figure 2 – Ordnance Survey map 1886 (detail)

Owners and Occupiers of Gwydir House³

- 1850 James Naden, linen and woolen draper, is reported as building the house in May 1850, and is recorded as its occupant in the census report of 1851 with his wife, two children, mother and a servant.⁴
- 1858 Joseph Wentworth [PO] Note: in 1847 and 1850 Joseph Wentworth of 24 Trumpington St. is described as Estate Agent, Undertaker, Upholsterer and Auctioneer – perhaps estate agents saw the value of Mill Road from an early time.
- 1861 [Captain] Rolfe Leeson and his wife Flora are recorded as occupants of Gwydir House with two servants, but are 'on a journey' on the day the 1861 census was taken.
- 1863 Captain Leeson⁵ is described as tenant in an advertisement for an auction of Gwydir House to take place on 30 January 1863 (Figure 3). The auction arranged by Wentworth and Son. The sale is described as being by direction of the Mortgagee under a power of sale. Perhaps someone was in financial trouble?
- 1864 John Dunn MA [PO and S]
- 1869 John Dunn now described as Rev John DUNN
- 1874–78 William Stodhart (Schoolmaster) [S 1874]
- 1892 no entry [K]
- 1896 Edwin Stanley Wood LRCP & LM Ire. & MRCS Eng. Physician and Surgeon [K]
- 1898 Stanley E. Wood (physician/surgeon) [S]
- 1904 David Livingstone Hamilton FRCS Edin. Surgeon [K]
- 1907 Mrs Waters- Gwydir House Surgery Stables [S]
- 1908 John Charles William Graham MRCS Eng. LRCP Lond. Surgeon, also Recruiting Office for Royal Navy and Marines (Wm Waldron recruiting officer) [K]
- 1910 J C W Graham , MA, MD, BC (Cantab.) Hon Clinical Assistant Eye Dept. Addenbrooke's Hosp. [S]
- 1911 The Census records (Figure 5) show John Graham living at Gwydir House with his wife, three children, his mother and three servants. The house is described as having twelve rooms.
- 1912 As above, but Recruiting Office now recorded at 101 Mill Road.
- by 1913 The Borough of Cambridge had bought the property. The directories for 1916, 1922 and 1925 contain no mention of 99 Mill Road and nothing in Gwydir Street either.

³ Sources: Kelly's Street Directory (K), Spalding's Street Directory (S), Post Office directory (PO). These can be consulted in the Cambridgeshire Archives at shelfmarks C47.2–4.

⁴ See Brigham: 'Mill Road Early Development: 1823–1851', Mill Road History Project Building Report, p. 32. Mr. Naden is recorded as the occupant in the Census report for 1851. See report in *CIP* 11 May 1850. An advertisement in *CIP* 18 May 1850 offers an adjacent piece of land for sale, in so doing corroborating the person building the house as Naden. *CIP* 20 July 1850 reports the theft of 'a brass tap and a quantity of lead piping' from the 'new house up the Mill Road belonging to Mr Naden, draper' (thanks to Allan Brigham for these latter items of information).

⁵ By 1865–66 Captain Rolfe Leeson lived at 23 Fitzwilliam Street [S].

FRIDAY NEXT.

**Freehold Detached Villa Residence,
WALLED-IN GARDEN, COACH HOUSE,
STABLE, &c.**

MILL ROAD, PARKER'S PIECE, CAMBRIDGE.

TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION, BY
WENTWORTH & SON,

At the Lion Hotel, Petty Cury, on **FRIDAY** next, Jan. 30, 1863, at Seven for Eight o'clock in the evening, by direction of the Mortgagee, under a power of sale.

The Modern and Substantially erected Brick and Slate **VILLA RESIDENCE**, known as "Gwydir House," very pleasantly situated on the Mill Road, the front of which commands a picturesque view, embracing the Gog Magog Hills, and surrounding country. The House is of Modern elevation, approached by a flight of stone steps, and protected from the road, by a neat iron palisade fence, containing entrance hall, dining, drawing and breakfast rooms, four cheerful bedrooms, water closet, two excellent kitchens, (one of which has a boarded floor), pantry, cellars, &c., together with the neat and well planted walled-in Garden, large coach house, stable, &c., as now in the occupation of Captain Leeson.

N.B.—The above Residence is built in a superior manner, and there is an excellent supply of water. The Land Tax is redeemed. The Fixtures to be taken at a valuation. The present tenant, Captain Leeson, will allow parties to view upon producing an order from the Auctioneers.

For further particulars, enquire of **EBENEZER FOSTER**, Esq., Solicitor, Trinity Street, or of **WENTWORTH & SON**, Auctioneers, Valuers, and Estate Agents, 23, St. Andrew's Street, Cambridge.

Figure 3 – Auction of Gwydir House (CC; History of Gwydir Street website)

How many Mill Road properties enjoy a 'picturesque view of the Gog Magog Hills' today?



Figure 4 – Believed to be the ‘The Doctor’s House’ in 1908 (CC)

CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.

Number of Schedule 208
(To be filled up by the Enumerator)

Before writing on this Schedule please read the Examples and the Instructions given on the other side of the paper, as well as the headings of the Columns. The returns should be written in Ink.

The contents of the Schedules will be treated as confidential. Strict care will be taken that no information is disclosed with regard to individual persons. The returns are not to be used for proof of age, as in connection with Old Age Pensions, or for any other purpose than the preparation of Statistical Tables.

NAME AND SURNAME	RELATIONSHIP TO HEAD OF FAMILY	AGE AND SEX	PARTICULARS AS TO MARRIAGE				PROFESSION OR OCCUPATION		BIRTHPLACE OF MOTHER	BIRTHPLACE OF FATHER	EDUCATION	REMARKS
			Married	Single	Widow	Divorced	Profession or Occupation	Industry or Service with which connected				
1. John Charles Thomas Jones	Head	39	Married				Surgeon	481	Cardiff	Cardiff	Cardiff	400
2. Elizabeth Ann Jones	Wife	48	Married				Laundress				Cardiff	
3. David John Thomas Jones	Daughter	8					School child				Cardiff	380
4. Mary Elizabeth Thomas Jones	Daughter	5 1/2					School child				Cardiff	
5. David John Thomas Jones	Son	1 1/2					Infant				Cardiff	
6. John Jones	Widow	78									Cardiff	320 340
7. Mary Jones	Widow	27					Cook		York	Cardiff	Cardiff	260
8. David John Thomas Jones	Daughter	19					Laundress		York	Cardiff	Cardiff	420
9. David John Thomas Jones	Son	12					School child		York	Cardiff	Cardiff	

(To be filled up by the Enumerator)

(To be filled up by, or on behalf of, the Head of Family or other person in occupation, or in charge, of this dwelling)

Signature: J. C. Jones
 Printed Address: 12, Mill Road, Cardiff

Figure 5 – Gwydir House : 1911 Census report

2. ACQUISITION OF SITE BY THE BOROUGH OF CAMBRIDGE

In 1912 Gwydir House' was 'compulsorily purchased' by the Borough of Cambridge. The legislation quoted in the documents shows the site was required for road widening.

The 1888 O/S map (Figure 2) shows the Gwydir Street frontage of 'Gwydir House' considerably further forward than the present day front of the Bath House. The present day Bath House has a frontage in line with the building line of the cottages further along the street (Figure 3).

Over time the site was considered for use as a school by the Council's Education Committee before providing a site for public baths.

Page 312 of Borough of Cambridge Lease Book⁶ (a misleading title as it contains copies of conveyances as well as leases) records a copy of :-

an Agreement made on 6th February 1912 between William Pryor of Gresham House Gresham Road Cambridge Gentleman (Vendor) and the Mayor Aldermen and Burgesses of the Borough of Cambridge(Purchaser)

By virtue of the Provisional Order to enable the Purchaser to put in force Compulsory Purchase Clauses in the Lands Clauses Acts as confirmed by the Local Government Board's Provisional Orders Confirmation (no5) Act 1908 the Vendor agrees to sell and the Purchaser agrees (subject to the sanction of the Local Government Board to raising the necessary loan) to purchase at the price of £1,250. All That piece of ground situate next to the Mill Road in the Borough of Cambridge containing in width next the Mill Road and measuring in line with the fence against the same 66 feet and at the back - next an Occupation Road of the width 10 feet – 64 feet and in depth on the North West side thereof next Gwydir Street 125 feet and on the South East side thereof 146 feet Together with a dwelling house called or known by the name of 'Gwydir House' walls stable Coach House Harness Room and other buildings erected thereon or on the same part thereof as the same is now occupied by John Charles William Graham in fee simple in possession Subject to a lease dated 27th November 1897 made between Emma Sanderson Lizzie Turner and Frederick Herbert Sanderson (1) and Edwin Stanley Wood (2) for a term of 21 years from 25th December 1897 interest now vested in JCW Graham.

The Vendor's solicitor is recorded as Mr A A Walker. Completion was to be on 24 June 1912 although it could be delayed eighteen months in order to get sanction for the loan.

The same Lease Book⁷ records completion of the sale as follows:-

Indenture (Conveyance) dated 14th October 1913 Between William Pryor and the Mayor, Aldermen and Burgesses of the Borough of Cambridge

Under the Powers of the Public Health Act 1875 agreed to buy for the purposes authorised by Section 154⁸ of the said Act at price of £1250.

The property conveyed is described using the same words as in the Agreement for sale but included 'Together with a right of way over the occupation Road of width 10ft situated at the back of the premises and subject to the lease'.

⁶ CA: CB/2/CL/17/17 – p. 312.

⁷ CA: CB/2/CL/17/17 – p. 492.

⁸ Section 154 of the Public Health Act 1875 was the power to purchase premises for improving streets 'Any urban authority may purchase any premises for the purpose of widening, opening or otherwise improving any street or (with the sanction of the Local Government board) for the purpose of making any new street.'

3. CONSTRUCTION OF THE PUBLIC BATHS

Why were Public Baths needed?

Although a prosperous, expanding town in the 19th century, Cambridge was no cleaner than in previous centuries. Life expectancy was low – as in other British cities. Damp and overcrowded housing and poor sanitation left people vulnerable to diseases such as tuberculosis, pneumonia, diphtheria, typhus and smallpox. Typhoid was endemic and epidemics of cholera recurred in these overcrowded urban conditions.

These illnesses were not widely understood, and many believed cholera and similar diseases were caused by 'bad air' – a 'miasma' emanating from decayed organic matter. Germ theory, or bacteriology – the idea that disease is due to tiny invasive beings – was one of medicine's true revolutions in the late 19th century. One of the pioneers, Louis Pasteur, was able to demonstrate the microbial causes of many diseases. However, doctors were slow to accept and popularise this vital information and the impact of germ theory on public health remained limited until the early 20th century.

By 1901, the population of Cambridge had expanded enormously, reaching a total of 30,000. With the arrival of the railway and other associated trades and industries, the Romsey area grew rapidly and the existing sanitation was inadequate – hence the need for this local bathhouse. As late as the 1960s, public bathhouses like this were still an important local amenity for many working class men and women, and the very last bath was finally run here in 1977.⁹

The idea of the construction of public baths was discussed several times before any concrete action was taken by the Borough. Sites on Laundress Green, Christ's Pieces and Sleaford Street were considered.

In Margaret Elizabeth Keynes' book about Newnham Grange¹⁰, there is mention of Prof George Darwin (her father) writing to complain about the Corporation's plan to commemorate the Queen's jubilee in 1887 by erecting public bath-houses on Laundress Green opposite the Old Granary where he lived. She quotes the letter in full, and then writes:

Whether it was Professor Darwin's grand protest or opposition from the general public that prevailed upon the Corporation to drop their scheme, dropped it was. It was not until 1929, after at least one more abortive attempt had been made to get public bath-houses that the borough at last opened its first one on a site at the corner of Mill Road and Gwydir Street, where they still are. This seems a surprisingly long time to have to wait for the supply of such a social need, but perhaps it was argued that, as the colleges existed without bathrooms, none were really needed in the town.

⁹ From *800 years of Death and Disease in Cambridge*, Audio Walk, website of the Institute of Public Health in the University of Cambridge (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 2009).

¹⁰ Keynes, Margaret Elizabeth, *A House by the River: Newnham Grange to Darwin College* (Cambridge: Darwin College, 1976), p. 77.

Christ's Pieces was considered as a possible site. Previously owned by Jesus College it was sold to the Borough Council in 1888, with a restrictive covenant that it should be kept for ever as a public space. In 1903 M A Hyman felt it would be an ideal site for public baths:

Vast numbers of undergraduates are at present unable to obtain the very necessary hot bath, as only a small proportion of licensed lodgings have fixed baths with hot water supply and few of the colleges are sufficiently equipped in this respect for those in residence. Country people of both sexes would also make use of the baths in the daytime.¹¹

In a newspaper report¹² of the speeches made at the opening of the public baths in 1927 some history of the decision making process was recorded. Although making a joke about the delay in bringing public baths to the population perhaps not everyone shared in the hilarity:

Dr J H C Dalton Chairman of the Public Health Committee, in outlining the efforts made in the past to establish public baths in the town thought that all would agree that the Council had not acted with any undue haste in that matter. (Laughter) He first came on to the Council in 1898, and the subject of providing public baths was then a burning question. Even in that far away time it was thought necessary to build places where people could obtain a bath when they wanted one, but matters unfortunately did not develop far. A few years afterwards a small number of ratepayers decided to take the matter up, and the result was a town meeting in 1902 at which it was decided to support the Public Baths and Washhouses Act. The matter was eventually taken up by the law and property Committee but the only suitable place that could be found was a plot of grass on Christ's Pieces. This scheme eventually fell through, for, during the next seven or eight years nothing appeared about it in the minutes.

Eventually the question was taken up by the Public Health Committee and an endeavour was made to convert a house in Sleaford Street into public baths and a lodging house. Unfortunately the outbreak of war interfered with this project and the matter was not revived until the cessation of hostilities when the Cemetery and Commons Committee took the question up and succeeded in providing a swimming bath. A suitable site for the erection of baths was sought, and when the Education Committee relinquished their claim to the Gwydir Street site, the spot was fastened on to because it was felt right that that was the place in town where the baths would be required and he felt that a better place could not have been chosen (Hear, hear) The intention was that if these baths proved successful similar buildings could be erected in other parts of the town. Cambridge had got its experience in this matter from Bradford which had seven or eight such centres. Of course there had been many difficulties, but all had been surmounted. The original estimates were supplied by the former Borough Surveyor Mr Julian and these had been taken up by Mr Teasdale who had carried on the work with great success. (Hear, hear). He (Dr Dalton) understood that when the bill came in no supplementary payment would be required by the Council.

