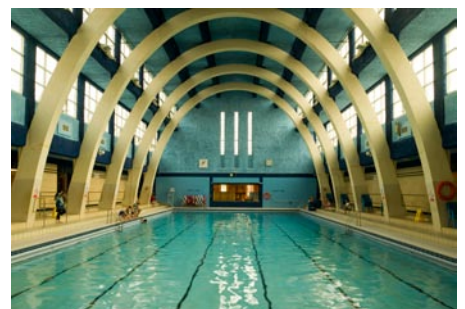


'Public baths reflect honour on the town, bestow abundant credit on the council, are model sanitary purifiers, and are hourly bestowing blessings, cheap, pure, and healthful, on the toiling masses of this great community.' Hugh Shimmin *Liverpool Mercury* 1856

Great Lengths

facts and figures on the historic indoor swimming pools of Britain

- By passing the Baths and Wash Houses Act of 1846, Britain became the first European nation since ancient Rome to facilitate the construction of public baths.
- Britain's oldest surviving public baths building is in a back street in Salford and dates from 1856. It is now derelict.
- Britain's oldest known operational indoor swimming pool is to be found at a school in Halifax. It was first used in 1864.
- Of over 4,700 indoor swimming pools in Britain in 2008, only 144 date from before 1945. Of these, 117 are public. No other nation has such a large stock of historic public pools.
- 116 indoor public and private baths buildings in Britain are listed, of which 51 remain in use for swimming.
- Former baths have been converted into a variety of uses, such as dance studios, churches and mosques, arts centres, colleges, offices, theatres and flats. One former baths in Liverpool is now a pet shop and fishery.
- Of six pools listed Grade II*, only one dating from before 1945 is open for public swimming. Moseley Road Baths, Birmingham (opened in 1907 and with only one of its two pools still in use), is arguably the most historically and architecturally important operational public baths currently under threat.
- Edinburgh has seven Victorian and Edwardian indoor swimming pools in use or in the process of being refurbished – more than any other British city.
- 20 pre-1945 indoor pools have closed since 2000, with a further five expected to close in 2009–10. At least eleven more are under threat.
- At the last count there were some 20 active campaign groups in Britain battling to save or re-open local swimming pools.
- Of nearly 1,200 swimming clubs affiliated to the Amateur Swimming Association, 237 were formed more than a hundred years ago. Brighton Swimming Club, formed in 1860, is the oldest.
- The plight of Britain's surviving historic baths came to the fore in 2003 when the magnificent Grade II* Victoria Baths in Manchester (opened in 1906) was the runaway winner of BBC TV's *Restoration* series. Victoria Baths is one of 56 case studies in *Great Lengths*. It was last used for public swimming in 1993.
- Olympic double gold medallist Rebecca Adlington (who has written the Foreword to *Great Lengths*) learnt to swim at Sherwood Baths in Mansfield. Built in 1934 by the Miners Welfare Fund, the baths are to be renamed after Adlington following a £4.5m revamp.
- Historic baths being refurbished in 2009–10 include the Royal Commonwealth Pool, Edinburgh (£37m); Kentish Town, Camden (£25.3m) and Marshall Street, Westminster (£25m).



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