

**VICTORIAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS CLEANLINESS
AND DIRT: BATHS AND WASH-HOUSES IN
BRADFORD AND LEEDS 1860 - 1914**

Baths and Wash Houses Historical Archive

**Victorian Attitudes towards Cleanliness and Dirt:
Baths and Wash-houses in Bradford and Leeds 1860 - 1914**

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ABSTRACT

This work explores Victorian attitudes towards cleanliness and dirt, and relates them to the provision of municipal baths and wash-houses in Bradford and Leeds in the period 1860 to 1914. Topics like this have been studied in the past as part of the development of municipal government. What this study seeks to provide is a different approach, one related to the significance of aspects of changing cultural values. The concepts of cleanliness and dirt are therefore examined and related to the topics of personal bathing and washing in Victorian times, and a little beyond. The impact of increased government involvement, at both national and local level, was greatly influenced by ideas about bodily hygiene. Relevant legislation, and related material, is outlined. The political and financial implications of the ways in which each local authority reacted towards the amount of legislation resulting from the great sanitary debate of the period are analysed. Details of the buildings erected, their locations, the various facilities provided and the use made of them, in light of the charges imposed, are also considered.

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1 Changing Cultural Values	5
CHAPTER 2 Legislation	16
CHAPTER 3 Local Authority Reaction in Bradford and Leeds	26
CHAPTER 4 Facilities Provided	38
CONCLUSION	50
APPENDICES	57
BIBLIOGRAPHY	60

LIST OF TABLES

	<u>Page</u>
Table 4.1 Wage rates for manual workers in mid 1880s	40
Table 4.2 Number of slipper and douche baths provided	43
Table 4.3 Attendance at Baths	47

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	<u>Page</u>
Diagrammatical representation of the location of baths in Bradford	27
Diagrammatical representation of the location of baths in Leeds	34

LIST OF APPENDICES

	<u>Page</u>
Appendix 1 External Views of Bradford Baths	57
Appendix 2 Internal Facilities at Bradford Baths	58
Appendix 3 Leeds Baths	59

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation examines the circumstances surrounding the provision of municipal baths and wash-houses in the towns of Bradford and Leeds during the period 1860 to 1914. Beginning with a consideration of the concepts of cleanliness and dirt in order to set the scene for the great sanitary debate of the mid to late nineteenth century, the study then examines relevant legislation in order to assess its impact and implementation in each local authority. It concludes by looking at the facilities provided and the use made of them by the public.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (O.E.D.) defines *dirt* as being unclean matter that soils any object by adhering to it.¹ The original sense of the word *cleanliness* is defined as the quality of being clean i.e. pure and free from defilement.² In modern terms this could be said to be free from dirt or filth. In 1791 John Wesley (*Serm. Lxxxvii. On Dress 111.15*) said: 'Cleanliness is indeed next to Godliness'. It was not cleanliness itself but the meanings that were attached to it that were important. For example, the belief that cleanliness was linked to moral purity was common in the Victorian era and this influenced the attitudes of many social reformers, who feared that dirt would disrupt social order in nineteenth century Britain. Cleanliness was also associated with ideas about self-control, dirt and disease. Endeavouring to introduce habits of cleanliness, therefore, became an object of great importance. It has to be remembered that dirt is a relative concept, there is no real standard which has remained unchanged throughout history. Mary Douglas, writing in 1966, considered that dirt was essentially disorder, matter out of place, because it

offended against the so-called order of cleanliness.³ Striving for order and control helped keep dirt at bay. Acts and observances related to personal cleanliness were therefore necessary if social order was to be maintained, because it was hoped that with improved personal hygiene would come improved moral behaviour. The building of baths and wash-houses from the mid nineteenth century onwards had a part to play in the movement towards establishing an ideal Victorian society.

The dissertation has four main chapters. Chapter One examines changing cultural values over the preceding centuries and considers links between dirt and disease, personal hygiene and medical science, including the spread of disease, and personal hygiene and moral behaviour. Mention will also be made of the widely accepted belief that washing damaged the health by removing essential oils from the skin. The significance of the work of people such as Edwin Chadwick, Dr. Robert Baker and Charles Kingsley is included. Changing ideas about cleanliness, especially bodily cleanliness are detailed. The work of Alain Corbin, about the situation in France, is related to the situation in this country and reinforced by the comments of Patrick Joyce. In addition the contributions of Anne McClintock, Leonore Davidoff and G. Vigarello to the debate about the significance of bodily cleanliness are included.

Chapter Two deals with the legislation that it was hoped would bring about the desired changes and this provides a background to the establishment of public washing and bathing facilities in Bradford and Leeds. The work of Select Committees and Reports of Royal Commissions, in addition to Parliamentary

Acts and bye-law legislation, are included in so far as they are relevant to the sanitary idea and views on cleanliness and public hygiene.

Chapter Three looks at local authority reaction to the national legislation within Bradford and Leeds, particularly relating directly, and indirectly, to the establishment of baths and wash-houses. It also considers the local legislation introduced by each authority, for example the Bradford Improvement Act of 1850 and the Leeds Act of 1842, in addition to various reports of Select Committees and Commissions of Inquiry etc. The implications of permissive legislation and also the political situation in both towns is considered in an attempt to discover why it was that both authorities reacted so slowly to the 1846 *Act to Encourage the Establishment of Public Baths and Wash-houses*.⁴ This has involved a detailed study of the Council and Committee minutes of the period. Details of the buildings eventually erected are outlined and illustrations are included in Appendices 1 and 3.

Chapter Four considers the types of facilities provided at the buildings that were established between 1860 and 1914. Illustrations are included in Appendices 2 and 3. Class segregation and sexual discrimination were encountered. Admission charges have been related to average earnings of the time. Rates of pay within the Baths service itself have been examined. Mention is made of the presence of swimming pools, although these are not connected with the bodily cleanliness side of public health issues. The chapter ends with an analysis of the use made of the facilities provided, based on the attendance figures contained in the Annual Reports to Council of the Baths Committees in Bradford and Leeds.

Notes

¹ Oxford English Dictionary, Vol.IV, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1989) pp. 709-12

² O.E.D., Vol. III, pp. 293-7.

³ M. Douglas, Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo (London, Routledge, 1966) p. 2

⁴ An Act to Encourage the Establishment of Public Baths and Wash-houses 1846 (9 & 10 Vic. c 74)

CHAPTER ONE

Changing Cultural Values

This chapter considers the concepts of cleanliness and dirt and relates these to the development of bathing and washing in Victorian times. Consideration will be given to the widely accepted belief that washing damaged the health. The work of Edwin Chadwick will be mentioned and links between dirt and disease, personal hygiene and medical science, and personal hygiene and moral behaviour will be examined. The building of public baths and wash-houses from the mid nineteenth century onwards, instigated as a result of the desire to change the washing habits of the working classes, was based upon the idea that keeping the whole body clean would result in a healthy work force and improved moral behaviour. Those responsible for the establishment of such buildings hoped that they would solve the problems of the 'great unwashed'. Whether they achieved this aim or not will be dealt with in a later chapter.

Prior to the eighteenth century bathing was considered to be a pleasurable and relaxing activity, not a necessity. There existed a belief that too much washing could damage health by removing essential oils from the skin. Hot water was believed to weaken the body by making it soft and moist, by opening the pores and thereby increasing its vulnerability to air and disease. In this way the body's equilibrium was disturbed and it became less resistant to infection. However, warm baths gradually gained ground in the early nineteenth century due to changes in the practice of using soap, which removed dirt and purified

the skin, a process helped by hot water. Bathing in the nineteenth century then came to be considered to be good for health. Dirt prevented perspiration and oil from being released by the skin and this was considered to cause illness. So it became necessary to wash in order to rid oneself of potentially harmful things. The prime role of the bath, by this time, had become one of cleansing therefore, rather than stimulating.

Links between personal hygiene and medical science were first realised in the late eighteenth century. In 1767, when the building of the General Infirmary in Leeds commenced, the town was a prosperous place, although its streets were unpaved and there was no sewerage system or drainage. In those days the matron visited the wards to see that everything was kept clean by the nurses. In 1785 Mr John Howard visited the hospital and he wrote: 'This is one of the best hospitals in the kingdom. In the wards ... there is great attention to cleanliness; ... no bugs in the beds ...'.¹

By the late eighteenth century the connection between smell and dirt began to be noticed, particularly wherever the poor gathered and this eventually led to consideration of links between dirt, smells and disease. In the early nineteenth century it was believed that disease was spread by dirt and by the gases which it gave off. There were initially two points of view. Miasmists believed that disease was spread by bad air. Contagionists believed that if people washed and were therefore cleaner this would stop the spread of disease by personal contact. Pasteur was later to show that there were links between disease and germs, that infections were caused by micro-organisms, and this gave rise to the germ theory.

As early as 1804 it was recognised that the spread of disease could be slowed by having adequate ventilation. Hospital reform was dominated by ideas about ventilation, the removal of rubbish, the provision of beds and clean linen.²

When the Infirmary was rebuilt in the 1860s the architect, George Gilbert Scott, sought the advice of Florence Nightingale about the size of the wards, and the spaces between, and the volume of air around each bed. Advances in antiseptic techniques resulted in lower mortality rates in the late nineteenth century. Around 1900 there developed the idea of aseptic surgery when the emphasis moved from killing micro-organisms to keeping areas free from them.³ Medical science had left smells behind and moved on to microbes.

At the time baths were virtually unknown in working class homes, sewers and drains were inadequate, the water supply was poor. Foul odours in the past may have been disliked, but they were tolerated. Decaying organic waste was accepted. Prevention of dirt and disease became a key issue in the effort to transform the hygiene habits of communities. By the end of the nineteenth century we had almost reached an understanding of the idea of cleanliness as it is today, all unpleasant smells having been sanitised. Many of the foul odours of earlier centuries have been eliminated from our modern world consciousness. Smell, therefore, is a cultural issue, society attaches certain values and implications to it, which may well change over the years.

Public health and sanitation began to be considered following outbreaks of cholera in 1832 and 1848 which affected areas where the poorer people were less resistant to infection, and overcrowding meant that any contagion spread quickly. That the spread of disease was caused by drinking polluted water was

not appreciated at the time, although a map drawn by Robert Baker showed a lack of sewers which meant that waste products were carried into the many streams which flowed into the River Aire.⁴ With growing industrialisation the problem of waste grew, and movements for sanitary reform began, fuelled by the belief put forward by Miasmists such as Edwin Chadwick, that cholera and typhus were spread by odours from the waste.