¹¹ CN 4 April 2007.

¹² CDN February 1927.

The Official Record of the Building of the Public Baths

The Cambridgeshire County Archive houses the minute books for the then Borough of Cambridge. References to public baths are few and far between before 1923, however the Public Health Committee Minute Books record in some detail the decision made in 1923 to construct the Bath House, the cost and the eventual opening in 1927. Unfortunately the original drawings and specifications prepared by the Borough Surveyor have not come to light in the archive.

Public Health Committee Minutes 1917 to 1922¹³

- 7 Jan 1919 A letter was read from Mrs Tillyard on behalf of the Lady Managers of the Elementary School on subject of Public Baths. Agreed letter be referred to the Subcommittee.
- 20 Jan 1919 In Subcommittee it was agreed that the Full Committee be advised to recommend to the Council to abandon the scheme for provision of Baths for men and women, Cleaning Station and lodging accommodation for women in Sleaford Street and authorise Committee to consider whole question of the provision of Public Baths
- 14 Feb 1919 Committee agreed minute of Subcommittee be approved
- 25 Nov 1919 Resolved on proposition of Cllr Thompson seconded by Cllr Pearce that Subcommittee be requested to consider question of provision of Public Baths
- 23 Dec 1919S Subcommittee agreed to defer question of provision of Public Baths
- 27 Jan 1920 Subcommittee – again the question of Public Baths was adjourned to another meeting

No further mention of the provision of public baths appears in this volume of minutes.

Public Health Committee (PHC) Minute Book 1922-28¹⁴

- 8 June 1923 Sub Committee - Chairman brought before the committee the question of the provision of public baths and suggested the use of the site belonging to the corporation at the junction of Gwydir Street and Mill Road. It was agreed that if land not required by Education Committee, Council should be asked to apply to Ministry of Health for permission to reserve it for the erection of public baths.
- 11 Sept 1923 A letter was read from Education secretary stating that Education Committee had concluded that Gwydir Street site not suitable for school purposes
- 12 Oct 1923 Sub Committee - It was agreed Council should be asked to instruct Borough Surveyor to prepare plans of site for the erection of a building containing 18 slipper baths and two douche baths- this would occupy half the site. Borough

¹³ CA: CB/2/CL/18/9

¹⁴ CA: CB/2/CL/3/18/10

Surveyor was not able to give an estimate of cost without making detailed plans but considered scheme could be carried out for £4,000 to £5,000.

16 Oct 1923 Full PHC – Minute of Subcommittee read and adopted and submitted to Council for final approval.

The *Cambridge Evening News* reported:

Cambridge Public Health Committee wishes to erect a building Containing 18 slipper baths¹⁵ and 2 douche baths¹⁶. Dr Dalton welcomes the idea. Three quarters of houses in Cambridge have no bath and there is only one place in Cambridge where there is a suitable space.

The Public Health Committee's minutes continue to provide the official record of the coming-into-being of the public baths:

- 15 Jan 1924 Plans for proposed baths on Gwydir Street site were produced and it was agreed plans be primarily approved and Borough Surveyor requested to prepare complete plans and estimates for fittings.
- 22 Jan 1924 Full PHC – Borough Surveyor attended and informed Committee as to action taken by him with regard to the fittings required for proposed baths
- 26 Feb 1924 Full PHC – Borough Surveyor presented a plan for construction of the public baths. He estimated cost at £4–5K. Agreed Council be recommended to approve plan and authorised Borough Surveyor to employ a quantity surveyor to prepare the necessary quantities. [Note: the plans referred to have not been located in the Archive.]
- 15 July 1924 Full PHC – Borough Surveyor presented a report with regard to the cost of proposed public baths at junction of Gwydir Street and Mill Road. The estimated cost of the whole works was £7,000. It was resolved to apply to the Ministry of Health for a loan of £,7000.
- 20 Jan 1925 The Town Clerk presented a letter from the Ministry of Health with regard to application of Council to borrow the sum of £7,500 for erection of the public baths, drawing attention to present shortage of skilled building labour and enquiring if Council could not defer the scheme unless they were able to substitute some other form of construction. After considering a report from Borough Surveyor it was resolved that Town Clerk be asked to apply to Ministry of Health pressing for application be acceded to.
- 24 Feb 1925 The Borough Surveyor submitted a report on scheme prepared by Cllr Morley. Resolved Council be informed of conclusions of Borough Surveyor and recommended Town Clerk be instructed to proceed with application of original scheme. Cllr French wanted to disassociate himself from the whole thing

¹⁵ Slipper Bath: a bathtub, slightly deeper at one end than the other. Oblong in shape from the side they look like a slipper. Taps are at the shallower end. Slipper baths could be turned into showers by erecting a frame to support the shower head.

¹⁶ Douche Bath: used mainly by women for medical or cleansing agents, applied to a body part for hygiene or therapy. The water is in the form of a large stream.

- 7 April 1924 Received a report on using gas heating system for proposed baths
- 8 Sep 1925 Town Clerk reported receipt of formal sanction of Ministry of Health for loan for public baths.

6 Oct 1925 The following tenders had been received for erection of public baths:

Mr C Kerridge	£7,331 0. 0.
Messrs Kidman & Son	£7,487 0. 0.
Messrs Coulson & Son	£8,480 0. 0.
Messrs Negus & Sons	£7,865 0. 0.

It was resolved that the tender of Mr Kerridge be recommended to Council for acceptance subject to bills of quantities being satisfactory to Borough Surveyor and Town Clerk to prepare contract and affix Corporate Seal. The Borough Surveyor was authorised to appoint a Clerk of Works to superintend the above at £6 6s 0d per week.

9 March 1926 The question of administration of the Gwydir Street baths and appointment of caretaker was to be referred to Subcommittee for consideration and report.

9 April 1926 Subcommittee discussed administration of the public baths. Resolved that Committee be advised to adopt the following rules:

1. That the charge be 4d per bath, to include 1 towel and soap, extra towels to be charged for at rate of 1d each
2. That books of 12 tickets be produced for 3/6d
3. That the baths be open from 10am to 8pm, closed Sundays, Christmas day, Boxing Day and Good Friday; other bank holidays at 1pm
4. That the baths be closed 1pm to 2pm
5. That a man with some mechanical knowledge be appointed Attendant together with a woman attendant and an assistant woman attendant.
6. That they be in attendance from 9am each morning
7. That reliefs for the three attendants be appointed
8. That some arrangement be arrived at for reduced charges if more than one child is bathed at the same time

13 April 1925 Full PHC agree the above with the addition of:

'That the baths and staff be placed under direct control of the Borough Surveyor.'

8 June 1926 Wages fixed at:

Male Attendant	£3 0s-0d pw
Senior woman	£2 10s-0d pw
Junior woman	£2 0s -0d pw

12 July 1926 Subcommittee - considered applications for Male Attendant- Short list of 16 names

13 July 1926 Full Committee advised reduction of list to 3 or 4 names for review by Committee.

16 July 1926 The Subcommittee submitted list of:

H Galloway of 51 City Road
 W J Hill of 28 Belgrave Road
 L R Carr of 75 Kingston Street

20 July 1926 Short list for women consisted of six names for Female attendant and five for assistant

23 July 1926 Subcommittee short listed:

Mrs Ray of 380 Mill Road and
 Mrs Stacey of 112 Fitzroy Road for Attendant and
 Miss Ketteridge of 51 Blinco Grove and
 Miss Middleton of 48 Suez Road for Assistant

27 July 1926 Full committee appointed Mr Galloway, Mrs Ray and Miss Middleton subject to being certified fit by medical examiner

12 Jan 1927 Subcommittee – Resolved that public baths at Gwydir Street be opened at 3pm on February 3rd and that the Mayor perform the opening ceremony

Uniform to be provided as follows –

Attendant – 2 blue overall jackets and trousers
 4 white Drill jackets with 'Attendant' embroidered twice on collar
 1 cap
 Female Attendant 4 white overalls with 'Attendant' embroidered twice on the collar
 3 blue overalls
 Female Assistant 4 white overalls with 'Attendant' embroidered twice on the collar
 3 blue overalls

Reported that attendants appointed by the Council had been examined by Dr Searle who certified them fit for duty

Resolved that 24 dozen towels (22" x 44") at 21/- per dozen be obtained and labelled 'Cambridge Public Baths'

Resolved that Tender 'B' for soap at 53/- per cwt¹⁷ be accepted

Borough Surveyor authorised to purchase a table, two chairs a soiled linen basket and necessary cleaning materials for the attendants.

Borough Surveyor instructed to report on cost of removing the boundary wall next to Mill Road and extending iron railing.

A plan for two proposed notice boards was submitted – resolved to recommend approval of larger one.

Borough Treasurer to be authorised to have necessary tickets printed and arrange with Borough Surveyor for provision of a cupboard

18 Jan 1927 Full Committee Resolved Cllr Mrs Stevenson be authorised to select head-dresses for Female Attendants

3 Feb 1927 Public baths opened by the Mayor of Cambridge Alderman J S Conder

26 April 1927 The Borough Treasurer reported on five weeks to 23/4/27
 Steam had been seen escaping at 11.15pm. The Borough Surveyor to look into it.
 Resolved name and address of Custodian be painted on board outside baths.

¹⁷ 'cwt': abbreviation for Centum weight (cwt), or hundredweight: = 112 pounds (Imperial) or 50.8 kg.

- 8 July 1927 Resolved public baths be closed on bank holidays and that the staff be given a holiday on such days
- 6 Sept 1927 Resolved BS be asked to make some provision for umbrellas at public baths and provide staff with means of boiling a kettle
- 6 March 1928 Resolved BS be asked to report upon question of provision of a water softener at Gwydir Street baths
- 8 May 1928 BS report received with cost (water softener?). It was resolved to defer until next year.

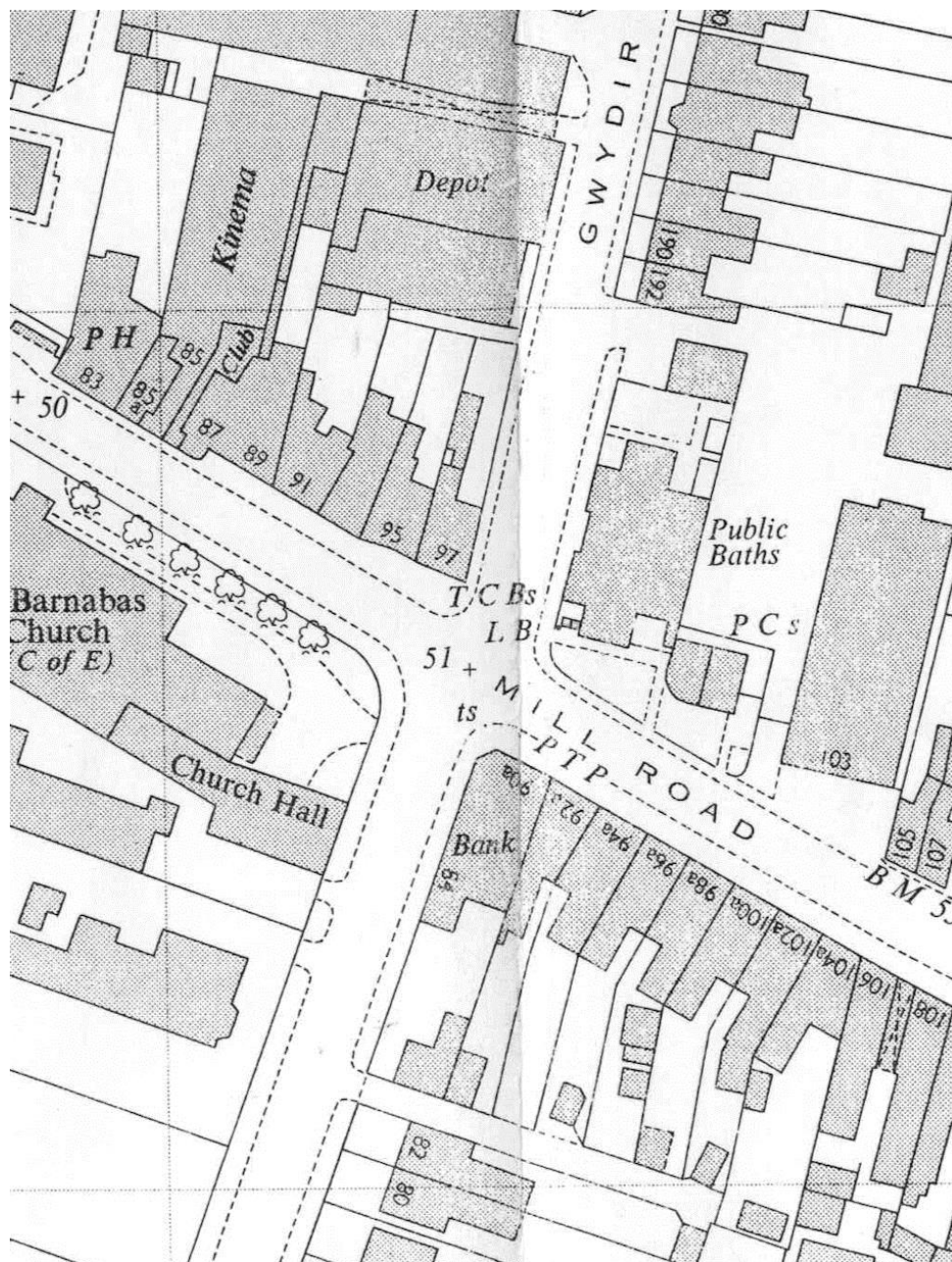


Figure 6 – Ordnance Survey map 1965 (detail)

The Cost of Building the Public Baths

The Borough Treasurer's Register of Contract Payments¹⁸ records details of the cost of building the Bath House.

Contract for the erection of public baths at Gwydir Street:¹⁹

Contractor - C. Kerridge 28-38 Sturton Street Cambridge		
1926 – Amounts paid direct to	Buck E G Quantity Bills	£58 18. 4.
	Taylor Smith Fee (on account)	£52 10. 0.
	“ “	<u>£75 01. 2.</u>
		£186 9. 6.
Less 1¾% on £150		<u>£2 12. 8.</u>
		£183 16. 10.
Instalments to C Kerridge		
[1926]	Feb	£663
	Mar	£650
	April	£700
	June	£450
	July	£875
	September	£600
	Nov	£1000
	Dec	£1200
1927	Feb	£300
	Aug	<u>£655 7. 0.</u>
		£7,277 3. 10.
Contra entries on right hand page are		
1926	Oct 6th Amount of Contract	£7331 0. 0.
	Less omissions	<u>£53 16. 2.</u>
		£7,277 3. 10.
May 1933 First and final payment to United Water Softeners Ltd, Permilit House London W4 is recorded for a contract – supply and erection of water softener at Gwydir Street baths Feb 1933 at cost of		
		£123 0. 0.

