

## The History of the Cleveland Pools – the Central Cottage

The whole structure of the crescent of changing rooms with its central cottage is original, dating from 1815 - 1816; a two-storey cottage is flanked on either side by wings of six changing cubicles. There is a taller block and extension to the west, integral to the original build, which housed the Ladies Pool, Perpetual Shower and two large dressing rooms. It is likely that the whole crescent was designed by John Pinch the Elder, a skilled architect who designed many notable buildings in the wider Bathwick area. Amongst the original fee-paying subscribers to the Pools, Pinch is one of the few whose fee is shown as 'gratis', acknowledging their contribution to the inception of this remarkable Georgian bathing facility.



The cottage within the crescent of changing rooms, pre – restoration 2018  
*Photograph courtesy of Sally Helvey*

### Central Cottage – its structure

One room deep, front and rear walls curved with the crescent, the cottage has chimney stacks at either gabled end with a 'blind' window in each end wall. Blind windows indicate that original windows were blocked to avoid the window tax that was not abolished until 1851. The slate roof, with remnants of lime torching, is original. The north elevation has a central arched opening with a window opening to either side, and three above. The existing windows are from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The central archway, through to a lobby on the south side, gave access from the entrance pathway to the main pool. This was the only access to the lower pool, probably until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when steps were created to facilitate access from the pathway, around the crescent of changing rooms.

The south elevation of the cottage has a central door accessed by steps which may be original, a window to its east and three above.



South Elevation of Cottage – Pre-Restoration  
*Photograph courtesy of Ainslie Ensom MSc.HistBdgCons*

### **The Interior Layout of the Cottage**

On either side of this passageway is a single room, with three rooms above, including a bathroom added at a later stage. The original interior layout of the cottage has been altered. The main original features can be summarized:

- The ground floor room to the west has a plain stone fire surround containing a small cast iron range].
- The upper floor room to the west has a cast iron hob grate with a stone surround.
- The upper floor room to the east has a plain stone surround although it has lost its grate, a simple plaster cornice, timber skirting boards, floorboards, door, and architraves.
- The boarded ceiling above the north lobby.

## The Cast Iron Ranges

There are four fireplaces inside, with three remaining cast-iron ranges. The ranges provided heating, washing, and cooking and the Cleveland Pools Trust wished to make a feature of them to explain to visitors (especially children) what living conditions were like in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. One of the ranges is dated 1842 and was produced by the Coalbrookdale company. Another range is likely to be one of the few ranges manufactured by 'Gardiner & Sons Ltd', now Gardiner Haskins of Bristol. A further range is a Falkirk type range, possibly dating from the 1900 – 1920 period, very common in working buildings and poorer households.



Cast iron range in west ground floor room of cottage pre - restoration  
*Photograph courtesy of Ainslie Ensom MSc.HistBdgCons*



Cast iron hob grate in upper west room in cottage –pre restoration.  
*Photograph courtesy of Ainslie Ensom MSc.HistBdgCons*

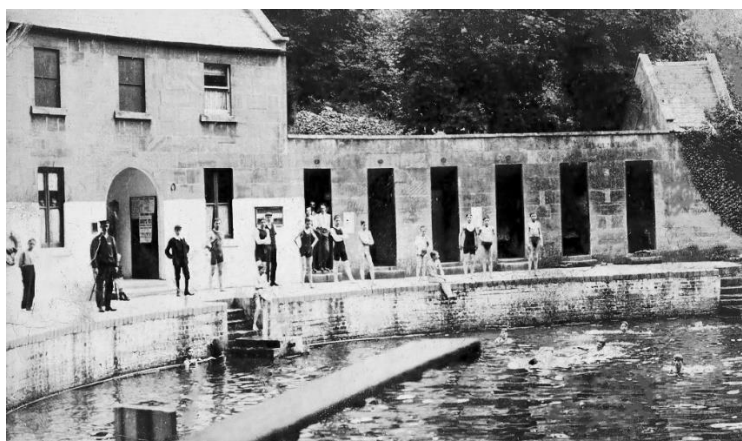
## **Some residents of the Cottage during the Pools' history**

Captain William Evans lived in the cottage during his notable oversight of swimming teaching and spectacular events during the 1860s, 1870s and part of the 1889s. His pet baboon lived on the site for part of this period but was likely to have had a cage or other suitable accommodation on the site.

When Evans died, a new Superintendent of the Baths was appointed to replace him – he was Edward Coles, a retired police sergeant. He was to be the last overseer appointed while the Baths was still in private ownership. We can see from a local press feature in 1984 about serious flooding of the river Avon, that he lived with his family in the cottage at the Baths:

*'Amongst the many accounts which have appeared of the damage and destruction worked by the flood, one spot appears to have been overlooked, viz, the Cleveland Baths. The custodian, his wife, and three children had a narrow escape being caught like rats in a trap so quickly did the flood come upon them on Monday night, they had barely time to get out before the flood was up to the bedroom floor...Frequenters of the bath will have some idea of the damage done when I say, the water at its highest point completely covered the roof of the dressing rooms'.*

In 1900, when the Bath Corporation had purchased the Cleveland Baths for wider use by Bath residents, the Corporation appointed Samuel Inkerman Bailey to be their first Superintendent. He was unmarried and had a distinguished naval service record. He married Alice Joanna Clark from Frome in 1901 – they brought up a family of five children at the cottage, three sons and two daughters, who were all born while he was the Baths' Superintendent. Before the First World War, the Inkerman Baileys lived in the cottage at the Cleveland Baths. Samuel sadly died in 1915. His widow and children had to move out of the cottage, but they continued to live locally in Bathwick and some of their descendants live in the Bath area.



*Photograph of the Cleveland Baths circa 1910 including the Superintendent, Samuel Inkerman Bailey, courtesy of his family descendants*

## The Cottage Restoration



*View of the restored cottage in 2022, courtesy of the Cleveland Pools Trust*

Cleveland Pools is listed Grade II\* and is significant as the oldest surviving public outdoor pool in the UK. Its location within the City of Bath World Heritage site, and crescent form referencing the well-known crescents of Georgian Bath, add considerably to its heritage value. This unique property was on Historic England's 'Heritage at Risk' register and, having been out of use for over 30 years, in very poor condition. The main aims and objectives of the restoration project were to restore swimming to the site, conserve and update the existing building and provide new facilities to complement and support this purpose.

During restoration of the historic 'crescent' of buildings, cleaning was followed by trial limewash samples to achieve a good match to the stone colour – historically, the lower storey of the building had been limewashed, then whitewashed (along with some masonry paint) – the continued use of limewash provides an appropriate solution to unify the elevation, tolerate flood conditions and provide a highly-breathable, antibacterial and antifungal finish to masonry surfaces.

Surviving areas of lime plaster, and lath and plaster, are retained and traditionally repaired in three coat haired lime plaster throughout the first floor residential flat in the cottage building. The first-floor boarding was lifted to allow upgrading for thermal, acoustic and fire separation before being reinstated. The cast iron ranges are repaired and refurbished, although not as working fireplaces.



*Cottage Interior View Post – Restoration,  
courtesy of the Cleveland Pools Trust*

The rooms in the cottage will be used as offices by Fusion Lifestyle, the Cleveland Pools Trust's operating partner. People will enter the poolside through the ground floor room. Access to the first floor is enabled by an outdoor metal bridge from the entrance path.

In summary, the restoration of the central cottage has been undertaken with care and consideration for this specific feature of the unique, historic, purpose designed buildings in their Regency crescent that reflect the curve of the main pool on the Cleveland Pools site.

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