Chadwick's *Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring Population of Great Britain* was published in 1842. He put forward the viewpoint that disease was spread by noxious fumes generated by decaying matter, primarily in overcrowded working class areas. In her book *Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation 1830-1864* Mary Poovey challenges the findings of Chadwick's famous nineteenth century documents. She writes: 'My specific argument is that Edwin Chadwick ... deployed assumptions about domesticity that both brought the labouring classes into the newly forming social domain and set limits to the role that (what we call) class could play in the government of the English nation.'⁵

The Improvement Acts relating to Leeds (1842) and Bradford (1850) gave the Town Councils authority to lay sewers, pave the streets etc. A Royal Commission into *The State of Large Towns and Populous Districts* reported in 1844 and 1845. Its findings are important because of the influence they had on the development of the public health and hygiene movement. An Act was passed in 1846 *To Encourage the Establishment of Public Baths and Wash-houses* and this gave power to any borough to 'adopt the provisions contained in this Act, if they think fit'. The Act was subsequently amended several times. All relevant legislation will be considered further in Chapter Two and its

implementation locally in Leeds and Bradford will be dealt with in Chapter Three.

Local Boards of Health were established as a result of the Public Health Act in 1848 and some of their duties were to see that new homes had adequate drainage and that the water supply was improved. Foul odours were no longer to be tolerated and therefore a revolution in cleanliness began. Connections between personal cleanliness and disease evolved further as the century progressed, particularly after the development of the germ theory in the 1880s. Pasteur's discovery that germs caused disease led scientists to accept that foul smells did not. He therefore transformed the concepts of washing and bathing. To be clean meant primarily to be free from germs etc. Cleanliness became the basis for hygiene because it removed unseen dirt and hidden germs on the skin.

The topic of health dominated Victorian times because it was seen as a vital part of the movement towards an ideal society. The Victorians thought that cleanliness was the principle means of achieving this. However, prior to the nineteenth century cleanliness was not a key issue. Throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries clothes and bedding were not washed as frequently as they are today, mainly due to the lack of an adequate supply of clean, hot water and effective detergents and the fact that the fabrics from which garments were made reacted badly to the washing techniques of the day. With the increased availability of cheap cotton material this aspect of cleanliness improved. However, the washing and drying of clothes remained a time consuming process until reliable washing machines became more readily available in the 1920s.

Standards of personal cleanliness were also quite different. Today the daily washing of the body is regarded as a necessity, but this has not always been the case. Queen Elizabeth I was unusual in that she washed 'regularly every month whether she needed it or not'.⁶ In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries bodily cleanliness applied not to the skin but to the linen that was worn, to what was visible, not to what was invisible. Most people washed only their hands and faces, hair was cleaned by using dry powder. Clothes were regarded as cleansing the body they covered of dirt. Bodily smells were removed, not by washing, but by perfume and by rubbing the skin with linen. Ideas of cleanliness were linked to creating first impressions. Many books on etiquette and manners were written and mentioned cleanliness of the body, by which they meant that which was visible i.e. the hands and the face and the linen that was worn. It was not the same sort of cleanliness that we understand today.

From the middle of the eighteenth century onwards the use of water began to change and its coldness became an important quality as it was believed to be a strengthening factor.⁸ The late eighteenth century was a period of changing ideas about hygiene. Cleanliness was no longer a matter of what was visible on the surface. During the nineteenth century washing the body with water, using soap, became more popular although the inadequate supply of running water prevented private bodily hygiene from becoming widespread. At the same time the use of perfume was thought to be unhealthy because it clogged up the pores. Perfumes therefore moved away from being an element of bodily cleansing, masking body odours and became fashionable in their own right. In an age when natural body odours came to be regarded as bad, un-natural body odours (perfumes) became acceptable. Whereas in the past it was only the well-to-do

who were concerned with smelling good, this change in practice cut across all classes. Writing in 1880, Andrew Tuer stated that the primary object of taking a bath was cleanliness. He believed that 'Perhaps the very acme of luxurious bathing is reached in a Soap bath, an application of hot water and soap to the whole body ... It is a simple and invigorating luxury'.⁹

Bathing, which did become more widespread in the late nineteenth century, was more a therapeutic practice than anything else in the early part of the century.¹⁰

In 1939 George Ryley Scott wrote:

The main and usually avowed object of bathing being to promote cleanliness of the body, the old saying that "Cleanliness is next to godliness" is trotted out as the major reason for the daily bath. ... There is reason to believe that in those early days many people were a good deal more concerned with moral cleanliness than with the removal of dust and dirt from the exterior of the body.¹¹

Progress towards better bodily hygiene encountered setbacks, the most important being the supply of water. By 1914 most homes had running water but bathrooms were still scarce. Therefore the construction of municipal baths helped to remedy the situation by providing facilities for both working and some middle class bathers.¹² The relevant legislation that was to ensue from the desire for cleanliness in the nineteenth century provides background to the establishment of public washing and bathing facilities in areas such as Leeds and Bradford. Official records may be supplemented by accounts of municipal proceedings reported in local newspapers, thereby giving a local perspective. The nature of the facilities provided, what the public thought about them as well as the use they made of them will be considered further in Chapter Four.

In today's age of consumer capitalism there is a vast array of products available to deal with body odour and vast amounts of money spent on advertising campaigns to promote them. The commercialisation of smell is evident in this marketing of deodorants and perfumes, using portrayals of the ideal bodily image to be created.¹³ In twentieth century Western culture the ideal society is presented as one that is becoming increasingly deodorized.¹⁴ This shows how much cultural values have changed since the beginning of the nineteenth century when people were not as sensitive to body odour as they are today.

Because disease struck mostly in poorer areas poor people were regarded as being dirty, uncontrollable and lacking in moral fibre. This led, in the early nineteenth century to the belief that if people were familiar with the concept of cleanliness then ideas of order, discipline and morality could be more easily invoked. The quest for health guided Victorian living habits and the middle classes were determined to prove that good health could not be achieved without personal cleanliness. There was a general acceptance of dirt and smell but, as Vera Lambourne states the connection between cleanliness, dirt and disease had not been realised.¹⁵

Outbreaks of cholera led reformers, such as Charles Kingsley, to consider that if living conditions, sanitation and ventilation and the supply of clean water could be improved then the working classes might be encouraged to keep themselves clean. Influenced by what he saw when visiting London he was active in the cause of sanitation and, in 1854, gave evidence to the House of Commons on the unhealthy state of towns and cities.

Kingsley was a proponent of the idea of muscular Christianity. A healthy body was one in which the mind and body were in a state of equilibrium. A healthy mind was a moral one and a healthy body was one free from disease, the balance between the two being affected when disease (or dis-ease) struck. This harmony between body and mind was important and physical activity was a way of achieving it. Lack of exercise led to flabbiness and poor sanitary conditions led to disease. Physical and spiritual well-being were important if lives were to be saved. As one of his contemporaries put it, Charles Kingsley became 'the apostle of cleanliness'.¹⁶

Personal cleanliness was also believed to be an indicator of good social behaviour. As the middle classes gradually became aware of issues of cleanliness they became conscious of the odours of the working classes, smell representing a particular image of the person who smells. Their sensitivity to smell became more acute. Alain Corbin writes that the air surrounding the poor man's body was regarded as being more contagious than that surrounding the rich man's.¹⁷ Based on the work of Corbin, who was writing about the situation in France, Patrick Joyce states that social distinctions became classified in terms of smell, the poor being identified by their stench, and the respectable by the refinement of their sense of smell, hence indicating a move away from the idea of smells as a source of disease put forward by Chadwick.¹⁸ The threshold of the tolerance of smells defined social status.¹⁹

The domestic environment of the poor offended the Victorian moralist. Anne McClintock states that social reformers saw soap as the answer to the problem of the 'great unwashed': 'The middle class Victorian fascination with clean, white bodies and clean white clothing stemmed not only from the rampant

profiteering of the imperial economy but also from the realms of ritual and fetish'.²⁰ According to Davidoff the concern for personal and domestic cleanliness emerged as an important way of marking the middle classes from those below them.²¹ Middle class women therefore became involved in public health campaigns in Victorian Britain and the drive to educate the poor. Notions of keeping houses, clothes and bodies clean were linked to those of moral cleanliness and women were seen as a family's first line of defence against moral and personal sloppiness.

The doctrine of bodily cleanliness did eventually penetrate to the working classes through the education system, better living conditions and the construction of public baths from the late 1840s onwards. But according to James Walvin the 'great unwashed remained unwashed, and would do so until the availability of water changed this age-old pattern'.²² Vigarello, writing about the situation in France, states that 'the establishment of public baths from the middle of the century onwards is the most significant and most obvious illustration of sanitary and moral measures'.²³ The idea was to change people's vices by changing their bodily habits. Baths for the poor, ensuring the removal of bodily dirt, seemed entirely appropriate. The discipline of washing came to be regarded as being a morally good thing.²⁴

Notes

- ¹ S. T. Anning, The History of Medicine in Leeds (Leeds, W.S. Maney and Son Ltd., 1980) p. 4
- ² G. Vigarello, Concepts of Cleanliness – Changing Attitudes in France since the Middle Ages (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988) p. 151
- ³ Anning, The History of Medicine in Leeds p. 18
- ⁴ Anning, The History of Medicine in Leeds p. 72
- ⁵ M. Poovey, Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation 1830-1864 (Chicago/London, University of Chicago Press, 1995) p. 116
- ⁶ A. McClintock, Imperial Leather (London, Routledge, 1995) p. 210
- ⁷ C. Classen et al., Aroma (London, Routledge, 1994) p. 185
- ⁸ Vigarello, Concepts of Cleanliness – Changing Attitudes in France since the Middle Ages p. 112
- ⁹ A. W. Tuer, Luxurious Bathing (London, Leadenhalle(sic) Press, 1880) p. 3-4
- ¹⁰ A. Corbin, The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination (Leamington Spa, Berg Publishers, 1986) p. 72
- ¹¹ G. R. Scott, The Story of Baths and Bathing (London, Werner Laurie, 1939) p. 177
- ¹² P. Joyce, The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City (London, Verso, 2003) p. 74
- ¹³ Classen, Aroma p. 180
- ¹⁴ Classen, Aroma p. 175
- ¹⁵ V. Lambourne, The Causes and Treatment of Poverty from the 1830s to the 1860s: The Case of Leeds (unpublished M.A. dissertation, Leeds Metropolitan University, 2002) p. 4
- ¹⁶ J. K. Laughton, review of 'Charles Kingsley: His Letters and Memories of His Life', Edinburgh Review, 145 (1877) 438 quoted in B. Haley, The Healthy Body and Victorian Culture (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1978) p. 116
- ¹⁷ Corbin, The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination p. 144
- ¹⁸ Joyce, The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City p. 74
- ¹⁹ Corbin, The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination p. 151
- ²⁰ McClintock, Imperial Leather p. 211
- ²¹ L. Davidoff, Worlds Between: Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class (Oxford Blackwell Publishers, 1995) p. 78
- ²² J. Walvin, Victorian Values (London, Cardinal, 1988) pp. 61-2
- ²³ Vigarello, Concepts of Cleanliness – Changing Attitudes in France since the Middle Ages p. 198
- ²⁴ Vigarello, Concepts of Cleanliness – Changing Attitudes in France since the Middle Ages p. 230