¹⁸ CA: B/2/TR/1/12/14, p. 27.

¹⁹ Council Minutes, October 1925, p. 259.

4. THE GRAND OPENING

The Mayor Alderman J S Condor opened the public baths on 3 February 1927 in a party atmosphere as described by the *Cambridge Daily News*. The newspaper print is too small to reproduce here, but below is a transcript, and photographs (Figure 7). Photograph No. 4 is believed to be the Mayoress issuing a ticket to an alderman who probably did not need a bath.



Figure 7 – Photographs of grand opening (CDN 3 Feb 1927)

BATHS WHILE YOU WAIT.²⁰**Gwydir Street Building Opened by the Mayor.****COUNCILLORS TAKE A 'DIP.'**

Cambridge has its public baths at last. The long-proposed Gwydir-street buildings were officially opened by the Mayor (Ald J S Conder) on Thursday afternoon, in the presence of a good number of aldermen, councillors, and townspeople. Owing to the cold weather, the inaugural speeches were not made in the open, but in St Barnabas' Memorial Institute, and after the speeches the Mayor, who was accompanied by the Mayoress, proceeded to the new buildings. Here he was handed the golden key by Mr C Kerridge, the builder, and unlocking the door, proceeded on a tour of inspection, followed by members of the Corporation, with the Borough Surveyor (Mr G W Teasdale), and Dr A J Laird (the Borough Medical Officer of Health).

The baths were opened to the public at 5 o'clock, and previous to this many of the councillors bought their 4d. tickets, issued by the Mayoress, and laughingly announced their intention to take a 'dip.' After their examination of the corridors and bathrooms, the civic party returned to St Barnabas' Institute, where tea was taken.

In the new building there were 18 ordinary baths which could be used with either hot or cold water, and there was one douche which had been put in as an experiment. He was sure that the condition of the baths was such that even the most luxurious person in the town need not hesitate to take a dip if he wished to. There was a certain portion of the building which was so constructed that if the women's side was full, this portion, by closing certain doors, could be added to the women's portion, and vice-versa. The baths would be open every day until 8 o'clock in the evening, with the exception of an hour for lunch, and an adequate staff was being employed to do the work. (Applause.)

THE NEW BUILDING

We are indebted to the Borough Surveyor (Mr G W Teasdale) for the following description of the baths:

The building is constructed of brickwork, with stone facings. The roof is covered with Broseley sand-faced tiles. The chimney shaft is 40 feet high, and is constructed of brickwork, surmounted at the top with a cast iron cap.

The building contains 18 slipper baths, nine for men and nine for women, one shower bath, a separate waiting room for men and women, pay office, boiler house, laundry and the necessary w.c. accommodation.

The internal walls of the baths are lined to a height of 7 feet above the floor level with white glazed brickwork, and the cubicles have solid white glazed brick partitions between them. Above the glazed work the walls are left plain and distempered. The inside of the roof is covered with asbestos sheeting painted white. The cubicles are roof lighted. Each cubicle contains a white porcelain enamelled bath, mirror, hat and coat hooks, seat with a teak top, and a duck-board mat. The colour scheme generally is black and white, but the woodwork to the women's cubicles is white enamelled.

There is a Cornish steam boiler which provides the necessary hot water and the necessary steam for the heating apparatus. Steam coils from the boiler are encased in Royles patent heaters, and the cold water passing through these coils is raised to the necessary temperature for the baths. The laundry is mechanically operated, and contains a washing machine, hydro extractor, mangle and drying chamber. The pay office, which adjoins the main entrance, is so arranged that the attendant has full view of the waiting rooms and corridors leading to the cubicles. The price for a bath, including soap and towel, is 4d. Extra towels may be obtained at 1d. each and a book of 12 tickets can be obtained for 3s. 6d. The interior is electric lighted throughout.

²⁰ *CDN* February 1927.

The contractor is Mr C Kerridge, junior, Cambridge. The boiler, steam and hot water apparatus was supplied and fixed by Messrs Busby, of London, the laundry fittings by Messrs. Manlove, Allott & Co Ltd., Nottingham, the slipper baths, mirrors and ironmongery by Messrs. Macintosh and Co., Cambridge, and the electric wiring and fittings by Messrs. The Electric Wiring Co., Cambridge.

The estimated cost of the scheme was £7,450, and the amount of the contract £7,331.

Who took the first bath?

We have local historian Mike Petty²¹ to thank for the following notes from residents who remember the day when the Public Baths opened in Gwydir Street.

Ben Benstead from Victoria Road thinks he was the first paying customer at the Public Baths.

I was born in Gwydir Street in 1910. In 1927 I was a young apprentice working for The Electrical Wiring & Repair Company of Corn Exchange Street, Cambridge. Those of us living in the immediate vicinity had watched the building work with great interest – this was the first public bathhouse that we knew of in Cambridge and news of its opening was eventually published in the *Cambridge Daily News* (the newspaper which my parents had read since before I was born).

The opening day arrived and after work at 5.30pm another apprentice, Doug Smith, and I cycled to the baths. Unbeknown to us, there had been a problem with the heating boiler during the day and the baths were not yet in operation although several people were still sitting patiently in the waiting room. Doug and I joined them and in the next half-hour or so other people arrived: some ran out of patience and left until finally only about five of us remained.

An attendant came in and told us that although there was no guarantee that the water would be hot, we could – if we wanted – have a lukewarm bath. Doug and I were the only two to agree to this offer. We paid 4d and received a tablet of soap and a small towel. A second towel was available for a further charge of 1d. (Just as well as the towel was less than 3ft long and 18 inches wide!).

I was directed into a small cubicle with a stone/concrete floor. There was a slatted wooden bench and a couple of hooks on which to hang my clothes. The bath was already filled with water. (There were no taps, just a fill-pipe over the end of the bath). Lukewarm? –Forget it! My first real bath was in stone-cold water! Even so, I guess that Doug Smith and I were the first two paying customers in the Gwydir Street Baths.

I used the baths over the next six years until I married and moved away. You waited in the waiting room until you were called to pay your money and receive soap and towel before going to the cubicle where your filled bath awaited. If you wanted more water you called out to the attendant, 'more hot in number six' and received the reply, 'water coming' to give you a chance to move your feet away from the fill-pipe.

Sometimes the waiting room got very crowded. There was a workhouse nearby at 81a Mill Road (which later became the Cambridge Maternity Hospital) and many of the local tramps used the waiting room in the baths until the workhouse opened its doors in the early evening. The attendant found great difficulty in discouraging the tramps and the genuine customers had to contend with the 'temporary visitors' smoking all sorts of cigarette dog-ends they had accumulated. It got very smoky in that waiting room!

²¹ First published 26 February 2003 in 'Memories', *CEN* 19 Feb 2003, and reproduced on the Gwydir Street website.

5. 1927–1976 : THE PUBLIC BATHS

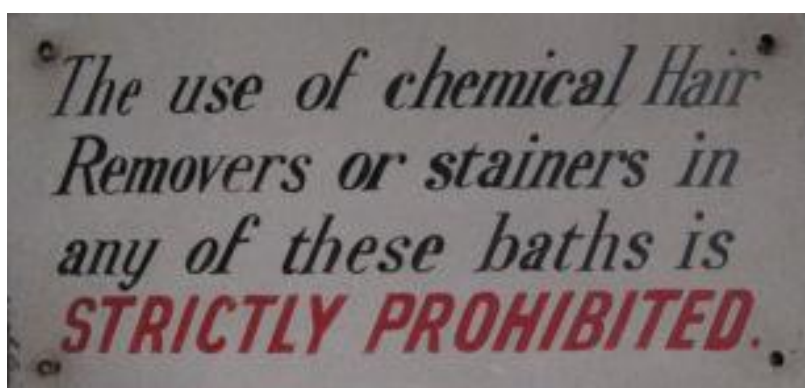


Figure 8 – Notice in Public Baths²²

Erica J Dinock's 'Down Your Street' article on Gwydir Street in the *Cambridge News* of 25 April 1963 says that the public baths were:

open from Tuesday to Saturday each week and with the charge only one shilling per person offers some of the cheapest facilities for bathing in the country. Originally intended for people with no bathrooms in their homes the baths are used far less now that housing improvements have been made and most people have some means of getting a regular bath. Although they have always sustained a financial loss in Cambridge, public baths are something which local authorities have to provide if it is in the interests of public health and hygiene to do so. Fewer local people make their way to the Cambridge baths than used to but the superintendent Mr H L Clayton comments that he still gets about 300 men each week among them many foreigners. He also estimates about 100 women make use of the facilities. For their shilling customers get a good hot bath, a towel and a piece of soap. If they wish they may purchase various scented bath cubes and perhaps a little surprisingly, Mr Clayton reports a brisk trade in this line. The busiest period at the baths is between Friday afternoons and Saturday evenings, and to help him keep the place clean and in order Mr Clayton has a stoker and two women helpers. An additional assistant is employed at the weekend. The baths have their little laundry and this has recently been equipped with an electric washing machine. Throughout this winter's big freeze up the baths managed to stay open and undoubtedly proved a godsend to those people who were less fortunate with their hot water supplies.

Introducing the Sauna

By 1969 the estimated annual loss was about £2,000 a year. Hoping to turn loss into profit, the Cambridge City Surveyor, Mr Geoffrey Cresswell, proposed to the Council the conversion of part of the building into a sauna. The plan was adopted unanimously by the Council's Commons Committee. The cost of works was estimated at £2,000. The men's section of the baths was to be converted into a sauna bath area with a lounge and rest room. The remaining women's section could be used alternately by men and women. Mr Cresswell estimated the sauna would cost £1,000 a year to run but would bring in £2,500 a year. The committee agreed to charge 10 shillings for each bath, which would take about one-and-a-

²² Source: CC.

half hours. Mr Cresswell advised that this was considerably cheaper than other baths like this in Cambridge.

More than a little tongue in cheek the *Cambridge News* of 13 March 1969 reported:

Although it won't be possible to supply an icy lake off Mill Road (the necessary adjunct to a sauna bath) cold showers will be a prosaic substitute. Mr Cresswell was reticent about the employment of comely women like those who beat male bathers with birch switches in Finnish saunas. 'We will have to engage extra staff of course and they will have to be the right sort of attendants,' he said, 'but I can't say more than that.' A pick me up rather than a way to lose weight, sauna baths have been built by other local authorities, particularly in the North and Midlands and have proved a great success.

The meeting hall of the Bath House today still bears the evidence of the sauna. The walls are vertically panelled in wood which, although painted today, would have given a 'log cabin' effect when first installed. See Figure 22 which shows clearly the wooden walls in the late 1970s.



The public baths in Mill Road, Cambridge.

Sorting out city's sauna problems...

CN 19/3/69

BY OLIVE NELSON

The affluent age is coming to Gwydir Street public baths, a bleak brick building off Mill Road, Cambridge, which was opened in 1927 for the use of cleanly citizens without baths of their own.

A scheme to turn part of the baths into a sauna establishment has been accepted unanimously by the city council's Commons Committee. The conversion scheme will cost about £2,000 but it is hoped that it will turn an annual loss of £2,000 into a substantial profit.

The plan is to turn the left-hand side of the building — now the men's section of the public baths — into a "sauna suite," while the right-hand side (now women's baths) will be retained as the traditional hot baths.

"It is intended that while the men are using the sauna suite section the women can be using the public baths part, and vice-versa," explained the City Surveyor, Mr. Geoffrey Cresswell. "It might be that it will be worked on a rota of alternate days or alternate times — we haven't decided yet."

Although it won't be possible to supply an icy lake off Mill Road (the necessary adjunct to a sauna bath) cold showers will be the prosaic substitute. Mr. Cresswell was reticent about the employment of comely women like those who beat male bathers with birch switches in Finnish saunas.

"We will have to engage extra staff, of course, and they will have to be the right sort of attendants," he said, "but I can't say more than that."

A pick-me-up rather than a way to lose weight, sauna baths have been built by other local authorities, particularly in the North and the Midlands, and have proved a great success. The suggested fee for the proposed one at Gwydir Street is 10s. — half the price of the only private sauna in Cambridge.

"How it goes at Gwydir Street will give us an idea of demand," said Mr. Cresswell, "and whether we should build a more palatial structure behind Parkside."

City sauna bath idea favoured as money-maker

CN 18/3/69

A plan devised by the Cambridge City Surveyor, Mr. Geoffrey Cresswell, to convert part of the Gwydir Street public baths into a sauna establishment could turn an annual loss of £2,000 into a substantial profit. The conversion scheme was accepted unanimously by the city council's Commons Committee yesterday.

Next month the committee will ask the city council to back the project which will cost about £2,000.

Log cabin

Mr. Cresswell told the committee that the men's section of the public baths could be converted into a sauna bath area with a lounge and rest room.

The remaining women's section of the existing baths could be used alternately by men and women.

Mr. Cresswell said the baths in their present form were losing

about £2,000 a year. The sauna side would cost about £1,000 a year to run—but this side alone would bring in about £2,500 a year.

The Cambridge baths superintendent, Mr. J. Allison, said sauna baths were designed to tone up the body. It was a traditional Finnish bath in a log cabin specially constructed to take the moisture from the atmosphere.

The baths had the effect of causing perspiration. "The pleasant feeling lasts days if not weeks," he said.

The committee agreed to charge 10s. for each bath, which takes about 1½ hours. "This is very considerably cheaper than other baths like this in Cambridge," said Mr. Cresswell.

Figure 9 – Announcement of the sauna (CN 13 March 1969)

Other Buildings on the Site

The 1965 Ordnance Survey Map (Figure 6, above) shows a building standing in what is now the garden and playground to the north of the bath house. This was probably a stable block. The area contains the remains of the walls of the building and the black 'chocolate block' brick paving often used in stable yards.

The Borough Council's Lease Book,²³ p. 65 records a lease dated 20 May 1933 which let to Guy Frederick Dale of 45 Hills Road, Cambridge:

All that messuage or premises formerly used as stable outbuildings thereto belonging situate at the back of the Public baths Mill Road. Commencing 9th March 1933 and thereafter monthly, the rent was 8/4d per month. No use is stated in the lease but Tenant was to maintain interior and landlord the exterior.

At the back of the Bath House public toilets were built. The location is shown on the 1965 Ordnance Survey Map, and in 2002 was completely rebuilt.

Cambridge News August 27, 2002 reported :-

NEW TOILETS OFFER GREATER CONVENIENCE

New public toilets which cost £200,000 have been opened in Mill Road, Cambridge.

The new building by the Gwydir Street junction replaces the block demolished earlier this year. It had a history of attracting drunks and drug users and was blighted by vandalism.

The revamp is the first step in Cambridge City Council's £1 million refurbishment programme for the city's public conveniences, which have come in for heavy criticism.

The council worked closely with residents and businesses in the Petersfield ward to come up with a design in keeping with its location within a conservation area.

Peter Littlefair, head of the Council's Street Services, said: 'The toilets are of modern style and incorporate facilities for the disabled and baby changing. This design offers greater personal safety for all users, is easier to keep clean and reduces the opportunity for anti-social behaviour.'

Flower beds, landscaping, new paving and lighting are all part of the new scheme along with enhancements to the adjacent Bath House, including raising the pavement to make it wheelchair accessible.

There is a purpose-built area for recycling and some spaces in the car park have been lost to make way for the environmental improvements.

Petersfield ward councillor Ben Bradnack said: 'Petersfield ward councillors and members of the local Mill Road Community Improvement Group worked together for over two years to make this project happen. We are pleased that Cambridge City Council decided to support this project but real credit is due to the initiative and commitment of the local people involved.'

Councillor Nichola Harrison, executive councillor for the environment, said: 'I am as pleased as punch to see the demolished old block of toilets have been replaced by an up-to-date facility. The new building will be easier to keep clean and more resistant to vandalism and will enhance the local facilities and the environment.'

To the north of the building is an area set out as a garden and children's play area.

²³ CA: CB/2/CL/17/20.

To the east of the Bath House is the Gwydir Street car park which is built on the gardens of Gwydir House, Cornetta Villa and Willoughby House.

6. THE PUBLIC BATHS REMEMBERED

The baths became a social centre for some Mill Road residents, some of whom continued to attend even after indoor plumbing reached their own homes. We have heard rumours of friendly card schools in the waiting room.

The *Cambridge Evening News* article of 2 October 1973 shows that thanks to Dolly Moy who was the female attendant at the baths, there was more than hot water on offer.

Hello Dolly! (QUEEN OF THE SAUNA)



Dolly Moy — she sees the future in the tea leaves.

BATH-TIME at Cambridge's municipal baths means clean towels, tea, biscuits—and Dolly.

Dolly, who runs the baths and the women's sauna on alternate days dishes out more than soap. She is always on hand to dispense homespun advice. She sits and listens to stories of husbands and boyfriends. To many women the sauna is just like a club, she points out. Some take their lunch and sit and relax there all day.

After a session in the steamy atmosphere of the "hot box"—punctuated by showers—they relax on reclining chairs, chat and sip lemon tea made by Dolly.

Dolly Moy, a warm-hearted grandmother, takes along her knitting—and a packet of biscuits which she offers round to "club members"—as she dispenses her own brand of folk wisdom. She reassures anyone not happy about their looks.

"Some people think that good looking girls stand a better chance. Don't you believe it. Just look at me."

There is a conviviality among the regulars at the sauna—who pay 55p a session, and no time limit. It is a place where the lonely can go just for a chat and company.

"They are very nice girls," she says warmly. Dolly takes a pride in her work although it does mean a long day, from 9.30 a.m. until the sauna closes at 8 p.m.

Even so, she is left with enough energy to go dancing at a disco every fortnight. And she is in the darts team at the Cross Keys public house, which is currently winning its league matches.

She knows she has got a very good husband. "Mind you, I have trained him well. He can cook as good a meal as I can." When she gets home from work at about 8.30 on Saturday evenings there is a cooked meal waiting for her.

Working five days a week she has little time to look after her home in Verulam Way, Cambridge. But she has her own system for brightening up housework.

A keen Engelbert Humperdinck and Jim Reeves fan, she puts on one of their records—very loud—grabs a mop and shuts her eyes!

And when it comes to the rattling of the tea cups Dolly is in her element. "Turn your cup upside down over the saucer and turn it anti-clockwise three times," she says when you have finished your drink. Dolly then peers into the cup and tries to make sense of the pattern of the tea leaves.

"It often comes true," she points out. There was the house by the river she kept seeing in her daughter-in-law's cup. It disappeared one day. That day she discovered her son had bought a house—by the river.

She looked at my cup. Surprisingly a corgi dog loomed large.

We have a cat, but no dog. I suppose I could start a few rumours about a new engagement for Prince Charles ...

Figure 10 – Dolly Moy offers folk wisdom and music (CEN 2 Oct 1972)

Customers' Memories

One regular customer recalls:

I've never had such fine baths – masses of piping hot water, and at the first sign of it cooling, you'd call the attendant and he would fit his lever to the tap on the outside of your cubicle, and yet more hot water would come. I think there were constraints about how much water, or how long you could stay in the bath. I don't remember anyone ever singing in the bath, but the place had an echo-y acoustic that picked up every movement you made in the water and seemingly amplified its sound; calling the attendant, and the attendant's cheery responses, resonated like a trumpet blast.

Tony Challis from Great Shelford was another who regularly patronised the baths:

As a young lad in the late '40s, I was a keen racing cyclist and would generally go training straight from work. Most of our work was pretty dirty and many times I would visit the Baths in Gwydir Street.

After paying the 1/- we would be shown into a bath cubicle. The attendant would turn on the hot taps from outside and, when the allowed amount had been delivered, would call out 'cold water going in'. This phase of the operation was tricky. The temperature of the water had to be gauged just right. Too much cold and it was a tepid bath; not enough cold and you either had to wait or get scalded! After the attendant had been told to turn off the cold water there was nothing more to be said. No more water, hot or cold, was allowed. The soap provided, about two inches square and very thin, gave little lather and had no smell. The towel was, from memory, a starched piece of material which had poor drying properties. I must say that I don't remember being offered scented bath cubes or that there was a women's end (wish I had known). By today's standard it was all rather primitive, but it did the job and seemed to be well used.

The following are extracts from oral histories and reminiscences collected from local residents by volunteers for the Mill Road History Project:

Victor Challis²⁴ remembers Mrs Ray who had been appointed as the first female attendant in 1927:

Eddie (or Ted) Ray was in my class at school. His mother ran the Bath House for years and years. His father was wounded in the head in the First World War; he used to come out sometimes in his apron; probably all he could do then. One of my brothers went there once a week and she'd give us soap and towels; only cost about a tanner.

Mrs Gee recalls:²⁵

[Interviewer: *You once told me something about the Bath House. Could you tell me a bit more about that?*] There was separate days for men and women, and on a Saturday the men used to queue. I used to see long queues in Gwydir Street. And two ladies ran the baths. They kept it beautifully clean. And out of curiosity – I never told my husband this – I went and had a bath there because I wanted to find out what it was like. I'm pleased now because of the experience it was ... they gave so much water that I felt as if I was drowning – hot water, you know, to bath in.

[*You had an individual bath?*] Oh absolutely. Yes, and it was all wood, and you could see how well they scrubbed the wood every time – you know, the surround round the bath.

²⁴ Interviewed by Caro Wilson, 18 May 2015.

²⁵ Interviewed by Caro Wilson, 21 May 2012.

[*Did you bring your own towel?*] That is something I cannot remember. I'll have to converse with Monica [Smith], who went regularly. Because they didn't have bathrooms in a lot of the houses.

Monica Smith describes vividly:²⁶

On the other side of the road [from Lloyd's Bank] we had the Bath House, which I must admit I *have* used, as a child, and well into being a teenager, because we did not have any bathrooms. And ... you feel now horrified that you ever did it, but we did. And lots of other people obviously in the area did, because there were no bathrooms *at all*, and [there were only] outside loos to the houses.

[*Tell me what happened when you went to the Bath House, for people who have never been in one or used one.*] Right: you go into the main room, which was like a little section room. And the lady comes along, gives you a towel, and when a cubicle is empty – you have to wait for them to empty – you had ... there was no time limit on how long you could be there – and you went into [a cubicle], which was a fair size, quite a big bath, and they poured the hot water in. The only problem was that the hot water come in very, very hot. And it meant that you had to call out for somebody to put cold water in because all the taps were working from the outside of the cubicles. So if you were undressed, put your foot in – 'Ow! it's too hot!' – so you stand there and you think, oh ... the attendant was probably up busy doing other things for other people. So then you wonder what you do. Do you stand there naked? Do you put your foot in? Do you get in the bath? Is it too hot? Yes, it is too hot. So you have to then call out and say 'Number (whatever number you've landed yourself in)' and ask for cold water. So then they put cold water in. So it was quite an experience just to get the water right. However, we managed. But luckily I didn't use it all that many times because we did have a little tin bath that we could use when I was younger and [when I got] older.

Irene Arnold remembers:²⁷

My father-in-law, he ... there was baths over the Mill Road, wasn't there? – swimming – er, not swimming – to go and have a bath. He was in charge of that. He used to give the men the towels and one thing and another. Then he lost that job during the war, and you know the famous one down ... down the River Cam where there's a famous pumping station they've still kept – he was in charge of that.

Minnie Baraclough describes domestic sanitary conditions in the '20s and '30s:²⁸

. . . so all we had was a back room and a kitchen. I mean, when there's ten of you living like that, you can imagine, can't you? And no bathroom.

[*I can't really imagine what that's like.*] No, no bathroom, we used to go over to the baths on Mill Road. I forget what that used to cost, but it was wonderful – on the corner of Gwydir Street –

[*How did that work? Did men and women go in different ...?*] It wasn't very often! [*laughter*]

[*High days and holidays?*] [Mum would say:] 'You'd better go to the baths and get yourself ...' And Mum used to wash you on the kitchen table. Shove you on the kitchen table with a bowl of water to rub up and down their legs like that: 'Now the other leg – put your other leg out ...' [*laughs*] That's how she used to wash us. Oh! I thought, what it must *be* like to have a bathroom. Oh, it must be marvellous.

Mrs Pankhania remembers her men-folk attending:²⁹

²⁶ Interviewed by Shelley Lockwood, 7 February 2014.

²⁷ Interviewed by Claire Cameron, 13 August 2014.

²⁸ Interviewed by Linda Cockburn, 26 November 2014.

We didn't have a bath tub, we didn't have a shower, we had to have a wash with a bucket. But my older men – my husband, my father, my brother – used to go to the Bath House in Mill Road. [...] They used to go and have a bath there. That was the Bath House.

[*Was it busy?*] It was well used – specially in the evenings. And that's how we managed.

²⁹ Interviewed by Linda Cockburn, 1 September 2014.

7. 1976 : CLOSURE OF PUBLIC BATHS AND A NEW LIFE FOR THE BUILDING

By 1975 concerns about the cost of operation the public baths came to a head when the estimated cost of £10,000 for a new boiler put pressure on Council budgets.

The *Cambridge Evening News* of 24 July 1975 reported on the Public Health Committee Meeting at which the public baths and other pressing calls on Council finances were discussed.

£1 a time forecast at council's public baths

X CEN 24.7.1975
It could be costing Cambridge City Council about £1 each time someone uses the public baths in Gwydir Street suggested Coun. Alec Molt (Lab., Abbey) at yesterday's meeting of the Public Health Committee.

"It would be cheaper to have a mobile bath service going around to these people," said Coun. Molt during a discussion arising from the committee review of its capital programme for 1975-76 which included a provision of £10,000 for a new boiler to heat water at the bath.

Coun. George Rowling (Lab.—Cherry Hinton) said a lot of showers could be bought for that money instead of providing baths which used so much water. Other members felt the elderly, who

formed a large number of those using the bath, would not appreciate showers so much.

It was agreed the city Engineer and Surveyor, Mr. Geoffrey Cresswell should be asked to report back to the committee at its next meeting to see if there was any suitable alternative to the boiler, taking into account Coun. Rowling's comments about the possibility of providing showers as well as sit-down baths.

Keeping Cambridge crematorium up to a peak standard of efficiency must be a top priority in the coming year, agreed members of the committee.

The committee heard that despite increased charges, the use of the crematorium was continuing to rise and facilities were being put to maximum use.

There is an urgent need for more public conveniences in

Cambridge members of the committee agreed when they decided that £13,000 spread over two years should be included in their capital programme for next year for a new lavatory.

If the Arbury Health Centre site at Mansel Way is sold to the Regional Health Authority, steps should be taken to safeguard its use only for health or community purposes, agreed members of the committee.

The chairman, Coun. Clarissa Kaldor (Lab.—Arbury) reporting on a meeting between council officials and doctors involved, said: "The doctors have made other arrangements and do not want to join in the health centre scheme. The possibility of a clinic was discussed but after a lot of debate it was decided one was not needed. But everyone was keen on the idea of a day-centre

Figure 11 – Operating costs (CEN 24 July 1975)

Later in 1975, the matter was still under discussion. The following article from the *Cambridge Evening News* reports that the boilers were not even new when installed in 1927. The councillors could not justify the cost of replacing the boilers and planned a more modest scheme at Parkside indoor swimming pool.

Public Health
 STS: GWYDIR ST

(CEN 2.10.1975)

Where having a bath costs £1.09p

Cambridge City Council Public Health Committee yesterday refused to spend nearly £9,000 on renewing the boilers and heating system at the public baths in Gwydir Street, after council officials said the present boilers would not last more than two years.

But the committee agreed to recommend the council to ask the architect's department to draw up plans for "a modest and simple" project for providing four slipper baths and two showers on the Parkside indoor swimming pool site at Mill Road—a few hundred yards from the Gwydir Street baths.

In addition, the committee agreed that officials should look at the possibility of sell-

But 99p goes on the rates

ing the Gwydir Street baths site. The committee was told the baths are losing more than £7,000 a year. Everyone who takes a 10p bath costs the council an average of £1.09. It was decided to recommend the council to double the charge and to increase from 75p to £1 the charge for a sauna.

Replacement

A report from the city Surveyor's Department said that the future life of the boilers at Gwydir Street, which were secondhand when installed more than 50 years ago, is doubtful. Insurance examiners had claimed the life would be not more than two years.

The report said the cheapest form of replacement would be gas fired boilers at a cost of nearly £9,000.

A report from the city Treasurer's Department showed that the number of people taking baths had declined rapidly over the past 10 years. Last year fewer than 6,000 people used the baths and sauna compared with nearly 17,000 10 years ago.

A number of city councillors made it clear at the meeting that they considered the spending of nearly £9,000 as unjustified at this stage in the council's finances.

They also emphasised they did not want the council to be advised to consider starting a massive replacement scheme based on Parkside Pool.

Coun. George Rowling (Lab., Cherry Hinton) urged the committee to take a chance on the baths boilers lasting for two years and said the

council should be recommended to ask the officials to consider the possibility of a modest replacement scheme at Parkside.