CHAPTER TWO

Legislation

During the nineteenth century the sanitary idea was a dominant feature and was linked very closely with views on cleanliness and public hygiene. It was hoped that through the provision of public sanitary facilities many of the health problems of the day would be solved. Alain Corbin writes of the 'civic toilette' when referring to the sanitary development of cities.¹ Patrick Joyce relates this to the care and health of the body, maintaining that the public and private spheres were created in parallel.² This chapter will examine the progress of legislation in this country in an area previously regarded as extremely personal i.e. bodily hygiene. The parliamentary arena of Select Committees and a Royal Commission involved the work of concerned individuals such as Dr James Williamson, Dr Robert Baker, James Smith and Edwin Chadwick. This led to Parliamentary legislation at national and local government level resulting in permission being given for the provision of municipal baths and wash-houses from the late 1840s onwards. As far as possible these will be dealt with on a chronological basis

In 1840 a *Select Committee on the Health of Towns* heard evidence from Dr James Williamson who knew Leeds well.³ He stated that nearly half the streets were weekly so full of lines and linen as to be impassable for horses and carriages, and that there was no place for washing or drying clothes sufficiently near the town generally available by the working classes. He said that it was

impossible to over-estimate the importance of a good supply of water to the working classes as a means of promoting their health and comfort. In reply to Questions 1774 to 1776 he said that there were two public baths in Leeds; one for the better classes; and another used by the working classes for which, he thought, they paid 2d. He considered that all classes were apathetic about the importance of bathing, as a means of preserving health.

Whilst he had also visited Bradford, he said that he did not know it as well as he did Leeds. But he had noticed that in many of the streets that he had passed through, occupied mainly by the working classes, there was the same degree of uncleanness that he had seen in Leeds. He considered it necessary for some legislation, conferring powers for the purpose of sanitary regulations, to be applied to both Bradford and Leeds.

In 1842 Dr Robert Baker reported on the state of Leeds and how matters might be improved.⁴ Among the remedial measures he suggested was the establishment of public baths for the use of the labouring classes, and enclosures in which to dry newly-washed clothes.⁵ It is not clear whether he was referring to municipal or private baths. He also stated:

The establishment of public baths ... would highly contribute to the health and comfort of both sexes ... In looking at the number of streets across which clothes-lines are drawn ... one cannot but imagine the straits to which the working classes must be put, to enable them weekly to accomplish this object. We feel country-washed linen a luxury ... surely it is not too fervent to imagine, that the more homely clothing of the humble classes might add to their comfort, if dried out of doors, and in other places than the public streets, or within doors, in the already too exhausted atmospheres of their dwellings.⁶

He clearly regretted that so little attention had been directed to the welfare of those whose physical strength had contributed so much to the capital of the districts in which they lived.

Baker's assessment of the living conditions of the working classes in the early Victorian period was vindicated by a report by James Smith in 1845, on the condition of Leeds and Bradford. About Leeds he said: 'By far the most unhealthy localities of Leeds are close squares of houses ...'. He went on to say that they were airless, lacked drainage, were damp and filthy.⁷ Many of the streets were unpaved and the main sewerage was imperfect.

About Bradford he wrote that the general state of the streets was respectable, but in the streets occupied by the working classes, the condition was quite 'otherwise'.⁸ The main sewerage was very defective and the supply of water was very limited.

In 1840 a Parliamentary Select Committee was set up to inquire into circumstances affecting the health of people living in large towns. It published its results in three volumes in 1842. One of these was a report by Edwin Chadwick entitled *General Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain*.⁹ The wording of the Report left no doubt that the overcrowding and poor sanitation encouraged disease. Chadwick recommended change, e.g. improved drainage and sewers, refuse to be removed from the streets and clean water supplies to be provided. He also considered that each area should appoint a 'Medical Officer' to check that things were done properly. He faced an uphill struggle to implement his ideas.

Chadwick's report of 1842 was followed by a *Royal Commission of Inquiry into the State of Large Towns and Populous Districts*, set up in 1843, which published reports in 1844 and 1845. The Commission found that no public baths cost less than 6d (it is not clear where the Commissioners actually looked) and that there were no municipally owned wash-houses. This meant that the working classes were limited to what they could achieve within their own homes. In 1844 the *First Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry* said it was impossible for the working classes to bathe regularly at home, or launder their clothing in overcrowded dwellings.¹⁰ The *Second Report*, in 1845, called for measures that would be applicable to all towns and populous districts. In particular it recommended arrangements for an improved water supply.¹¹ Mention was made of supplies of water to any public baths and wash-houses established for the poorer classes.¹² The appointment of a medical officer was recommended and he had to report periodically upon the sanitary condition of the town or district.¹³ These Reports set the scene for the dominance of ideas about cleanliness, health and sanitation.

The *Leeds Improvement Act* of 1842 gave the council new powers to improve public health. The preamble to this Act states:

Leeds in the County of York is a large, populous and improving Borough, and it would conduce to the Comfort and Advantage of the Inhabitants of the said Borough of Leeds and the Public, if the Streets, Markets, Thoroughfares, and Places therein were better lighted, drained, widened, and otherwise improved and regulated, and Nuisances, Annoyances, and Obstructions therein removed and prevented: ...¹⁴

Authority was given to purchase or rent suitable premises to be used for drying washing.¹⁵ However this took time to implement. In spite of the great expectations raised by the Improvement Act, it was a sad indictment that more than thirty years after Baker's *Report* had identified the problems of the slums, most still existed in 1870 and were still there in 1900.¹⁶

The preamble of the *Bradford Improvement Act* of 1850 is almost identical to the 1842 Leeds Act.¹⁷ However, unlike Leeds, the Bradford Waterworks Company was required to supply water for any public Baths or Wash-houses that may be established for the use of the inhabitants.¹⁸

However, despite all this local legislation, still no municipal baths and wash-houses were being built in either Leeds or Bradford, both towns lagging far behind both London and Liverpool, who had begun to provide of such facilities in the 1840s.

A Committee known as *The Committee for Promoting the Establishment of Baths and Wash-houses for the Labouring Classes* was established in London in 1844. It was a non-parliamentary lobbying organisation, and was reported to be actively promoting the establishment of the institutions in all parts of the country.¹⁹ However, it has proved difficult to find any evidence of their activities in the Leeds/Bradford area. Although relating to the building of baths in London the following remarks apply also to the situation elsewhere.

The object of these Establishments is to encourage habits of cleanliness among the Industrious Classes by providing means for bathing and washing and drying linen, at the lowest possible charge, and thereby placing comforts and luxuries that have hitherto been enjoyed by the rich – and which are associated in the popular mind with affluence and expense – within the reach of the poorest classes.²⁰

The work of the above Committee was obviously influential for, in 1846, an *Act to Encourage the Establishment of Public Baths and Wash-houses* was passed.²¹ Section I of the Act stated that 'it is desirable for the health, comfort and welfare of the inhabitants of populous towns and districts' that such institutions should be established, and power given to authorities to raise funds for that purpose.²² The emphasis was on relieving the lot of the poor but there was also a strong feeling that a clean body improved public morals. Power was given to water and gas companies to supply baths and wash-houses without charge or on such terms as they thought fit.²³ There had to be more than twice as many baths for the labouring classes as for the higher classes and charges were to be fixed, and not to exceed certain guidelines.²⁴ The Act intended to ensure that prices, usually one penny for a cold bath and two pence for a warm bath, were below those charged by subscription baths, bringing them within the reach of the working classes. There were separate facilities for men and boys over 8 and for women and girls and children under 8. Washing and drying clothes etc cost one penny for one hour and three pence for two hours.

The urgent need to provide facilities for the poor had been influential in forcing the government to pass the 1846 Act. However, the great vice of such legislation was that, to a large extent, the care of the public health was left to the discretion of the local authorities, and not rendered compulsory.²⁵ It was thought that the Act of 1846, which had been allowed to remain a dead letter, should have been made compulsory as baths and wash-houses could become valued and self-supporting whilst, at the same time, educating the people to appreciate the healthful habits of cleanliness.²⁶

There were many people who, while needing bathing and laundering facilities, were nevertheless class-conscious and reluctant to patronize the public baths. In 1847 a further Act was passed enabling local authorities to provide additional facilities, at slightly higher fees, for these people.²⁷ The higher classes were to use the class one facilities and the others were for the poor. Basic charges remained unchanged.

The *Public Health Act* of 1848 resulted from the imminent danger of cholera.²⁸ As a result of the legislation each Council could set up a Board of Health, a committee to improve the health of their area, but many did not. Among the officials to be appointed was an 'officer of health' who had to be a legally qualified medical practitioner.²⁹ The Act allowed, but did not compel, authorities to make appointments and some councils resisted. Although Chadwick had hoped to help central government force towns to improve, the early public health laws did not provide that power to a significant degree. Instead, the acts were predominantly permissive rather than obligatory and were not carried out by some authorities for at least 20 years. The Local Board had also to provide water to any public Baths or Wash-houses.³⁰ In order to finance these undertakings the Board was permitted to borrow money, using the Rates as security.³¹

In 1849 a *Report by the General Board of Health* came to the conclusion that the means of thoroughly purifying the densely populated districts were beyond the power of private individuals.³² Therefore state intervention was necessary.

Not everyone was happy with the situation. In 1853 *Punch* wrote:

Private Bill legislation ... still secures the Briton's [sic] inestimable privilege of self government ... The Public Health Act, however, has commenced an insidious attack on this holy principle ... and a good many other dangerous measures, such as the Baths and Wash-houses Act ... are all formidable allies of the first mentioned revolutionary statute. Happily, however, they have not done much mischief yet, but they have inserted the small edge of the wedge; and if Briton's [sic] don't take care, they will find ... that sacred principle of "doing what they like with their own" trampled under foot on every side, by some poking Officer of Health...³³

However, in direct contrast to these remarks, E.T. Bellhouse, in a paper read to the Manchester Statistical Society in 1854, stated that the gradual extension of the system of public baths and laundries and the increasing interest shown in the subject were an illustration of the desire to relieve the plight of the labouring classes.³⁴

How the situation within the local authorities in Leeds and Bradford reflects these thoughts expressed in 1854 will be examined in the next chapter.