He added: "We could sell the Gwydir Street site and use the money on the new building."

Old folk

Other councillors pointed to the need for the baths, particularly by old people living in unmodernised houses without their own baths.

Coun. Alec Molt (Lab., Abbey) added: "We want just a straightforward simple scheme at Parkside. After all, only about two dozen people a day are using the baths now."

"I think it would be a complete waste of money to put £10,000 into Gwydir Street now."



The Gwydir Street public baths.

Figure 12 – Boiler trouble (CEN 2 Oct 1975)

The annual loss was stated to be £7,000 a year, with total number of users down from 17,000 in 1965 to 6,000 a year. The price of a hot bath was only 10p, the real cost was

£1.09p. The price of a sauna was 70p. As a comparison, a pint of milk in 1975 was about 10p. In 1970 the cost of a pint of milk was about 5p by the end of the decade it was 17p.³⁰

the 1970s was of high inflation for all groups of items, with prices for most groups increasing by 200 per cent or more, and overall prices rising by 261 per cent. Annual inflation exceeded 10 per cent in each year from 1974 to 1981, with the exception of 1978. The situation in Britain reflected the experience of the industrial world which was struck by a series of supply shocks during the 1970s, including a quadrupling in the world price of crude oil in 1973.

During the decade, prices rose fastest in 1975, peaking at 26.9 per cent in August 1975, and increasing by 24.2 per cent over the year as a whole. All groups except clothing and footwear and housing experienced their highest recorded annual increase during this year, with inflation for each exceeding 20 per cent. The Budget that year raised indirect taxes substantially, and extended the then 25 per cent rate of VAT to cover a wide range of luxury goods. That led to what was, at the time, the highest month-on-month increase ever recorded in the RPI of 4.2 per cent in May.

In October 1977 the City Council was offering the building for rent 'Suitable for use as club-rooms, meeting rooms or other non-commercial purposes' (Figures 13 and 14, below).

The Council refused the Burma Star Association's plan to use Bath House. The St Matthew's Neighbourhood Association was formed. When the City Council planned to demolish the building to make a car park the St Matthew's Neighbourhood Association and Friends of the Earth formed the Bath House Trust, and later in the year it acquired the lease and opened up to the public.

³⁰ Source Jim O'Donoghue, Carol McDonnell and Martin Placek (Office of National Statistics), 'Consumer Price Inflation, 1947-2004', *Economic Trends* 626 (January 2006), p.43.

5 OCT 1977

CITY OF CAMBRIDGETO BE LETSuitable for use as club-rooms, meeting rooms
or other non-commercial purposesTHE FORMER PUBLIC BATHS,
GWYDIR STREET, CAMBRIDGE

The property is a substantial brick building constructed in the 1920s and until recently used as the "slipper baths." The premises are situated on the corner of Mill Road and Gwydir Street close to existing shops and amenities and conveniently located to serve the residents of the St. Matthew's and Mill Road area.

The building, which will require some adaptation and alteration, may easily be split to form two smaller units, each of 725 square feet or thereabouts. The premises are to be let for non-commercial purposes, such as club-rooms, recreation rooms, meeting place or for general community purposes.

The accommodation provides the following rooms:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1. <u>Entrance Lobby</u> | : about 12'8" x 6' |
| 2. <u>Former Changing Room</u> | : about 16'4" x 8'5" with W.C. off |
| 3. <u>Former Sauna Room</u> | : about 27'3" x 16'3" |
| 4. <u>Shower Room</u> | : about 16'6" x 8'3" |
| 5. <u>Former Changing Room</u> | : about 16'4" x 8'5" with W.C. off |
| 6. <u>Baths Area</u> | : about 27'6" x 16'6" at present
comprising seven bath cubicles, W.C.,
and store capable of being removed easily. |
| 7. <u>Former Office</u> | : about 12'8" x 8'11" |
| 8. <u>Kitchen</u> | : about 15'10" x 13' with sink |
| 9. <u>Boiler Room</u> | : about 18'8" x 9'8" |

In addition there are two small stores and two further WCs. The premises could be conveniently split into two units (rooms 2, 3 and 4 on the left side and rooms 5, 6 and 7 on the right, the remainder being shared).

Rateable Value : to be re-assessed
Rent : open to offer - see attached sheet

TO BE LET ON AN ANNUAL TENANCY

See below for terms of tenancy

Inspection : Keys available from:
The City Engineer and Surveyor,
Estates Department,
Third Floor, The Guildhall,
Cambridge.
Telephone: 58977, Extension 239 or 321

These particulars are believed to be correct but their accuracy is in no way guaranteed, nor do they form part of any contract or offer.

Figure 13 - Council's offer to let, p. 1

TERMS OF TENANCYFORMER GWYDIR STREET BATHS

1. The property is to be let on an annual tenancy.
2. The tenant is to be responsible for all repairs and decorations, other than repairs to the main structure.
3. The tenant shall be responsible for all outgoings, including rates, water rates and fire insurance premiums.
4. The rent is to be paid quarterly in advance on the usual quarter days.
5. The tenant is to carry out any alterations and adaptations required to render the premises suitable for their proposed use at their own expense. Such alterations must not be made without the prior written consent of the City Council.
6. The tenant is to comply with all existing legislation or any legislation taking effect during the term of the agreement. The tenant shall obtain any planning consents which may be necessary, together with Building Regulation approval where applicable.
7. The tenant is not to assign, sub-let or part with possession of any part or the whole of the premises without the prior consent, in writing, of the City Council.
8. The tenant shall enter into a tenancy agreement in the form prepared by the City Secretary and Solicitor and shall be responsible for any stamp duty or costs arising therefrom.

Figure 14 – Council's offer to let, p. 2

A number of organisations applied, but by May 1978 no tenancy had been offered.

Fate of old baths site still in the balance

CEN 31/5/78

The future of the old public baths site at Gwydir Street, Cambridge, is still undecided.

The city council is offering a lease on the premises to the Petersfield Residents' Association, which has said it might be interested in turning the former baths into a community centre.

If the Association rejects the offer the city council has decided to look for alternative uses for the old buildings.

The public baths have been replaced with a new suite at the Parkside indoor swimming pool.

Originally the council's Property Panel offered a lease on the old buildings to the Burma Star Association

for use as a club and meeting rooms.

But intense opposition from many living nearby resulted in the city planners refusing to grant planning permission.

In a report to Thursday's city council meeting the Property Panel say that the British Sub-Aqua Club and the Royal Naval Association are also interested in using the buildings for the similar purposes to those proposed by the Burma Star Association.

The report adds: "In the circumstances the city surveyor, Mr Geoffrey Cresswell, did not feel it would be sensible to offer the property to these organisations in view of the fact that planning permission for a similar use had recently been refused."

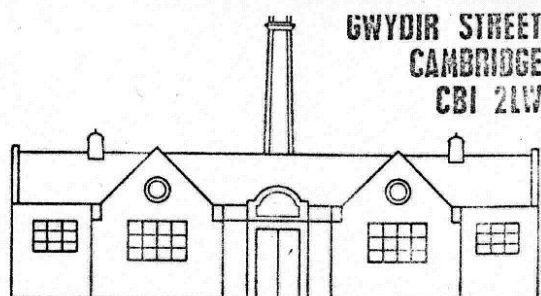
Figure 15 – Future undecided (CEN 31 March 1978)

The Bath House Neighbourhood Centre

An organisation called The Bath House Neighbourhood Centre was formed with Trustees Robert Rhodes James, M.P. for Cambridge, Philip Shears, civil engineer, Liz Reason, photographer Ray Hammans, and Michael Forester. This new grouping took a lease on the building with a rent free period and work began in September 1978 to clear the building and in November an application was made to the City Council to fund the cost of those conversion works which volunteers could not undertake. The application is reproduced here in full with the hand-drawn plans of the building (Figures 16–20).

THE BATH HOUSE

Neighbourhood Centre



City Architect and Planning Officer
The Guildhall
Cambridge.

14th November 1978

For the attention of Mr R. Darlington.

Dear Sir,

The Management Committee and Trustees of the Bath House have prepared the following rough estimate of expenditure required to refurbish the building and to provide comprehensive heating and electrical services.

These estimates do not include labour costs except where necessary jobs are beyond the skills of our voluntary workforce and outside professional contractors may need to be employed e.g. gas main installation and fitting of central heating boiler.

The three outline plans enclosed show how work has progressed since the commencement of tenancy and how we intend to convert the rest of the building subject, of course, to City Council's approval. We have not, except where indicated, been able to obtain detailed professional estimates for much of the work in time to submit this report. The most detailed survey carried out to date has been for the insulation requirements and this was done by Philip Shears, who is a consultant engineer and Trustee of the Bath House.

We shall be submitting more detailed and comprehensive plans for all the work outlined herein for Council approval as and when we are ready to start each project. Work at the Bath House is already well ahead of schedule and we hope to start much of the work described as soon as possible.

We think that after renovation the Bath House will be an attractive and useful building, providing important community facilities and much needed office accommodation for many voluntary groups in the City.

Yours faithfully,

Roy S. Hammans

Liz Reason

~ Trustees ~

Robert Rhodes James, M.P., Philip Shears, M.A., C.Eng., F.I.E.E.
Liz Reason Roy Hammans Michael Forrester, M.A.

Figure 16 - Bath House Neighbourhood Centre, application letter

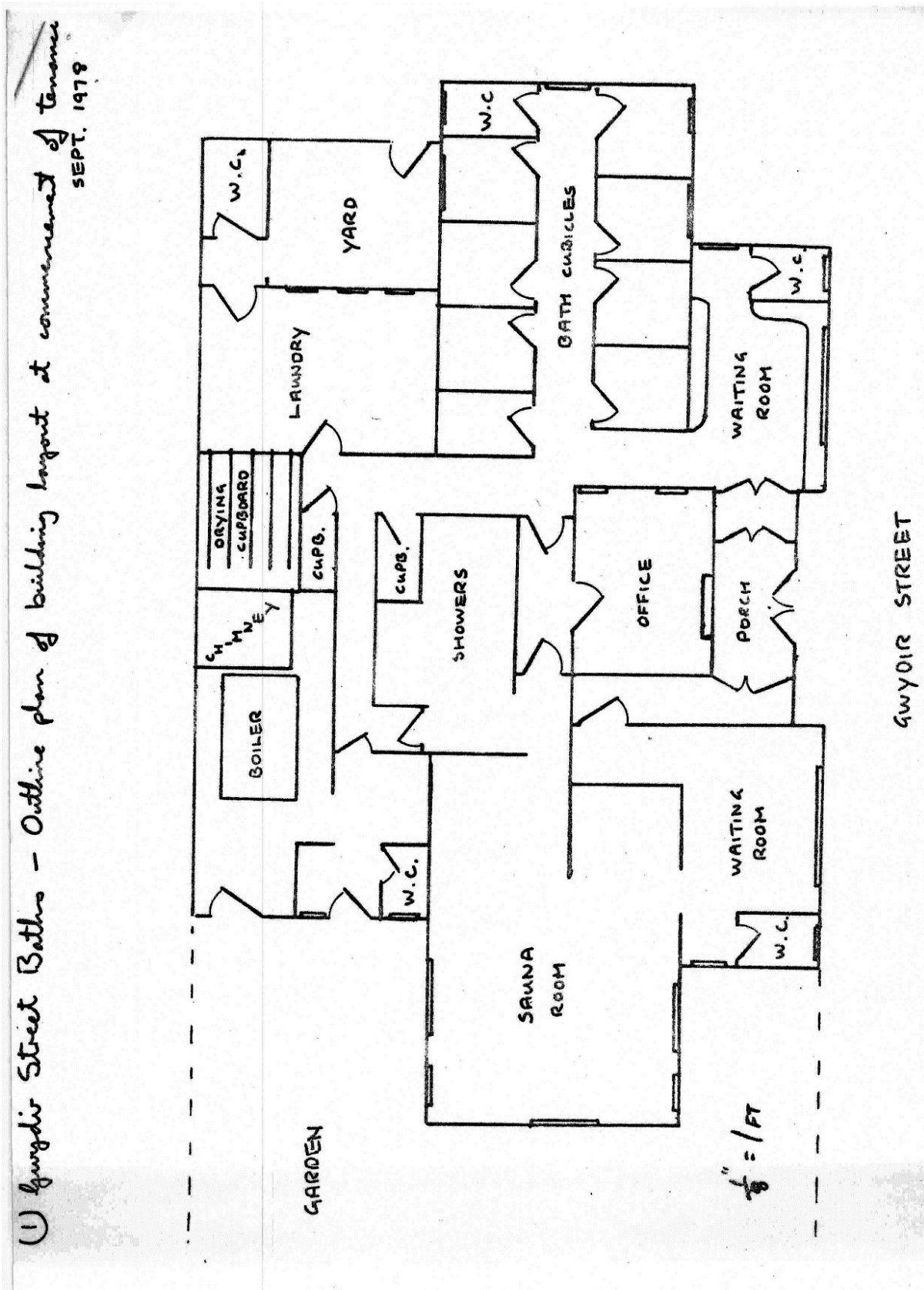


Figure 17 – Layout before work began (not reproduced to scale)