Notes

- ¹ A. Corbin, The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination (Leamington Spa, Berg Publishers, 1986) Chapter 6
- ² P. Joyce, The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City (London, Verso, 2003) p. 65
- ³ Select Committee on the Health of Towns 1840 (384) XI. 277 (Irish University Press – Health – General – Vol. 2)
- ⁴ Local Reports on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population. No. 23 Report on the State and Condition of the Town of Leeds by Robert Baker Esq. P.P. 1842 (House of Lords) XXVII
- ⁵ Report on the State and Condition of the Town of Leeds by Robert Baker Esq. 1842. p. 397
- ⁶ Report on the State and Condition of the Town of Leeds by Robert Baker Esq. 1842. p. 402
- ⁷ Report on the Condition of the Towns of Leeds and Bradford by James Smith of Deanston. P.P. 1845 [610] xviii, pp. 312-3
- ⁸ Report on the Condition of the Towns of Leeds and Bradford by James Smith of Deanston. 1845, p. 315
- ⁹ General Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain by Edwin Chadwick. P.P. 1842 (House of Lords) xxvi.I
- ¹⁰ First Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Large Towns and Populous Districts. P.P. 1844 [572] xvii
- ¹¹ Second Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Large Towns and Populous Districts. P.P. 1845 [602] xviii.I
- ¹² Second Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Large Towns and Populous Districts. 1845 – Section XX
- ¹³ Second Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Large Towns and Populous Districts. 1845 – Section XXIX
- ¹⁴ Leeds Improvement Act 1842 (5 & 6 Vic. c. civ.) Preamble
- ¹⁵ Leeds Improvement Act 1842 Section CCXLVI
- ¹⁶ S. Burt and K. Grady, The Illustrated History of Leeds (Derby, Breedon Books, 1994) p. 190
- ¹⁷ Bradford Improvement Act 1850 (13 & 14 Vic. c. lxxxix) Preamble
- ¹⁸ Bradford Improvement Act 1850 XXXVI
- ¹⁹ Times Newspaper. 13 January 1852, p. 5d
- ²⁰ Committee for Promoting the Establishment of Baths and Wash-houses for the Labouring Classes. (London, Ivington and Co, 1850) p. 5
- ²¹ An Act to Encourage the Establishment of Public Baths and Wash-houses 1846 (9 & 10 Vic. c 74)
- ²² An Act to Encourage the Establishment of Public Baths and Wash-houses 1846. Sections I and III
- ²³ An Act to Encourage the Establishment of Public Baths and Wash-houses 1846. Section XXVIII
- ²⁴ An Act to Encourage the Establishment of Public Baths and Wash-houses 1846. Section XXXVI
- ²⁵ D. Dunlop, Philosophy of Bathing (London, W Kent and Co, 1868) p. 409
- ²⁶ Dunlop, Philosophy of Bathing. p. 413
- ²⁷ An Act to Amend the Act for the Establishment of Public Baths and Wash-houses 1847 (10 & 11 Vic. c. 61)
- ²⁸ Public Health Act 1848 (11 & 12 Vic. c. 63)
- ²⁹ Public Health Act 1848 Section XL
- ³⁰ Public Health Act 1848 Section LXXVII

³¹ Public Health Act 1848 Section CVII

³² Report by the General Board of Health on measures adopted for the execution of the Public Health Act. P.P. 1849 [1115] xxiv.I

³³ Punch, Vol. 23 (1853) p. 146

³⁴ E. T. Bellhouse, On Baths and Wash-houses for the People, paper presented to the Manchester Statistical Society, 15 June 1854, p. 3

CHAPTER THREE

Local Authority Reaction in Bradford and Leeds

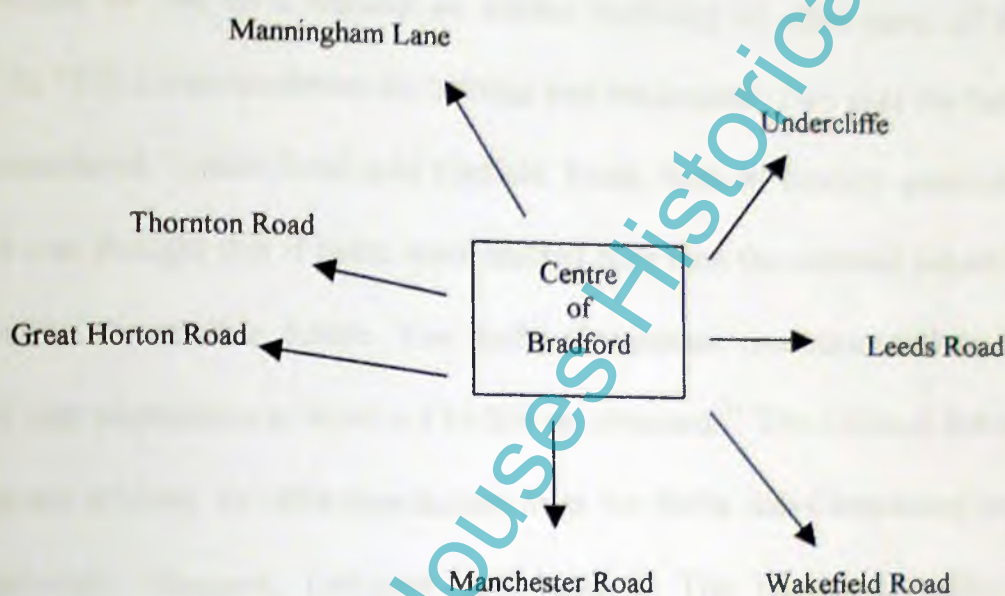
In the early nineteenth century there were areas of urban life that were part of the private sphere, but gradually Central Government became more involved in local issues. Much national legislation, however, was permissive and towns had to decide whether to adopt it. They had to be aware of what was needed and of the financial burdens often falling upon the ratepayers.¹ The reaction to the increased amount of legislation within the municipal authorities of Bradford and Leeds is detailed below.

Bradford obtained its Charter of Incorporation in 1847, following a struggle for control between the new Liberal elite and old Tory elite. Resistance to improvements was due to reluctance to undertake the cost of reforms, rather than denial of the need of them.² The Council had to fight another political battle in 1850, this time for the *Improvement Act* mentioned in Chapter Two.³ The campaigns were fought against a background of the developing sanitary movement. The Council knew that Bradfordians had no public means of washing themselves, and that the need for such facilities had been recognised by the passing *An Act to Encourage the Establishment of Public Baths and Wash-houses* in 1846.⁴ This did not compel but merely allowed authorities to do provide baths, a relevant factor when considering the ways in which such permissive legislation was interpreted in Bradford and Leeds. Bradford politics were never dominated by a 'shopocracy' as in Leeds (mentioned below), the near monopoly of office was held by the textile merchants. However, overall,

both Councils had to consider the concerns of the ratepayers, keep rates low and introduce changes slowly.

The following diagram gives some indication of the areas to be mentioned below, all of which, at the time of William Byles' *Plan of Bradford*, prepared for his Post Office Directory published in 1903, were becoming densely populated.⁵

Diagrammatical representation of the location of baths in Bradford



The Council, in 1854/55, acquired the property of the old Waterworks Company at 111 Thornton Road. Finance remained a prominent feature and there was little money or enthusiasm for dealing with sanitary reform and the problems of the poor. William Cudworth stated that the adoption of *The Baths and Wash-houses* Act by the Council in 1864 culminated in the adaptation of the premises in Thornton Road for the purpose of baths and wash-houses.⁶ In July 1865 *The Builder* reported: 'The Corporation of Bradford have converted the old waterworks company offices ... into public baths and wash-houses, which have just been opened ...'⁷ Within a few years the facilities were

inadequate and additional slipper baths⁸ were added in 1873. In July 1883 the Corporation took a house at 84 Lister Terrace, Great Horton Road, and fitted it out as ladies' Turkish baths. However for years expenditure exceeded income. In November 1896 these baths were closed.⁹

In May 1884, nineteen years after the establishment of baths in Thornton Road, the Council decided to build facilities in Manchester Road, in the West Bowling district. When opened in 1887 by the Mayor, Mr Angus Holden, he said that the Baths would be one of a number of similar buildings in other parts of the town.¹⁰ In 1890 accommodation for bathing was inadequate. Two sites for baths were considered, Leeds Road and Carlisle Road, both in densely populated areas. It was thought that if baths were erected here then the demand would be met for the foreseeable future. The Baths Committee recommended to the Council that permission to borrow £15,000 be obtained.¹¹ The Council did not approve the scheme. In 1898 deputations from the Baths Sub-Committee went to Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leicester and London. The municipal baths in Bradford, opened in 1865, were out of date and permission to sell the premises was granted by the Treasury.¹² Between 1887 and 1898 little had been done towards providing the much needed district baths. Once again, in February 1899 consideration was given to the subject but the Council decided to defer making any decision pending further negotiations with the owners of the land, namely private individuals, companies and various council committees.¹³

The demand for baths continued and in June 1899 the Council agreed to replace the Thornton Road premises with a new Central Baths, in Morley Street, and establish baths in five other districts of the town. It was an ambitious scheme and in February 1900 doubts were expressed at the Council Meeting about the

appreciation shown for the two baths which already existed and whether the expense incurred had been justified by the use made of them. Some Councillors thought the Council should wait before imposing any additional burden on the ratepayers.¹⁴ The amended motion 'That it was inexpedient at the present time to establish additional district baths' was carried by 25 votes to 15. A deputation, representing female residents in the Manningham area, urged the Committee to provide wash-house and laundry accommodation at the proposed new baths. The Committee decided that they were unable to undertake such provision.¹⁵

In November 1900 the Local Government Board asked for more plans and estimates of the proposed costs. The Council decided that details for the new Central Baths and those in Manningham, would be submitted, leaving other baths in abeyance.¹⁶ The scheme for these two baths was approved by the Board in autumn 1901, but was criticised locally because of the expenditure involved. The plans were revised in 1902 and this delayed the start of work. By this time the condition of the Thornton Road Baths had deteriorated. The foundation stone of the Central Baths was laid on 5 June 1903 and they were opened in 1905, at which time the old baths in Thornton Road were closed.¹⁷ The facilities available at the new Central Baths were extended in 1914.

In 1902 the Baths Committee finally accepted plans for three district baths, in Manningham, in Wakefield Road (East Bowling) and in Leeds Road, costing £7,000 each. Those in Manningham were the first to be undertaken, and were opened on 25 July 1904, fifteen years after they had first been envisaged.¹⁸ Wakefield Road and Leeds Road Baths were opened in July 1905 and a further baths at Undercliffe was completed in September 1905. Facilities were also

required in the Low Moor area. The Committee decided, in the interests of economy, to lease a house and shop at School Street for seven years and the property was altered. This building finally opened on 18 July 1904.¹⁹ A selection of external views of the buildings in both Bradford and Leeds are contained in Appendices 1 and 3.