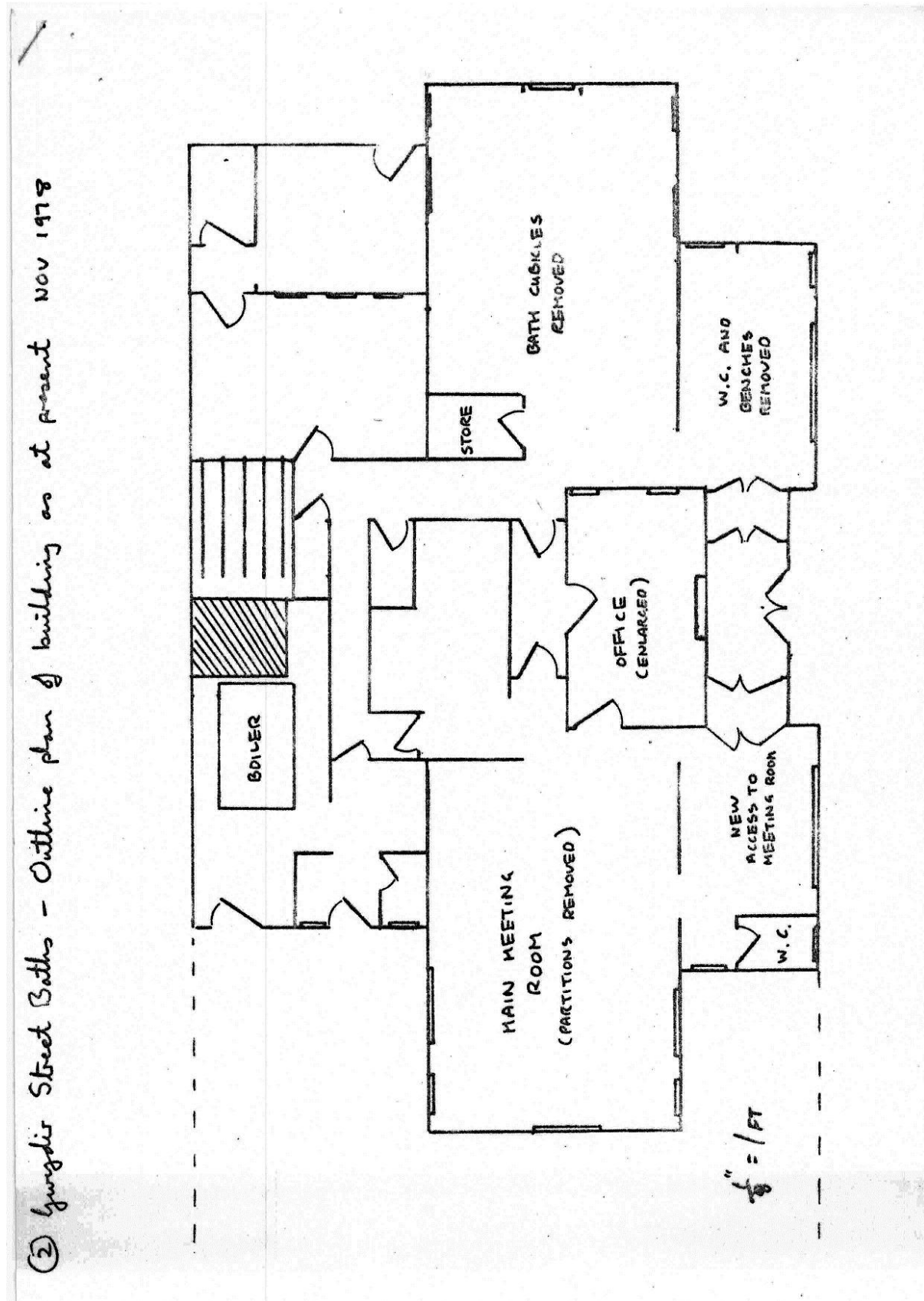


Figure 18 – Layout after building was cleared in November 1978 (not reproduced to scale)

The Bath House Neighbourhood Centre, Gwydir Street.

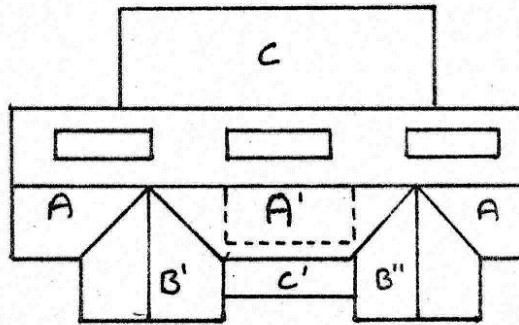
Rough Estimates of cost of providing main services, necessary structural alteration and improvement, permanent fixtures and fittings, and general refurbishing of premises.

Item 1: Structural.	Timber, plasterboard, and general finishing materials for construction of offices C, D, & E, (see plan) general workshop and reception area. Materials for converting existing boiler room to include plastering, fixed work surfaces, new window and flooring. Provision of self-levelling screed flooring in main meeting room. Construction of additional W.C. Provision of fire doors and exits to meet statutory regulations.	<u>£3000</u>
Item 2: Gas.	Gas Installation to premises (Eastern Gas quotation) Central heating system for offices and workshops only supplying seven radiators and hot water to sinks.	<u>£180</u> <u>£1000</u>
Item 3: Electricity.	Provision of lighting and power circuits for entire building to include all wiring and fittings. Electric water heaters for small washbasins in W.C.'s.	<u>£850</u>
Item 4: Water.	Pipework to reconnect existing W.C.'s and to supply additional W.C. Provision of hand basins in W.C.'s to include pipework, taps and drainage. Provision of sink unit in kitchen to include pipework taps and drainage. Provision of sink in each workshop to include pipework taps and drainage. Provision of hot and cold water tanks in roofspace.	<u>£850</u>
Item 5: Kitchen.	To provide permanent work surfaces and cupboards.	<u>£500</u>
Item 6: Interior and exterior decoration.	Paint and decorating materials for entire interior and exterior of building. (Professional quotation - materials only)	<u>£500</u>
Item 7: Double glazing.	Double glazing in main meeting room and office (C) to provide sound and heat insulation.	<u>£600</u>
Item 8: Insulation.	See attached schedule.	<u>£3970</u>
	Total:	<u>£11,450</u>

Figure 19 – Bath House Neighbourhood Centre, schedule of proposed works, p. 1

Bath House - Gwydir Street.

Insulation of building

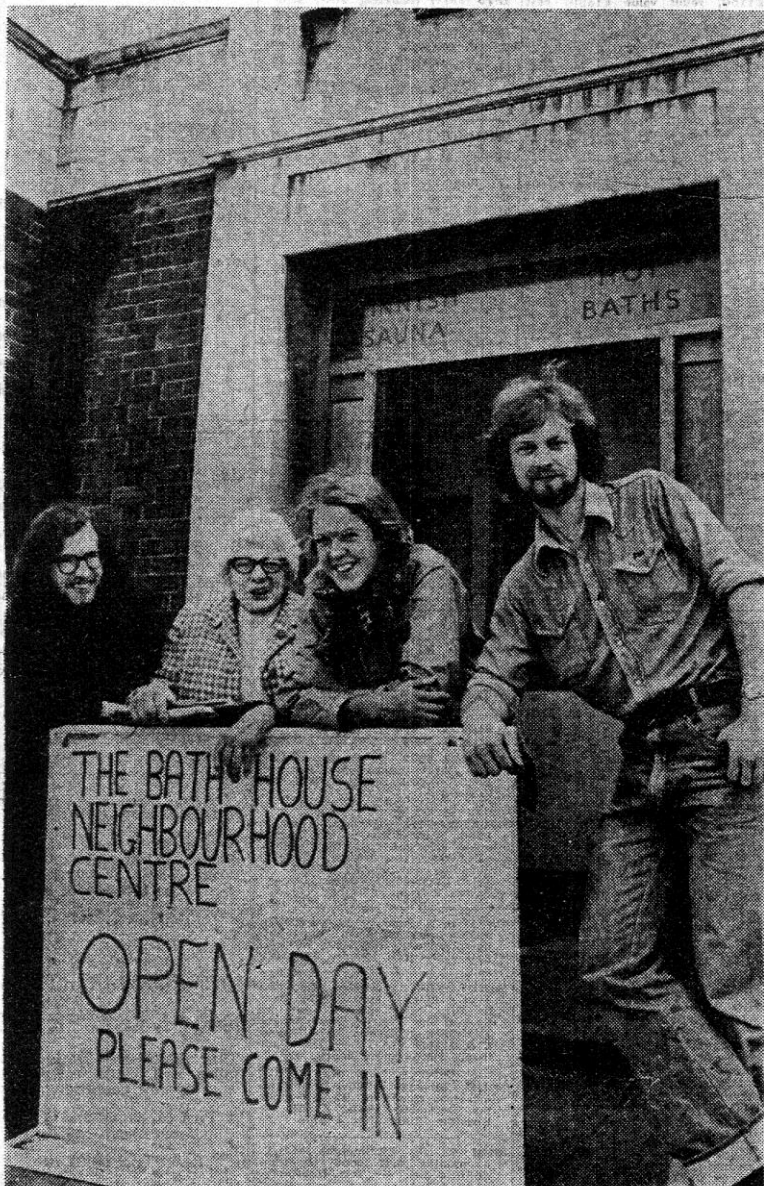


Approximate plan of building.

Location	Area m ²	Materials for insulation ¹	Est. Mat. Cost ² £	Annual Fuel ³ Savings
Floors A,B	164	40mm XPS + chipboard	700	15
Roof A (open pitch)	116	Polystyrene beads injected into joist cavities.	350	126
Roof A' (open pitch)	40	100-150mm Glass fibre + plasterboard	200	89
Roofs B'+B'' (ceilings)	32	100mm Glass fibre laid on ceilings	45	24
Roof C (Flat)	66	XPS Roofing board 50mm + chippings	300	71
Roof C'	11	Ditto	50	12
Skylights	30 est.	Double Glaze	450	43
Walls	212 app.	50 m ² Polystyrene beads behind existing wall linings 150 m ² battens & linings with 100mm fibreglass	75 1200	} 134
Windows exc. Item 7 on main sheet.	25	Double glaze	600	
		Total	<u>£3970</u>	<u>£587</u>

Figure 20 – Bath House Neighbourhood Centre, schedule of proposed works, p. 2

Work begins at the old baths



From left: Eric Blenkinsop, Doreen Garner, Sarah Webster, Roy Hammans — members of organisations concerned with the Bath House centre. 2653788

Work at Gwydir Street, Cambridge, got underway at the weekend as volunteers started the mammoth task of converting the old public baths into a neighbourhood centre. With a six-month rent-free period from the city council and a £500 grant from the lottery fund, the project has already been given a big boost.

But the task facing the volunteers includes knocking down walls, re-organising the layout and getting rid of a massive boiler — so more expert help is still needed. Eventually, the centre will house the Friends of the Earth, the Community Relations Council and the St Matthew Neighbourhood Association — with plenty of space for other organisations interested in using the building as a base.

MORE HELPERS NEEDED FOR CITY PROJECT

Figure 21 – Beginning of work (CEN 18 Sept 1978)

A few years ago, Mike Petty wrote the following summary of the conversion of the building to a community facility:-

The St. Matthews General Improvement Area was declared in 1977. The St. Matthews Neighbourhood Association (SMNA) was formed. A regular newsletter went out (2000 copies distributed) financed by a monthly waste paper collection, the paper being stored in a hut behind the Bath House which became a home for a vagrant and a smoking den for small boys until its removal. When the City Council revealed plans to demolish The Bath House to make a car park the SMNA and Cambridge Friends of the Earth formed the Bath House Trust. A founding trustee was Robert Rhodes Jones, MP. In 1978 the Bath House Trust acquired the lease of the Bath House, and on 15th Sept opened the building to the public. Some groups were prepared to move in even though conditions were rough – initially there was no heating or running water, but loads of pick-axes. The groups worked voluntarily to improve the situation while negotiations began in order to get a grant. They were given a 6 month rent-free period (which ended in March 1979) in order to make it habitable. It was a very cold winter. £500 was received from the city lottery fund towards a Calor gas heater (there was no mains gas!). Donations of furniture and equipment were gratefully received. The Sauna room became the Main Meeting Room. The area where the baths were was once going to be an Artist's studio but later became the Tenant Support Service's suite. Friends of the Earth occupied the Laundry for many years, basing their (government-sponsored) Home Insulation Project there. The plan to have a Workshop and Tool Exchange centre never came to fruition, but newsletters, paper collections, noticeboards and adversity generated a community spirit.

In 1982: Cambridge Friends of the Earth, Community Relations Council, Cambridge Youth Club, Gingerbread and the Community Press were the initial office users. The Cambridge Claimants Union and Neighbourhood Law Centre had regular meetings too. The Bath House acquired a Bedford van available for local hire. Gingerbread and the Community Press soon moved to other premises and were replaced by Cambridge Darkroom and the Marine Action Centre. A great variety of groups have come and gone over the years, and an even greater variety have held regular meetings in the hall. A toddlers group has nearly always been present. Externally the building has changed little. Internal space has been re-organised more than once in the last 20 years – the original boiler room became a darkroom initially, then the kitchen and darkroom swapped places, then the darkroom became a small meeting room.

The St. Matthew's Photo Workshop and Cambridge Darkroom

The following is an extract from a history of the Cambridge Darkroom,³¹ written by two of the founders, Roy Hammans and Brian Human.

In October 1978 six people with a passion for photography met in the Dewdrop Inn Public House,³² Gwydir Street, Cambridge to form the **St Matthews Photo Workshop**. The Workshop group published four aims:

- to make a photographic record of the people and buildings of the St Matthews area [an undeveloped Victorian inner-city part of Cambridge, UK]
- to explore the particular social and environmental qualities of the area through photography
- to make people in Cambridge more aware of the qualities of the area through photography; and
- to find and record old photographs of the area.

The Workshop members proposed to exhibit their photographs and hoped '*to extend activities to include the teaching of young people about photography.*'

The group grew to around twenty members and many were active in a range of local community activities.

One project to encourage local participation and advertise the group was a '**Photograph Yourself**' day in which local people were encouraged to come into a makeshift studio and make a self-portrait with a preset camera and lighting rig.

The results provided a literal 'snapshot' of the many and varied residents in the locale and were included in the group's first community exhibition, **Exposures**, held in the Cambridge Lion Yard Library in September 1979. A second exhibition, **Exposures 2**, was brought to the local Mill Road Library for display in May 1980.



Figure 22 – Prof. Paul Hill (left centre) leading a workshop at the Bath House

³¹ The full history is available on Roy Hammans' website Photography @Weeping Ash

³² The *Dewdrop Inn* became the *Cambridge Blue*.

The First Cambridge Darkroom – the transition. These modest beginnings catered for a growing local interest in photography and quickly showed the potential for a publicly accessible photographic darkroom in Cambridge. The group resolved to set up a community darkroom facility in the Bath House Neighbourhood Centre, an old public baths in the St Matthews area that local residents had fought to secure as a community resource when the building was threatened by demolition and redevelopment.

Towards this goal, in June 1980 the group transformed – renaming itself '*The Cambridge Darkroom*' with ten founder members.

The aims of the Cambridge Darkroom were stated thus:

- to promote the practice of and interest in all forms of photography by:
 - providing a photographic darkroom for community use
 - offering education in basic photographic techniques
 - organising photographic workshops and exhibitions
 - making photographic expertise available to community groups

In November 1980 the Eastern Arts Association gave the organisation a grant of £350 – this seemed quite a reasonable sum in those days. Work started on converting the old Public Baths' boiler room into a community darkroom for monochrome processing and printing.

The first Cambridge Darkroom was launched and opened to the public on 11th April 1981.

In addition to these practical facilities, the Darkroom quickly established the main elements of the activities that underpinned it in the coming years. During 1981 the first Beginners' Workshop was held in May; Ron McCormick conducted an Urban Landscape Weekend Workshop in September; an open meeting to discuss members' work was held in October; and in December Martin Parr's exhibition '*The Non-Conformists*' was brought to the Lion Yard Library in central Cambridge.