Leeds obtained their own local Improvement Act in 1842 but they failed to implement this satisfactorily and by the end of the 1840s the sanitary state of Leeds was causing concern.²⁰ Standards had to be raised but little headway was made. Writing in 1860 *The Builder* stated that: 'Leeds, speaking broadly, is a filthy and ill-contrived town ... Perhaps it would be impossible to find a town in all England where the accommodation for the labouring poor has so unequally kept pace with the increase of population...'.²¹ This article also mentions housewives drying their washing before the fires of their single dwelling rooms. In 1863 the Council considered the adoption of the 1846 *Act to Encourage the Establishment of Public Baths and Wash-houses*. However nothing was done immediately to improve facilities for the labouring poor. In 1874 *The Builder* posed the question: 'What progress have the Town Council of Leeds made since we pointedly drew their attention to the disgusting state of their town in 1860 ...?'.²² The answer was 'Nothing', and this related not only to the sanitary state of Leeds, but also to the provision of baths and wash-houses, which had been pioneered in Liverpool in 1842.

At a Council meeting in June 1878 it was agreed that a committee report on the feasibility of adopting the 1846 Act. After a debate centred on whether facilities would be financed from the borough rates, the Council agreed, in August 1878,

to implement the Act.²³ In February 1879 the *Yorkshire Post* said that the Council were to be asked to erect baths and wash-houses on land in Lemon Street, off High Street in Leeds, the wash-house portion to include facilities for washing, wringing and drying. The cost of the work was £5,400.²⁴ By March 1879 it had risen to £6,035. The debate again centred around the burden this increase would put on the ratepayers. It was decided to postpone a decision about the baths as trade was depressed, and this fact outweighed any possible benefits of improving facilities.²⁵ The Conservatives accused the Liberals of inconsistency because, having promoted the scheme, they objected to it on grounds of cost, thereby failing to provide what was necessary for personal cleanliness detailed in Chapter One.²⁶ In June 1879 the proposal to erect only a wash-house in Lemon Street was defeated, objections being made on the grounds that, firstly, in almost every town such schemes had resulted in a loss and, secondly, that the time was not right for spending money on works which were not absolutely necessary because many people preferred to do their washing at home.²⁷ When the Council reconsidered the situation in September 1880 it was decided to hold the matter in abeyance and there it remained until the early 1890s.

In view of the urgency mentioned in Chapter One why were there these delays? The answer is that the Council wanted to spend as little as possible and one way of avoiding costs was to delay spending. The Council were not necessarily refusing to spend anything, but they were very aware of the political implications of a situation that involved or cost the taxpayer money. However, by the 1890s the accumulation of the problems of previous years was coming to a head. According to Barber the group most antagonistic to proposals of

increased expenditure was the 'shopocracy', a group of influential shopkeepers whose political vigilance was directed towards maintaining economy in local government.²⁸ They feared that increases in the rates would affect the purchasing power of their customers. According to Hennock, the proportion of shopkeepers on the Council reached unprecedented levels in the 1870s, rising sharply in relation to 1862, and exceeding the previous peak in the 1850s.²⁹

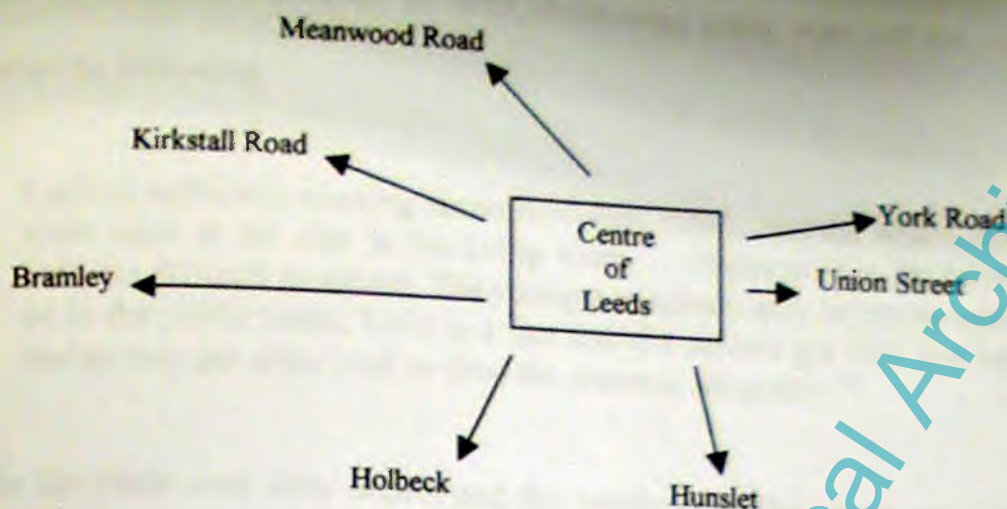
Much of the delay related to the differing approaches of the Liberals and Conservatives towards finance. From the late 1870s until 1895, the Liberals operated the utility services for the benefit of the consumers rather than the ratepayers and profits were passed on in the form of lower prices rather than being paid into borough funds. When the Conservatives gained power in 1895 they reversed this policy. Despite their opposition the Liberals did not change the arrangements when they regained control in 1905.³⁰ This narrowing of differences perhaps accounted for the intensity in the building programme from the mid 1890s onwards and the move towards the provision of adequate facilities for public bathing.³¹

Not until the early 1890s did the Council accept the advantages of having public baths. The Corporation's duty, said the *Yorkshire Post*, was to improve health and conditions of life. At no time had the number of baths been so inadequate.³² There were privately owned facilities in Leeds but the town was far behind towns such as Liverpool (1842), London (1840s) and Birmingham (1848) in providing municipal bathing and washing facilities. The town obviously lacked the enthusiasm of individual councillors (Liverpool), the existence of a pressure group (London) or the vision of instituting a public subscription list (Birmingham) to promote the venture. In January 1893 the

members of the Baths Committee went to Bradford to see the public baths in Thornton Road and Manchester Road.³³ What they saw impressed them and the Council, in April 1893, resolved that two baths be erected, one in Union Street and the other near the Viaduct in Kirkstall Road, both densely populated areas.³⁴ The Liberal majority said that the call on ratepayers was likely to be either 1/8 of a penny or one farthing at the most. Wash-houses were not contemplated because they were believed to be unpopular. At the time of the municipal elections in 1893 the Liberals, for the first time, had a 'manifesto'. Point Three of their plan was the extension of public baths. In 1894 this was dropped on the grounds that two baths were already being constructed. Further action was delayed in order to determine whether the use made of them justified the expense of building any more.³⁵ Work was finally completed in 1895, Kirkstall Road opening on the 8 June and Union Street on 24 August of that year.

Work began in Holbeck and Hunslet and the Baths Committee Report for 1898 stated that the Holbeck baths would be opened in April, and the Hunslet Baths would be completed by the end of the year.³⁶ It also mentioned negotiations with the Oriental and General Baths Company in Cookridge Street to take over the premises. By the time of the 1899 Report baths in Meanwood Road were almost completed. The Council took possession of the Oriental Baths in June 1898 and reconstruction work started.³⁷ There were, at this point, five municipal baths in Leeds, in Union Street, Kirkstall Road, Holbeck, Hunslet and Meanwood Road. The following diagram shows they served areas around the centre of Leeds and, according to Bacon's 1891 *Plan of Leeds*,³⁸ these were all densely populated areas of the town.

Diagrammatical representation of the location of baths in Leeds



In July 1900 the Council stated that sites had been purchased in the York Road and Bramley districts.³⁹ The Baths Committee Report for 1902 stated that work at the Cookridge Street Baths was complete. No other baths were mentioned.⁴⁰ Work progressed on the baths in York Road and Bramley throughout 1903. In addition a site was chosen, at the junction of Leeds Terrace and Albert Grove, for a Jewish Baths.⁴¹ These were opened on 25 October 1905.⁴² The new baths in Bramley were completed on 17 October 1904.⁴³ The York Road Baths opened on 4 April 1905, the premises consisting of public baths and a branch library.⁴⁴

1905 heralded, in Leeds, the end of an era of building public baths. After this Council minutes contain little mention of baths or wash-houses, with one exception. In 1913 the Leeds United Society of Women's Labour Leagues and Guild petitioned the Council about the provision of wash-houses and were told that the matter would be considered.⁴⁵ It was still under consideration in October 1914.

What difference the baths made to the people of Leeds is debatable. Some used the bathing facilities. However, in 1931, there were many who did not, as is evidenced by following:

Lack of sufficient washing accommodation means that the whole family must wash at the sink in the living room ... Opportunities for taking a bath are difficult to secure. The younger members may be encouraged to go to the public baths; but it is a fact that the parents get very few baths, and as they get older tend to drop the practice altogether.⁴⁶

Despite the panic over dirty bodies and the problems of the 'great unwashed' mentioned in Chapter One Bradford and Leeds were slow to react to the permissive legislation of 1846 which allowed them to establish public baths and wash-houses. They were more concerned with the effects on their ratepayers' pockets than with providing a public service. Bradford opened premises in 1865, but then delayed until 1887 when the first district bath opened. Not until 1898 did the building programme begin in earnest. By 1905 there was a Central Baths and five district baths. Leeds reacted slowly but once building got underway then work progressed quickly. Between 1895 and 1905 seven baths were built in the outlying districts and the Council took over the Oriental and General Baths in Cookridge Street. The facilities provided in all the establishments mentioned above will be dealt with in Chapter Four.