The next two years saw workshops led by John Benton Harris (*Documentary Photography*), Ed Barber (*About Face – self-portraiture*) and Professor Paul Hill (*Beyond the Record*).

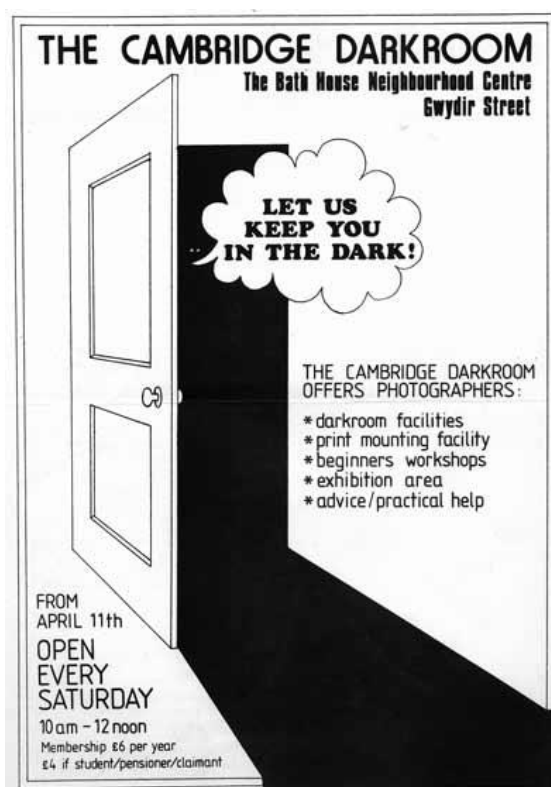


Figure 23 – Poster which introduced the Cambridge Darkroom in April 1981

Touring exhibitions of the work of Nick Hedges, Glyn Satterly and Jane Bown were exhibited in libraries and public buildings in the city. Fine photography had arrived in Cambridge!

However, the popularity and success of these early days soon exposed the limitations of the Darkroom as it was then: the reliance on voluntary effort; the lack of an established base from which to organize activities; and, crucially, no high quality, dedicated gallery space in which to show work and develop associated programmes. By early 1982 it was clear that the aims of the Darkroom could be achieved only by becoming a fully professional organisation with its own premises.

This challenge was addressed on three fronts simultaneously. Successful bids for grant funding were made to the City Council, the Community Programme and the Eastern Arts Association. In August 1982 the Darkroom took office space in the Bath House as a campaign HQ; and in February 1983 Mark Lumley became the Darkroom's first paid worker. Proposals to establish a gallery in the old Dales Brewery building, opposite the Bath House, were canvassed in April 1982; a prospectus setting out plans for the conversion of a unit in the old Brewery was published in March 1983; and in June 1983 the City Council agreed to lease the unit to the Darkroom. Work on converting the derelict space into a gallery, offices and darkrooms started in the autumn of 1983. The main structural work was carried out by paid contractors, but much of the interior finishing came about through the voluntary efforts of supporters and the commitment of the fledgling gallery staff – now comprising four paid workers.

The artist and designer Edward Wright (renowned for his famous 'New Scotland Yard' signage), who had retired to live in the area, and photographer, artist & designer Humphrey Spender (perhaps best known for his work on the 'Mass Observation' project in the 1930s) agreed to become patrons of the Cambridge Darkroom.

Also, artist and photographer Pavel Büchler, a local resident at the time – now Research Professor at Manchester Metropolitan University, took an interest in the project and became heavily involved in the preparations for the 'New Cambridge Darkroom' during 1983.

The Cambridge Darkroom was formally constituted as a company limited by guarantee on 11th January 1984. The objects for which the company was established were stated as: ***'to further and advance the education of the public in the art of photography and to promote public knowledge, appreciation and understanding thereof.'***

To achieve this it was 'empowered' to mount exhibitions, collect photographic works, promote photography and provide public facilities for the pursuit of photography. The journey began.

The team that brought the Cambridge Darkroom to fruition were Mark Lumley, Pavel Büchler, Roy Hammans and Brian Human. The founding directors of the company were Roy Hammans, Brian Human, Colen Lumley, Peter Soar and Edward Wright. Colen Lumley, an architect, advised on the design of the gallery space and Peter Soar, a local solicitor, provided legal advice and services – both had an active interest in photography and were keen supporters of the venture. Edward Wright brought his wealth of experience in design and teaching to the mix. The 'board of directors' met the legal requirements for a limited company and managed the company affairs.

The Cambridge Darkroom Gallery opened on the first floor of Dales Brewery on 20th January 1984, with Mark Lumley as Director and Pavel Büchler as Co-Director.

8. THE BATH HOUSE IN 2015

The freehold of the Bath House remains in the ownership of Cambridge City Council. The Bath House Association manages the building and is the tenant from which community users rent space.

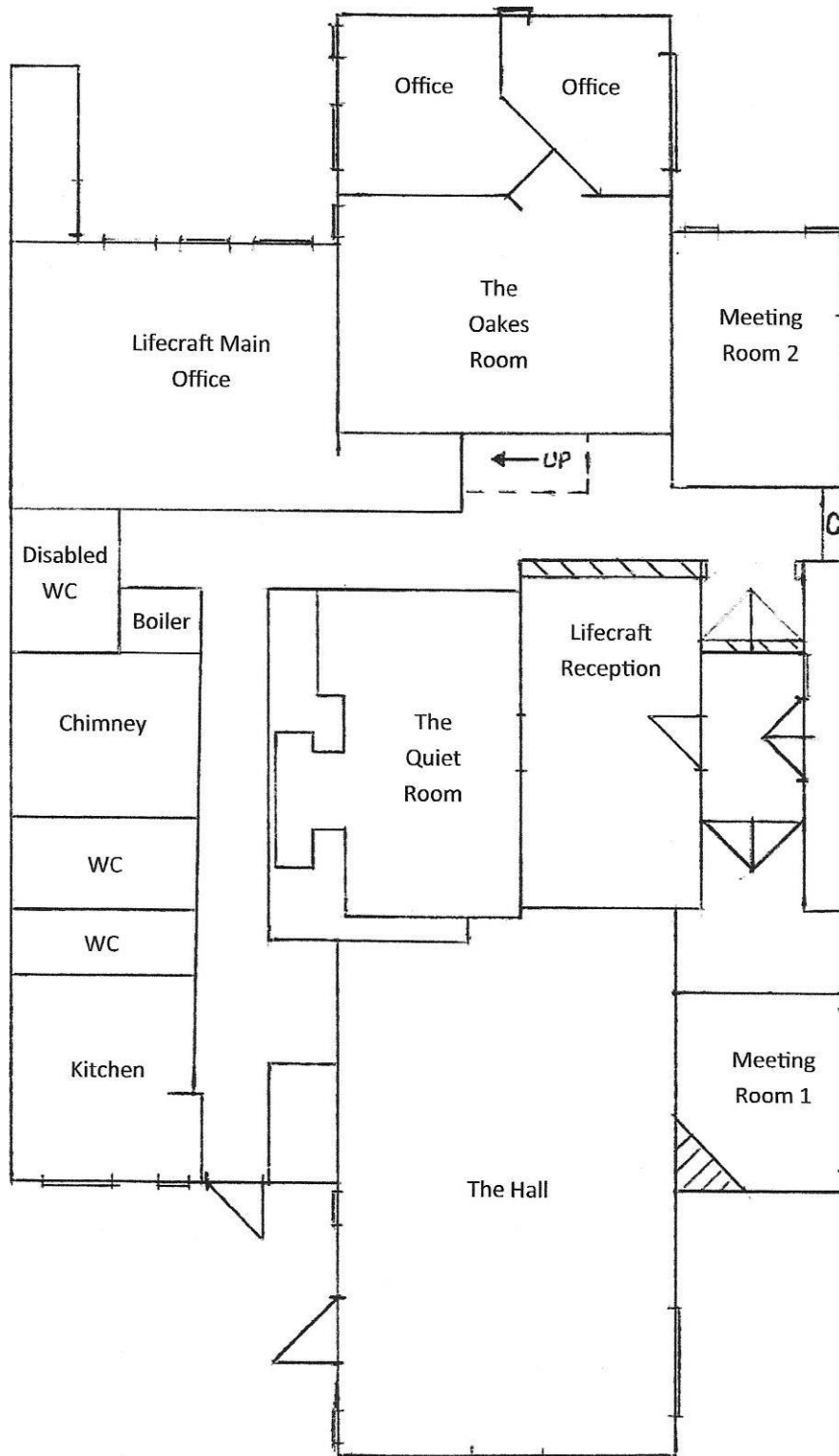


Figure 24 – The Bath house today (not copied to scale)

The Bath House Association

The Bath House Association (Registered Charity Number 1068989) was formed and adopted a formal constitution on 7 January 1994. The objects of the Association are, among others:

To maintain and manage the bath house, Gwydir St, Cambridge, CB1 2LW ('The Bath House') as a community centre for the benefit of the inhabitants of St. Matthew's constituency, Cambridge and the neighbourhood without distinction of sex, sexual orientation, race or of political, religious or other opinions, by associating together the inhabitants and the local authorities, voluntary and other organisations in a common effort to advance education and to provide facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation and leisure time occupations with the object of improving the conditions of life for the said inhabitants. The association shall be non-party in politics and non-sectarian in religion....

The Association was registered with the Charity Commission on 1 April 1998.

Trustees of the charity are drawn from the organisations which use the building and from local residents.

Lifecraft

The hall (formerly the men's baths and later the sauna) is used by **Lifecraft** during the day and by other local groups in the evenings and at weekends.

The office space with the building is occupied by Lifecraft³³ (RCN 1048144).

The old laundry is now the 'back office' space. The former women's baths are a meeting room and offices for the manager and deputy manager, from which each evening a telephone helpline is operated. The old waiting rooms are now counselling rooms. The shower room houses computers. The removal of the boiler opened up a space which was first used as a darkroom, and is now two toilets and the Lifecraft kitchen.

The layout of the building is shown on Figure 25.



Lifecraft was founded by a small group of mental health users who identified gaps in community care, particularly access to information and support. The organisation's main aim is to promote self-help for mental health.

Bev Sedley, Co-Founder of Lifecraft, says :-

In January 1993 four of us who had mental health problems felt there was a need for a place for people to come together to support each other in any way we could.

For several weeks we met in my basement room, the group got a bit bigger and we managed to get £400 from Cambridge City Council to rent the hall at the Bath House on the corner of Mill Road and Gwydir Street and put up some posters. The first day no one came, except a social worker who put her head around the door to see what we were about, but pretty soon word spread and we had 20 or 30 people just dropping in to have a cup of tea, chat, share music and do a bit of play reading. It was really supportive – I loved it because I didn't need to pretend I was always OK, I felt at home with everyone, it was like a new kind of family. It just grew from there.

³³ For more information on Lifecraft, see its website: Lifecraft.org.uk

Today, Lifecraft is a unique user-led mental health organisation. It continues to grow and evolve in response to the diverse and changing needs of its members. Lifecraft is currently funded through a wide range of grants, statutory funds, donations and fundraising activity.

Lifecraft has a number of valued services which include:

- A wide range of weekly creative groups and support groups
- Counselling Service and telephone helpline
- Campaigns and user involvement
- Social Club and Information Centre
- Member Employment

Currently it has over 300 members and no professional referral for membership is required, which makes it unique amongst other mental health charities.

Lifecraft is governed by a Board of Trustees, most of whom are Lifecraft members. Monthly member meetings give members the opportunity to exchange views and ideas and provide input to the development of Lifecraft services.

9. THE BUILDINGS IN 2015

The following gallery of thirty-eight photographs, all taken by Peter Bridge on 5 September 2015, shows the Bath House, exterior and interior, as it is today, and at the same time reveals traces of the past that can still be discerned.

THE EXTERIOR



Figure 25 – View of southwest corner from across Mill Road



Figure 26 – Coat of arms of the City of Cambridge



Figure 27 – Eastern wall, from Gwydir Street car park



Figure 28 – View from across Mill Road looking at the southeast corner and the public toilets



Figure 29 – View from the play area looking at the northern side of the building



Figure 30 – the old flooring

Could the old flooring shown in Figure 30 above, in what is now the open space to the north of the building, be the old floor surface of the stables?

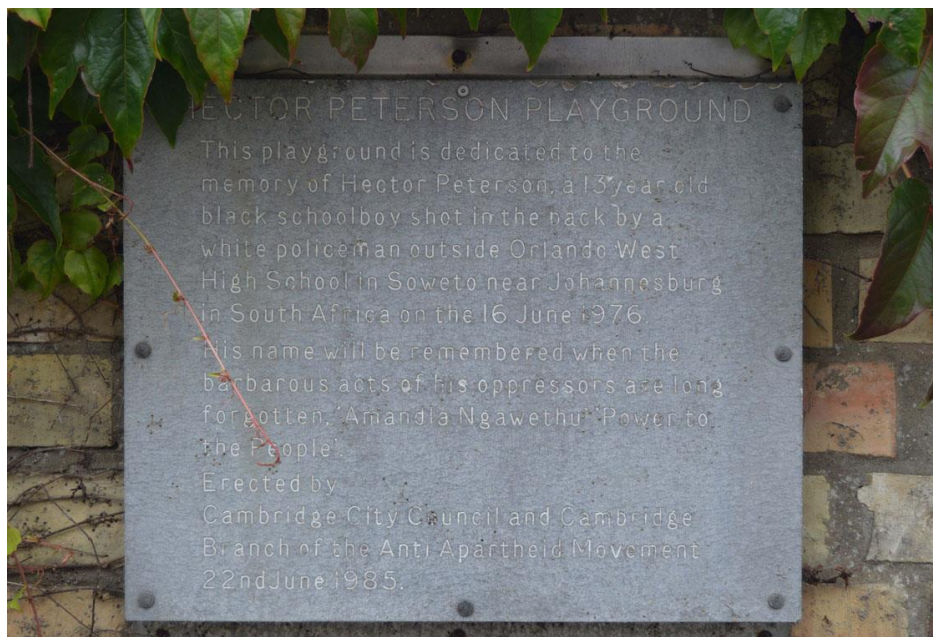


Figure 31 – Memorial/dedication plaque in the play area

The memorial/dedication plaque shown in Figure 31 reads:

HECTOR PETERSON PLAYGROUND

This playground is dedicated to the memory of Hector Peterson, a 13 year old black school boy shot in the back by a white policeman outside Orlando West High School in Soweto near Johannesburg in South Africa on the 16th June 1976. His name will be remembered when the barbarous acts of his oppressors are long forgotten. 'Amandla Ngawethu' 'Power to the People'

Erected by Cambridge City Council and Cambridge Branch of the Anti-Apartheid Movement 22nd June 1985



Figure 32 – Bath House chimney

The Borough Surveyor, G W Teasdale, described the building in 1927 as having been constructed of brickwork, with stone facings. The roof is covered with Broseley sand-faced tiles. The chimney shaft is 40 feet high, and is constructed of brickwork, surmounted at the top with a cast-iron cap (see Figure 32 above).