Notes

- ¹ E. P. Hennock, Fit and Proper Persons: Ideal and Reality in Nineteenth Century Urban Government (London, Edward Arnold, 1973) p. 5
- ² D. Wright and J. A. Jowitt, Victorian Bradford (Bradford, City of Bradford Metropolitan Council, 1981) p. 139
- ³ Wright and Jowitt, Victorian Bradford p. 147
- ⁴ An Act to Encourage the Establishment of Public Baths and Wash-houses 1846 (9 & 10 Vic. c. 74)
- ⁵ W. Byles, Plan of Bradford, 1903.
- ⁶ W. Cudworth, Historical Notes on Bradford Corporation (Bradford, Thomas Bear, 1881) p. 155
- ⁷ The Builder, 29 July 1865 p. 539
- ⁸ These were individual baths enclosed in a small cubicle. Further details are included in Chapter Four.
- ⁹ Bradford Tramways Committee Minutes, 18 November 1896.
- ¹⁰ Bradford Public Baths (Bradford, Bradford Town Council, 1905) p. 3 - held at Bradford Central Library Ref. B 613.47 CEN)
- ¹¹ Bradford Baths, Tramways and Team Labour Committee Minutes, 8 January 1890.
- ¹² Bradford Baths, Tramways and Team Labour Committee Minutes, 16 August 1898.
- ¹³ Bradford Baths and Team Labour Committee Minutes, 13 February 1899.
- ¹⁴ The Bradford Observer, 12 February 1900 p. 8
- ¹⁵ Bradford Baths and Team Labour Committee Minutes, 16 July and 27 August 1900.
- ¹⁶ Bradford Baths and Team Labour Committee Minutes, 19 November and 3 December 1900.
- ¹⁷ Bradford Public Baths p. 5
- ¹⁸ The Builder, 26 July 1902 p. 85 and 6 August 1904 p. 148
- ¹⁹ Bradford Public Baths p. 7
- ²⁰ B. Barber, 'Municipal Government in Leeds, 1835-1914' in D. Fraser (ed.), Municipal Reform and the Industrial City (Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1982) p. 67
- ²¹ The Builder, 22 December 1860 p. 809
- ²² The Builder, 10 October 1874 p. 844
- ²³ Leeds Town Council Minutes, 7 August 1878.
- ²⁴ The Yorkshire Post, 28 February 1879 p. 2
- ²⁵ Yorkshire Post, 1 April 1879 p. 8
- ²⁶ Leeds Express, 14 May 1879 p. 3
- ²⁷ Leeds Express, 5 June 1879 p. 4
- ²⁸ Barber, 'Municipal Government in Leeds, 1835-1914' in D. Fraser (ed.), Municipal Reform and the Industrial City p. 104
- ²⁹ Hennock, Fit and Proper Persons: Ideal and Reality in Nineteenth Century Urban Government p204
- ³⁰ B. Barber, 'Aspects of Municipal Government, 1835-1914' in D. Fraser (ed.), A History of Modern Leeds (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1980) p. 324
- ³¹ Hennock, Fit and Proper Persons: Ideal and Reality in Nineteenth Century Urban Government p. 253
- ³² The Yorkshire Post, 3 December 1891 p. 3
- ³³ Leeds Mercury, 19 January 1893 p. 3
- ³⁴ Yorkshire Post, 6 April 1893 p. 3
- ³⁵ Hennock, Fit and Proper Persons: Ideal and Reality in Nineteenth Century Urban Government p. 254-55

- ³⁶ Leeds Baths and Cemeteries Committee Annual Report year ended 25 March 1898.
- ³⁷ Leeds Baths and Cemeteries Committee Annual Report year ended 25 March 1899 and 1900.
- ³⁸ Bacon, Plan of Leeds - 1891.
- ³⁹ Leeds Town Council Minutes, 24 July 1900.
- ⁴⁰ Leeds Baths and Cemeteries Committee Annual Report year ended 25 March 1902.
- ⁴¹ Leeds Baths and Cemeteries Committee Minutes 22 September and 27 October 27 1903.
- ⁴² The Yorkshire Post, 26 October 1905 p. 4
- ⁴³ The Builder, 29 October 1904, p. 447
- ⁴⁴ The Builder, 22 April 1905, p. 441
- ⁴⁵ Leeds Property Committee Minutes 19 February 1913.
- ⁴⁶ H. J. Hammerton, This Turbulent Priest, quoted by S. Burt and K. Grady, The Illustrated History of Leeds (Derby, Breedon Books, 1994) p. 216

CHAPTER FOUR

Facilities Provided

Municipal baths were established to provide facilities for the labouring classes in the second half of the nineteenth century, once it had been recognized that diseases such as cholera and typhoid arose from a lack of sanitation. Although a feature of the drive towards the improvement of public health, baths and wash-houses were 'the Cinderella of the public health department'¹ because in the later nineteenth century they did not attract the same degree of support as was evident in the 1840s when the movement for their establishment first began. There may have been several reasons for this. Many did not actually make any profit, some people were diffident about washing and bathing 'in public places' and finally, as society became better equipped with amenities within the home, the need for municipal provision gradually diminished and baths began to close due to lack of demand. Today baths are seen mainly as swimming pools but originally they provided a variety of facilities. The majority catered for the washing of the body in cubicle or slipper baths, and some for the washing, drying and ironing of laundry in a wash-house. However, the provision of wash-houses was much less widespread than that of baths. There were also other types of baths e.g. Turkish, Russian, vapour, douche, shower and medicinal baths at some establishments. (see Appendices 2 and 3) Some premises provided first and second class bathing facilities. In addition there also

existed segregation on the grounds of sex, there being separate entrances for men and women, fewer baths for women and access to the baths for women being restricted to a few hours per week. Discrimination existed between men and women as users of the baths, and also as employees, women being paid less than men doing the same job. In addition they had different spheres of operation in that they attended only bathers of their own sex.² In 1846 *The Baths and Wash-houses Act* stipulated that the maximum charges for use of public baths should not exceed one penny for a cold bath or two pence for a warm one, this including the use of a clean towel.³ It is intended, in this chapter, to examine the facilities provided in both Bradford and Leeds, with a view to determining how far they reflect the above facts.

Opening hours varied but the following details, relating to the Thornton Road and Manchester Road Baths in Bradford, are typical. In April and May 1890 the baths opened at 9 a.m. and closed at 9 p.m. On Saturdays the hours were 6 a.m. to 9 p.m., and on Sundays 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. Between June and September the baths were open 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. except on Sundays when they opened 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. From October to March the baths opened at 9 a.m. and closed at 8 p.m., closing all day on Sundays.⁴ In Leeds, in 1899, the baths opened at 7 a.m. between May and September and from 6 a.m. in June to August.⁵ These hours were closely related to the seasons of the year and fitted in with work patterns. People could call on either their way to or from work. It is puzzling why there was Sunday opening in view of Victorian attitudes towards the Sabbath.

Perhaps it was hoped that people using baths on Sundays would at least be physically clean when they arrived at Church/Chapel. However this does not explain why the washing baths were only open on Sundays in summer, unless the hours were linked to those of swimming pools which were often closed during the winter months.

Baths attendants therefore worked long hours during the summer months. In 1899 the hours of employees at the Baths in Bradford were reduced from an average of 64 and a half hours per week to an average of 56 and a half.⁶ A similar situation arose in Leeds where the average working week was 63 hours.⁷ They were given one half day holiday per week. In 1889 the average wage of a male bath attendant appears to have been 23/- per week, but by 1890 this had risen to 25/-.⁸ This compares favourably with the following rates of pay⁹ earned by some manual workers in the mid 1880s:

Table 4.1 Wage rates for manual workers in mid 1880s

Place	Trade	Job	Average Rate
Leeds	Linen and Flax	Labourer	16s – 20s
Leeds	Woollen trade	Fuller	16s – 21s
Bradford	Worsted trade	Comber	15s

It was quite usual for staff, usually managers and Engine men/caretakers, to live on the premises. They were often accompanied by their wives and the wages

reflected this, e.g. Jobson Blakey was appointed Engine Tenter and Caretaker at Thornton Road Baths in Bradford in 1889, together with his wife as matron, the wages for both to be 26/- per week with House free of charge for rent, rates, taxes, coals, gas and cleaning materials.¹⁰ By 1900 the average wage for a manager/manageress of Baths in Leeds rose to 38/6d per week plus house etc.¹¹ In contrast to this the wages of a Miss Manners, a ticket clerk at Cookridge Street in Leeds, were raised from 9/- to 11/- a week in February 1912.¹² When Mr. Hudson resigned as superintendent of baths in Bradford in 1893 his salary (his wife was matron) was £100 per annum, including house etc. By the time their replacements, Mr. and Mrs. Smith, left the job in 1901 the salary had risen to £110.¹³ In Leeds the salary was much higher, but it is not clear whether this included living accommodation. Mr. Bond, former manager of the Oriental and General Bath Company Ltd taken over by the Corporation in 1898, received £200 per annum in 1899 and £250 in January 1901.¹⁴ This was an enormous salary for the time. He was described as the Baths Superintendent for the whole of Leeds and it is possible that his salary reflected both his increased responsibilities and also bore some relationship to what he was paid in his previous job.

With relatively few exceptions all the municipal baths in either Bradford or Leeds during the period 1865 to 1905 had swimming pools (including the baths in Thornton Road, Bradford opened in 1865) and only Great Horton Road, Bradford did not have slipper baths. These baths were usually white enamel and had a brush and soap tray, the rooms having tiled floors and glazed walls. (See

Appendices 2 and 3) A bell was provided to summon the attendant. Separate waiting and dressing rooms were provided and the people of Bradford were assured that the slipper baths, on every occasion of use, would be filled with fresh water.¹⁵ Half the establishments also had douche baths. The main feature of these, as opposed to slipper baths, was that a shower of warm or cold water could be applied, at the will of the bather, during the time that the bath was being taken. (Appendix 2) There were also specialized facilities at Thornton Road and the new Central Baths in Bradford, and at Cookridge Street in Leeds, but these were not connected with maintaining bodily cleanliness, being of a medicinal nature. At only three places, Thornton Road in Bradford and Holbeck and Kirkstall in Leeds, were there wash-houses.

In general the swimming pools built at the District Baths in Bradford i.e. Manchester Road, Leeds Road, Manningham, Wakefield Road and Undercliffe were 60ft long by 20ft wide, whilst the one at the Central Baths in Morley Street, opened 1905, was 100ft by 30ft. At Thornton Road there were pools for males and females, with separate entrances, the men's bath being bigger than the women's.¹⁶ The Leeds pools were slightly larger, 75 ft by 30ft, and at Union Street and Hunslet there were both first and second class pools. It was common in the period 1890-1905 to have diving boards and a gallery for spectators, and dressing boxes or cubicles down each side of the pool with doors or curtains. (Appendices 2 and 3) It was not unknown for thefts to occur at the baths. In 1891 a gold watch and a purse containing £3 in money were taken from a dressing box, and in 1899 another purse was stolen. In both cases the bathers

failed in their claims for compensation as they had not left their valuables in the Ticket Office.¹⁷

Without exception municipal baths provided more slipper and douche baths for male than female bathers as will be seen from the following table:

Table 4.2 Number of slipper and douche baths provided

Baths	Male	Female
Manchester Rd, Bradford ¹⁸	29	12
Morley Street, Bradford ¹⁹	29	4
Hunslet, Leeds ²⁰	15	5
York Road, Leeds ²¹	16	4

This may have been because men's occupations were dirtier than women's, and men had money to pay for the use of washing facilities away from the gaze of the rest of their family.

There were also restrictions on when facilities were available for the use of women. These may have applied only to the swimming baths as there were usually separate facilities for other types of baths. There was no mixed bathing. Bradford Council decided in 1890 that the Manchester Road Baths should be set aside for the use of ladies only, on Monday afternoons from three to five o'clock. This was later amended to Wednesdays from three to nine o'clock.²² Similar arrangements existed in other baths in both towns and there is no doubt that the local authorities catered more for male than female bathers. The only exceptions to this situation were the Turkish Baths in Bradford and the Jewish

Baths in Leeds, which catered solely for ladies. These latter baths, however, were provided in order to cater for the religious needs of their users rather than for the personal washing and cleanliness of the public at large and, as such, are outside the remit of this study.

In the year ended March 1900 a gymnasium²³ was opened at Kirkstall Road Baths in Leeds, the first class swimming pool, which was unfit for use as a bath, being used. There was also one at Meanwood Baths but this was discontinued during the winter of 1912-13 due to lack of patronage. The floor was removed to Kirkstall where a music and dancing license had been obtained with a view to letting out the premises for social events in winter.²⁴

The authorities in Bradford and Leeds did little to provide for washing clothes. At a time when few people had adequate provision at home, there were only three public wash-houses, namely at Thornton Road in Bradford, and at Kirkstall and Holbeck in Leeds. In Bradford there were thirteen stands, in 1865, for washerwomen and the drying room was situated above the boiler room.²⁵ At Kirkstall in 1895 there were twenty washing machines, sinks, mangles and driers, so that all the laundry could be taken home dry.²⁶ Other baths had laundries that dealt with the washing of towels etc. used by bathers. In 1905 all the towels used in Bradford's baths were sent to the new Central Baths to be washed.²⁷ The attitude towards provision of public wash-houses, in both Bradford and Leeds, can best be summed up by the following comment made in 1913, sixty seven years after the original permissive legislation was passed in 1846: 'The [Property] Committee have under consideration at the close of the

period under review, the question of providing public wash-houses' ²⁸ Progress was exceedingly slow!

Those wishing to use the baths had to pay for admission and obtain a ticket. Bad behaviour was not tolerated. In June 1901 two boys aged 12 and 10, appeared before the Baths Committee in Bradford to answer a complaint made against them of improper conduct. After hearing evidence the boys were severely reprimanded and cautioned as to their future conduct. ²⁹ Mixed bathing was not permitted, costumes had to be worn in the swimming baths and dirty persons were not allowed to enter the pools. No-one was to use any bath for longer than thirty minutes. This restriction appears to have applied to both swimming and washing baths as the 1896 bye laws for Leeds stated that: 'A person resorting to the public baths shall not knowingly remain in any bath room or swimming baths for a longer period than half an hour at any one time'. Any person improperly using the facilities was liable to be fined £5. ³⁰ These regulations were typical of those enforced by other authorities.

Baths were built originally to provide facilities for the masses to keep clean and healthy. As the desire to learn to swim increased, more pools were included in design plans for new baths and swimming became a leisure activity not connected with public health issues. In 1888, in order to encourage greater use of the swimming bath at Manchester Road, Bradford, during the winter months it was decided that the charge should be reduced from 2d to 1d. ³¹ By the time that the new Central Baths opened in Bradford in 1905 a swimming ticket cost

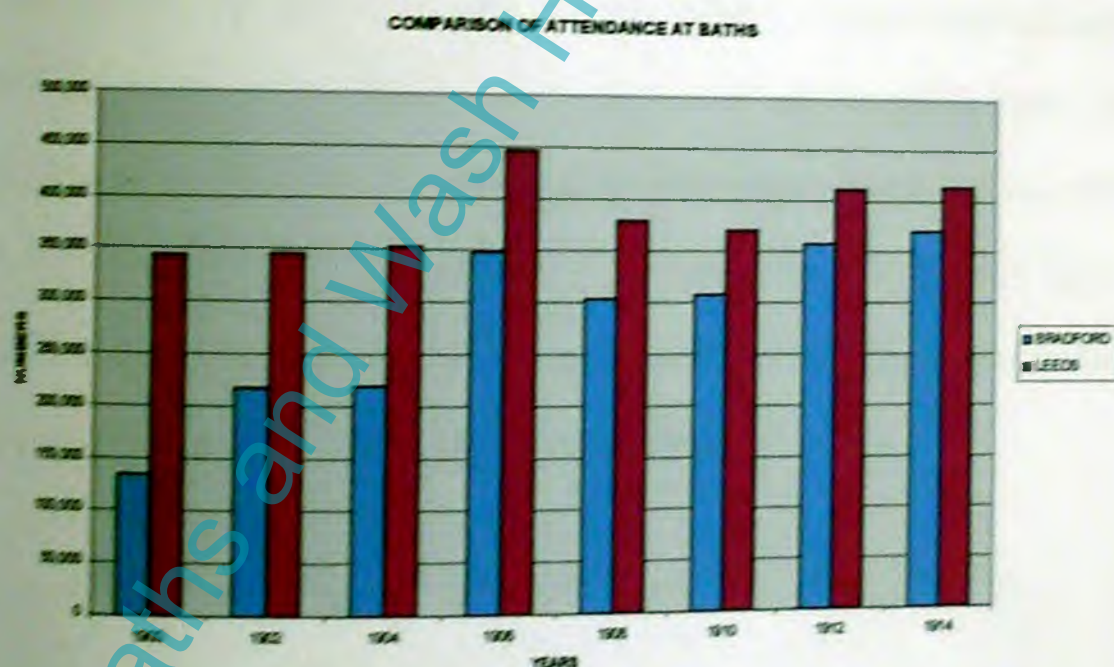
4d. as did a Slipper bath. A douche bath was 2d., a first class Turkish bath with massage was 2/6d, a second class bath costing 1/6d. The charges for women were almost identical. Speciality baths varied between 1/6d to 2/6d each.³² Charges at the district baths in Bradford were cheaper. In Leeds the cost of admission to the baths was slightly higher. In 1895 slipper baths for men cost 6d and 3d and the swimming baths ranged from 6d to 1d.³³ At this time the average wage in the textile industries was: Woollen manufacture 23s2d and Worsted manufacture 23s4d.³⁴ A charge of 6d per bath represented approximately 2% of these amounts. Based on earnings of £20,000 a year today, the equivalent weekly figure would be approximately £7.70, quite a sizeable amount. Books of cheap tickets to the swimming baths in Leeds were introduced in 1899 in order to encourage regular use of the facilities, the prices being 20 1st class 5/-, and 20 2nd class 2/6d. Admission to most baths was reduced from 6d to 4d, and from 3d to 2d.³⁵ The baths in Cookridge Street, Leeds, were taken over by the local authority in 1898 and the charges were almost the same as those at the Central Baths in Bradford. The cost of admission included the use of a towel, but the hire of bathing costumes or drawers involved a small additional charge of 1d.

The above charges relate to adults. When the *Baths Act* was passed in 1846 it mentioned charges for children, namely 2d for a cold, or 4d for a warm bath which included one clean towel per child, up to four children being allowed to share one bath. It did not mention at what age the young people ceased to be children. No further evidence of charges for children is available.

Details of the use made of the facilities provided can be obtained from the annual reports of the relevant committees to both Councils. In Bradford the reports show the number of tickets issued each year, but no details of receipts or expenditure. In Leeds the reports give details of attendance, receipts and expenditure. An analysis of these show that between 1899 and 1914 only Cookridge Street Baths in Leeds regularly made any profit. All the other baths in Leeds made a loss.

Using the factor of attendance/tickets issued it is possible to compare the situation in both towns.³⁶ By 1905 all the baths in the period under review had been completed. The figures for 1906 reflect a full year's 'trading'. Once the initial impact had been felt use of the facilities fell.

Table 4.3 Attendance at Baths



From the Chart above it is evident that more use was made of the facilities in Leeds than in Bradford. However, it has to be remembered that Leeds was larger than Bradford. In 1901 the population of Leeds was 428,968 and of Bradford 279,767. By 1911 the figures had risen to 445,550 and 288,458 respectively.³⁷ Bradford may have made provision for public baths thirty years before Leeds did, but Leeds can be seen to have surpassed Bradford when a comparison is made of the use of the baths. Whether the need was greater in Leeds than in Bradford is not evident. Whilst attendance figures are known, it is not possible to accurately determine how many individual people are represented in the statistics. Assuming that an individual attended the baths once a week, and using the Census statistics for population and the attendance figures shown above, it is possible to calculate that approximately 2 per cent of the population in both towns used the baths in, for example, 1902 and 1912. However, it must be remembered that with improved working class housing some families had their own baths at home. What is certain is that both towns took great pride in the design and appearance of their municipal baths, both externally and internally, as is shown in the illustrations included in Appendices 1, 2 and 3. They were all particularly fine examples of a Victorian style of architecture relating to public works, well constructed buildings, some of which are still standing today, albeit having been adapted for other uses.

Notes

- ¹ H. Rose, Public Baths Revisited, The Lancet, 10 December 1966, p. 1302
- ² P. Bird, 'The Origins of Victorian Public Baths', Local Historian, 25(3) (1995), p. 150
- ³ An Act to Encourage the Establishment of Public Baths and Wash-houses 1846 (9 & 10 Vic. c 74), Schedule B
- ⁴ Bradford Baths and Team Labour Committee Minutes (hereafter Bradford Baths Committee), 2 April 1890
- ⁵ Leeds Baths and Cemeteries Committee Minutes, 25 April 1899
- ⁶ Bradford Baths Committee Minutes, 8 May 1899
- ⁷ Leeds Baths and Cemeteries Committee Minutes, 25 April 1899
- ⁸ Bradford Baths Committee Minutes, 4 February and 15 March 1889, 25 September 1890.
- ⁹ Returns of Wages published between 1830 and 1886 - (London, HMSO, 1887) C.5172 pp. 69, 94 and 120
- ¹⁰ Bradford Baths Committee Minutes, 9 July 1889
- ¹¹ Leeds Baths and Cemeteries Committee Minutes, 27 October 1898, 24 July 1900
- ¹² Leeds Sub-Property (Baths) Committee Minutes, 21 February 1912
- ¹³ Bradford Baths Committee Minutes, 20 October 1893 and 16 May 1901
- ¹⁴ Leeds Baths and Cemeteries Committee Minutes, 22 February 1899 and 22 January 1901
- ¹⁵ Bradford Public Baths (Bradford, Bradford Town Council, 1905) p. 2
- ¹⁶ The Builder, 29 July 1865, p. 539
- ¹⁷ Bradford Baths Committee Minutes, 7 October 1891 and 25 September 1899
- ¹⁸ The Builder, 6 August 1904, p. 148
- ¹⁹ Bradford Public Baths p. 15/16
- ²⁰ The Architect, 23 December 1898, p. 20
- ²¹ The Yorkshire Post, 4 April 1905
- ²² Bradford Baths Committee Minutes, 4 June 1890 and 1 July 1892
- ²³ Leeds Baths and Cemeteries Committee Annual Report, year ended 25 March 1900
- ²⁴ Leeds Property Committee Annual Report, year ended 31 March 1913
- ²⁵ The Builder, 29 July 1865, p. 539
- ²⁶ Leodis Web-site, www.leeds.gov.uk
- ²⁷ The Builder, 16 September 1905, p. 304
- ²⁸ Leeds Property Committee Annual Report for year ended 31 March 1913
- ²⁹ Bradford Baths Committee Minutes, 3 June 1901
- ³⁰ Bye-Laws for the Management, Use and Regulation of the Public Baths, Leeds - 1896 pp. 3-11 (Leeds Public Library - Reference LP 352.561 L517)
- ³¹ Bradford Baths Committee Minutes, 21 November 1888
- ³² Bradford Public Baths p. 25
- ³³ Leeds Council Minutes, 1 May 1895
- ³⁴ General Report on the Wages of the Manual Labouring Classes C.6889 (Irish University Press, Volume 21, 1893)
- ³⁵ Leeds Baths and Cemeteries Committee Minutes, 22 February 1899
- ³⁶ Annual Reports to Council of Baths Committees in Bradford and Leeds 1900-1914
- ³⁷ Census Statistics for the County Boroughs of Leeds and Bradford 1901 and 1911

CONCLUSION

The relationship between cleanliness and dirt and the provision of municipal baths and wash-houses in the towns of Bradford and Leeds during the period 1860-1914 has been the subject of this dissertation. The study began by considering the impact of changing cultural values, prior to the Victorian era, in the area of bodily hygiene. What this has confirmed is that ideas about cleanliness and dirt have changed greatly over the centuries. These changes ranged from the belief that washing damaged health by removing essential oils from the skin to the nineteenth century view that washing was good for health because it removed dirt, which actually prevented perspiration and oil from being released from the skin, thus causing illness. In addition cleanliness also came to be regarded as no longer applicable only to the parts of the body that were visible i.e. the hands and face. It applied equally to the washing of the entire body, including that which was invisible beneath the clothes that were worn.