Figure 33 – Ventilation cap

Each of the bathing areas had a ventilation cap over it (see Figure 33 above).



Figure 34 – Ventilation vent

At each end of the building there was a ventilation vent. Figure 34 shows the opening on the Mill Road gable end.



Figure 35 – Window of women’s bathing cubicles

The window shown in Figure 35 originally lit the women’s bathing cubicles. All of the windows in the public bathing areas are set high to discourage prying eyes.



Figure 36 – Window with frosted glass

This window, shown in Figure 36, is located on the northern side of the building and was blocked up with brick work to provide a cupboard on the inner side. The window displays four distinct types of ‘frosted’ glass.



Figure 37 – Soft brickwork with coin

Whilst customers were queuing for a bath, coins were rubbed into the soft brick work and names were scratched into the surface (as can be seen also on the side wall of the Playhouse cinema at 44a Mill Road – now the Sally Ann's Charity Shop³⁴). Some of these names may be more recent and a result of waiting for the telephone boxes to become vacant.



Figure 38 – Graffiti on the wall adjacent to the telephone box

³⁴ See Ian Bent and Kieran Perkins, '44a Mill Road, Cambridge', Mill Road History Project building report.

THE ENTRANCE HALL, 'PAY OFFICE' and WAITING ROOMS

Figure 39 – Original swing doors

Figure 39 shows the original internal swing doors to the men's baths. Sadly these doors are no longer compliant with modern requirements for disabled access and are likely to be removed. The floor in this area is the only remaining part of the original black and white colour scheme.



Figure 40 – Brass floor-plate from swing doors

Figure 40 shows a detail from the swing door's fittings.



Figure 41 – Original pay office

Figure 41 shows the Lifecraft reception area, formerly the pay office. The two small frames are the 'windows', now blocked in, through which payment was made and soap and towels were dispensed. These are on the women's side of the baths. In 1927 this area was described as 'the pay office, which adjoins the main entrance, [...] so arranged that the attendant has full view of the waiting rooms and corridors leading to the cubicles'.



Figure 42 – Modern reception area

Figure 42 shows the Lifecraft reception area looking towards the men's baths and showing a small window in the corner, and also two blocked-up doorways, probably from the time the sauna was introduced.



Figure 43 – Pay office window

Figure 43 shows a pay office window seen from the women's baths side. Note the glazed brick work (now painted) which was a feature of much of the building.



Figure 44 – Original women's waiting room

Figure 44 show a meeting room used by Lifecraft for counselling. It was built as the women's waiting room with a w.c. cubicle in the corner. The marks left by the removal of the head-height cistern can still be seen on the wall between the right and centre windows.

THE HALL (formerly the men's bathing cubicles and the Sauna)

Figure 45 – Former men's baths, later sauna

Figure 45 gives an interior view of what is now the hall and was originally the men's baths and from 1968 the sauna. Compare this view with Figure 22 above, from 1981.



Figure 46 – Former men's baths, later sauna, looking north

Figure 46 gives another view, looking north, of the present hall, formerly the men's baths and from 1968 the sauna. The timber cladding of the sauna survives under many coats of paint. The room was decorated in 2015 by a group of volunteers from the Prince's Trust..

THE LAUNDRY



Figure 47 – Former laundry and drying room, exterior view

Behind these three windows on the south (Mill Road) side of the building (Figure 47) was the laundry and drying room, with a w.c. for the staff to the right.



Figure 48 – The former laundry, interior view

The former laundry (Figure 48) is now a busy office space where Lifecraft staff and volunteers work. The door on the left used to give access to the yard. It now accesses a storage space which was formerly the staff w.c.



Figure 49 – Former access way to drying racks

This low doorway is probably where the drying racks were accessed from the laundry. The drying racks backed on to the boiler. The drying space is now the disabled toilet accessed from the corridor.

THE QUIET ROOM (formerly the SHOWERS FOR THE SAUNA)

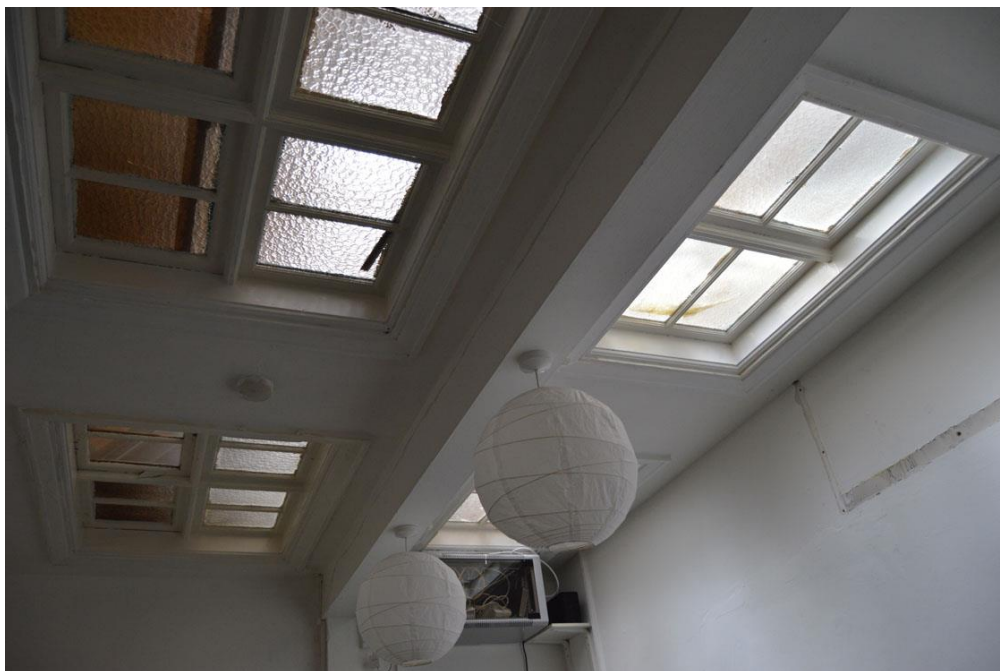


Figure 50 – Windows in ceiling, interior view

No! – this picture is not on its side! These windows are in the ceiling with roof lights in the main roof above.



Figure 51 – Roof lights, exterior view

And these are the roof lights located above the windows in Figure 50.



Figure 52 – Corridor with fire alarm



Figure 53 – Quiet room

In Figure 52 above, the brick work in the corridor outside the quiet room shows evidence of the works from 1978: a doorway has been moved; and the newer brickwork is rough whereas the old glazed bricks are smooth. — There cannot be many fire alarms like this one left in use, either!

Figure 53 shows the quiet room, in which the 1927 glazed bricks contrast with the 1968 square tiles of the former showers.



Figure 54 – Quiet Room

The Quiet Room, Figure 54, is a part of the building used exclusively by Lifecraft. Having no external window, it really is the quietest part of the building. The room multi-tasks as the members' computer room, counselling room, reading room and therapy space.



Figure 55 – Former pay office window seen from the women’s baths side of the building, and corridor

Figure 55 shows the corridor outside the current quiet room. On the right, painted green is a blocked-in opening to the corridor (now part of the quiet room) which ran behind the pay office to link the pay office to the two bathing areas. The black rectangular feature is one of the pay office windows.

In Figure 56 can be seen the modern boiler, and also remnants of the old heating system. Behind the boiler is one of the foundation walls of the chimney. The original boiler was on the northern side of the chimney. It was removed in 1978 and the old boiler room is now kitchen and w.c.s



Figure 56 – Remnants of old boiler



Figure 57 Women's bath area with staircase and mezzanine



Figure 58 – The Oakes Room

Figure 57 shows that a mezzanine floor has been built over the area of the women's baths, accessed by a wooden stair to provide storage space above with meeting room and offices below.

Figure 58 shows part of the Oakes Meeting Room. The name has been adopted by Lifecraft in memory of Suzy Oakes. The trust fund set up on her death generously funded the first 18 months rent, enabling Lifecraft to occupy this much needed space when the previous occupants, Linchpin and the Cambridge Federation Tenants Leaseholders and Residents, moved out in 2014. Formerly part of the women's baths, the lowered roof now supports the mezzanine area used for storage. The doors access the offices of the Lifecraft manager and the Lifecraft Lifeline manager. These rooms are also used by the Lifeline telephone volunteers every evening of the year.



Figure 59 – Internal circular window

In Figure 59 can be seen an internal circular window above the women's bathing cubicles which brings in light from the skylights in the roof space above the former pay office.

In Figure 60, the rear corridor doors on the left lead to the toilets. The boiler was here before. The original glazed bricks now painted pale green are still in place.

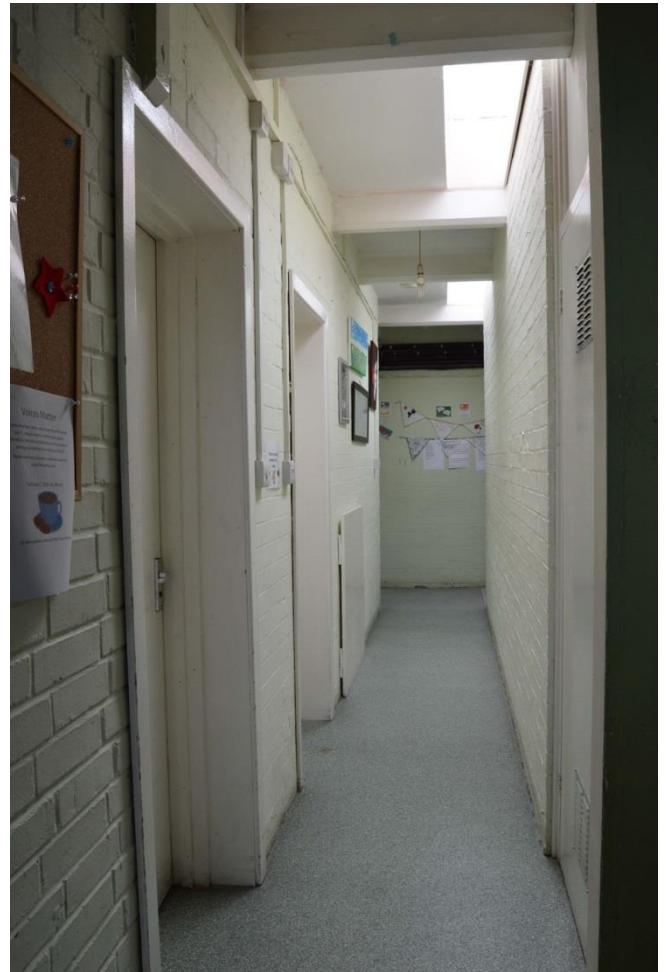


Figure 60 – Original glazed bricks in rear corridor

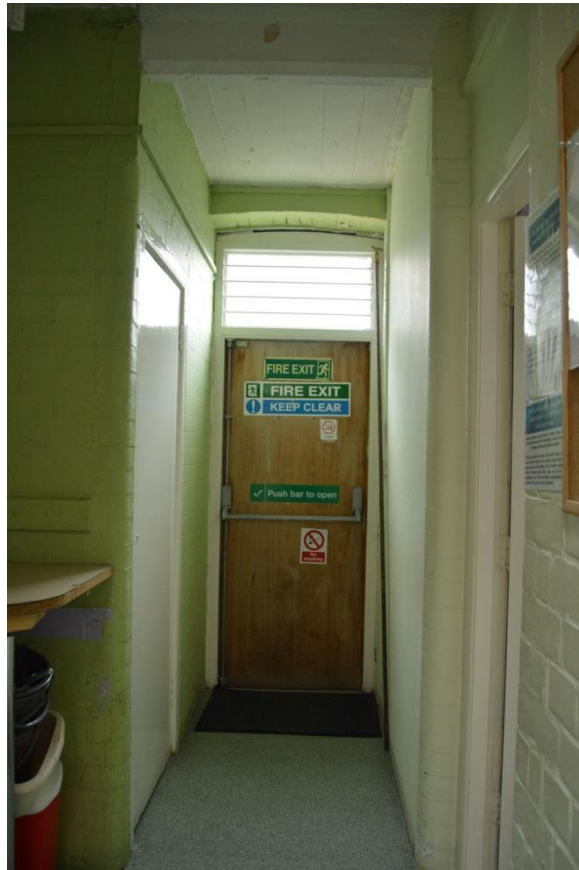


Figure 61 – Back door, door to kitchen

In Figure 61, the corridor and back door can be seen, with the door on the right leading into the kitchen.

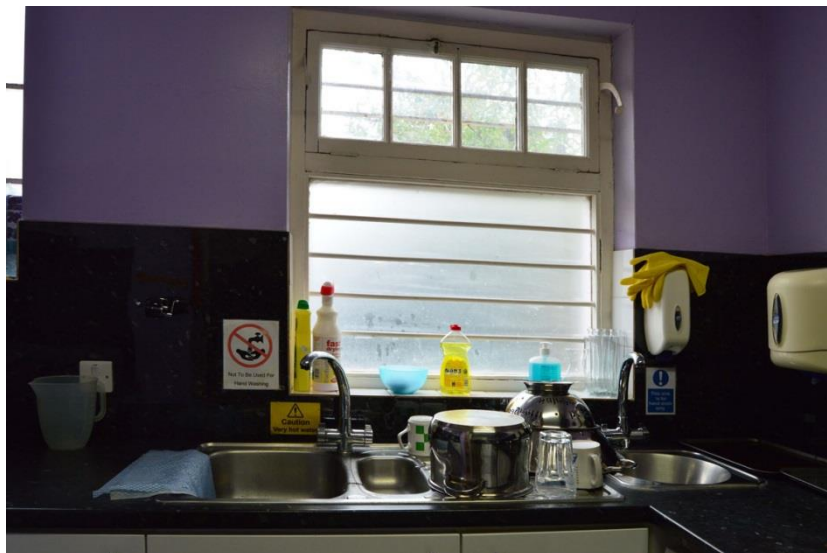


Figure 62 – Lifecraft kitchen

Figure 62 shows the Lifecraft kitchen after a busy 'Social Club' evening and a cooked meal for members.

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Julia Ewans

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