The title of the dissertation implies that there existed attitudes to cleanliness and dirt that were specifically Victorian and investigations have established this to be the case. These attitudes centred around approaches towards creating an ideal society. Health became an important issue in a period when disease, overcrowding and poor sanitation were rife. By tackling the situation through the promotion of ideas about cleanliness the Victorian middle classes believed that the ideal could be achieved. The poor were regarded as dirty, malodorous, uncontrollable and completely lacking in moral fibre. Therefore, ideas of order, discipline and morality needed to be invoked and the chosen means of doing

this was through the medium of cleanliness. The work of social reformers such as Edwin Chadwick and Charles Kingsley emphasised this. Not only was personal cleanliness believed to be important in relation to moral behaviour, it was also believed to indicate good social behaviour. A balance between the two was essential in the quest for an ideal society. The provision of public baths and wash-houses was one measure that was undertaken with the intention of improving the physical, social and moral condition of the population. However, there is little evidence to suggest that either social or moral behaviour was changed, although public health did improve.

The sanitary idea was a dominant theme throughout Victorian Britain and there was a steady progression of legislation within the area of bodily hygiene. The parliamentary arena of Select Committees and Royal Commissions led to parliamentary legislation at both national and local government level. The *Select Committee on the Health of Towns* (1840), *Local Reports on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population* (1842), and a *Report on the Condition of the Towns of Leeds and Bradford* (1845) all described extremely bad living conditions in working class areas. Chadwick's *Sanitary Report* published in 1842 also left no doubt that overcrowding and poor sanitation encouraged disease. The *Royal Commission of Inquiry into the State of Large Towns and Populous Districts* published reports in 1844 and 1845 and these set the scene for the subsequent ideas about how cleanliness, health and sanitation might be improved.

In 1846 an Act was passed which gave permission for local authorities to provide municipal baths and wash-houses. Whilst the main objective of this was

to encourage habits of cleanliness amongst the labouring poor there was also, in the background, a feeling that clean bodies improved public morals and thereby made social control of the working classes by the middle classes much easier. Whilst it might have been expected that any local authority would wish to improve conditions for its inhabitants the situation was by no means as simple as that. The 1846 legislation was permissive, authorities were not compelled to adopt it, and herein lay the root of subsequent problems surrounding its implementation.

The financial burden of providing the required buildings and facilities fell upon the ratepayers of each town and the overall need to keep the rates down in order to satisfy them was a contributory factor to the delays in adopting the Act in both Bradford and Leeds. It is evident that both Councils responded half-heartedly and were reluctant to build such expensive facilities. They wanted to spend as little as possible and saw avoiding costs as one way of delaying spending money. It was not that they were refusing to spend anything, but that they were both very aware of the political implications of embarking on a project involving cost to the ratepayers.

The records of the Town Council meetings in both Leeds and Bradford, and also relevant committee and sub-committee minutes, show that there was an appreciation of the need to make the necessary improvements but action was hampered by limited funds, political wrangling between Liberal and Tory councillors with opposing points of view on financing public works, and consideration for the reactions of the ratepayers.

Changes were introduced very slowly. It was not until 1864 that Bradford adopted the 1846 Act. Even then there were periods when nothing happened for several years. The first municipal baths in the town were opened in Thornton Road in 1865 but the next ones, in Manchester Road, did not open until 1887. After a further gap of seventeen years premises in Manningham opened in 1904, followed by those in Leeds Road, Wakefield Road and Undercliffe districts in 1905.

The situation in Leeds took even longer to resolve, the 1846 Act not being adopted until 1878. However, the first municipal baths, on Kirkstall Road and Union Street, did not open until 1895. These were followed by Holbeck and Hunslet baths in 1898, Meanwood Road in 1899, Bramley 1904 and York Road in 1905.

Although the local authorities were given permission to include wash-houses in their improvement plans very few were actually built, because they were considered to be an un-necessary expense, it being said that the possible use was not worth the costs involved. It has not been possible to obtain details relating to the use of the three wash-houses that were built i.e. Thornton Road, Bradford and Kirkstall Road and Holbeck in Leeds. 1905, in both towns, saw the end of a concentrated period of building related to municipal baths. Despite the slow start to the building programme all the municipal baths eventually constructed, as will be seen from Appendices 1 and 3, give some indication of the civic pride, a strong motivating force in Victorian Britain, that Bradford and Leeds took in the architecture of their public buildings.

It is clear that whilst a considerable amount of money was spent on improving sanitation and water supplies the provision of baths and wash-houses remained a low priority area within the public health sphere in Bradford and Leeds, despite much concern having been expressed about the 'great unwashed'. Once the building programme began in earnest the facilities provided proved to be varied. Most public baths provided swimming as well as slipper and douche baths (see Appendices 2 and 3), whilst a few of the larger establishments had Turkish, medicinal and more specialised baths. Little provision was made by either authority to provide facilities for washing clothes. Almost every time the subject was raised at a council or committee meeting delaying tactics were invoked, as a result of which very little progress was made.

There was no mixed bathing, in fact in some premises there were facilities solely for the use of men and solely for the use of women. When considering the use of the baths it was found that there was some discrimination against women. There were fewer baths for women than for men and women also had restricted access to the facilities. In addition they were paid less than men for doing the same job e.g. as a baths attendant. One surprising feature discovered was that most baths were open on Sundays, certainly during the summer months. No satisfactory explanation has been found for why this should be the case as ample provision was made for customers to go for a bath either on their way to or from work.

The average basic wage rates within the baths' department have been found to compare favourably with those in other industries. A greater discrepancy existed between the salaries paid to 'management staff' in the two authorities, Leeds paying more than Bradford did to their superintendent of baths. The

reason for this is unclear but may be related to the inclusion, or otherwise, of 'perks' of the job i.e. free house, fuel, rates etc. Relating the admission charges for the use of the baths with the average wage rates of the day has revealed that for some people the charges would have represented a considerable portion of their weekly income and may have discouraged them from using the facilities at all. Unfortunately, due to the fact that statistics concerning the use of the baths were recorded differently in Bradford and Leeds, it has not proved possible to compile a detailed and direct comparison between the two towns. More admittance tickets were sold in Leeds than in Bradford but, as the population of Leeds was greater than that of Bradford, this is not surprising. One problem for which there is no solution is that it has proved impossible to discover how many people are actually represented in the attendance figures and how regularly each of them used the facilities provided.

As the nineteenth century drew to a close there was an increase in the number of properties connected to an improved mains water supply. The need for municipal provision of washing facilities gradually diminished as more houses were fitted with bathing facilities. At the same time swimming came to be regarded as a healthy activity, not just one associated with pleasure. The popularity of swimming as a leisure activity, and later a competitive sport, was an area of growth that signalled a move away from issues connected with public health. Was Victorian society's idea of cleanliness fulfilled at working class level? Did people get cleaner? If so, did the local authorities in Bradford and Leeds help at all? The answer to all these issues is by no means clear-cut. There is no doubt that both town councils eventually came to believe that they had a

role to play in providing bathing and washing facilities, but the delay between the time of greatest need, when nothing was done, and the time of implementation, when the need was not so great, leads one to the conclusion that such matters were not high on the list of priorities in either town.

Baths and Wash Houses Historical Archive

APPENDIX 1

External Views of Bradford Baths



Thornton Road opened 1865



Manchester Road, West Bowling opened 1887



Manningham opened 1904



Leeds Road opened 1905



Viewed from Morley Street



Viewed from Great Horton Road

New Central Baths opened 1905



Wakefield Road, East Bowling opened 1905

Source for all illustrations is Bradford Public Baths (Bradford, Bradford Town Council, 1905)

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Thornton Road opened 1865



Manchester Road, West Bowling opened 1887



Manningham opened 1904



Leeds Road opened 1905



Viewed from Morley Street



Viewed from Great Horton Road

New Central Baths opened 1905



Wakefield Road, East Bowling opened 1905

Source for all illustrations is Bradford Public Baths (Bradford, Bradford Town Council, 1905)

APPENDIX 2

Internal Facilities at Bradford Baths



Leeds Road Swimming Pool



Slipper Bath at Wakefield Road, East Bowling



Swimming Pool at New Central Baths



Vichy Douche Bath



Radiant Heat and Light Bath



Medicated Vapour Bath



Solarium or Sun Bath

Source for all illustrations is Bradford Public Baths (Bradford, Bradford Town Council, 1905)

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Slipper Bath at Wakefield Road, East Bowling



Swimming Pool at New Central Baths



Vichy Douche Bath



Radiant Heat and Light Bath



Medicated Vapour Bath



Solarium or Sun Bath

Source for all illustrations is Bradford Public Baths (Bradford, Bradford Town Council, 1905)

APPENDIX 3

Leeds Baths



Cookridge Street Exterior
Opened 1867, acquired by Corporation 1898



Union Street Baths opened 1895



Holbeck Swimming Pool opened 1898



Meanwood Road Baths opened 1899



Bramley Baths Exterior, opened 1904



Bramley Baths Ticket Office



Bramley, Gentlemen's Slipper Baths



* York Road Baths opened 1905

Source for all illustrations is the Leeds City Council Leodis Web Site www.leeds.gov.uk except where marked *.
* D. Goodman, *The Making of Leeds*, (Barnsley, Wharnccliffe Books, 2004) p. 169

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