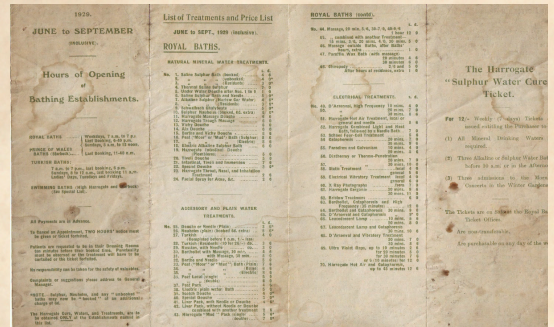


2 Royal Baths



From the time of their triumphant opening in 1897 until their closure in 1969, the Royal Baths were at the heart of Harrogate's spa industry.

The single storey building, allowing all parts to be accessed easily by patients with mobility issues, was constructed over a raised basement containing the well's, storage space and plant. Two tall towers provided proper pressure for the various water treatments, and an imposing dome rose over the Grand Pump Room at the building's heart, where many of Harrogate's mineral waters were dispensed, and where visitors could mingle amidst luxurious surroundings embellished with marble, mahogany and stained glass. The overall magnificence of this interior resembled a cathedral dedicated to healing.

Treatments included the whole range of bathing: mud baths, Vichy massage treatments, paraffin wax baths, electric treatments and the ever-popular Turkish Baths, which are still available. When the Plombieres system of treatment became fashionable in the early twentieth century, the Royal Baths built a facility in the gardens, which provided intestinal lavage, or colonic irrigation.

The declining popularity of British spas during the 1930's saw the council embark on a last ditch effort to secure Harrogate's position as premier spa of the British Empire, with the August 1939 opening of a

new treatment wing, a Roman-style fountain court, and the stunning art deco Lounge Hall. After the war, the arrival of the new National Health Service and the growing popularity of foreign holidays ensured that this development was never fully exploited.

The National Health Service continued to send patients requiring spa related treatment to the Royal Baths, but when the NHS announced this would be discontinued after 1968, the very existence of the building was uncertain. After an attempt to run the Royal Baths for private patients, the Council announced that in 1969 it would be closed, and that developers were being actively sought to redevelop the site.

Salvation came for the former Grand Pump Room in 2008, when it was restored as a Chinese restaurant. The former Lounge Hall was occupied by Wetherspoons, who, if they did not retain the art deco fittings, at least ensured the impressive space was preserved and used when it became one of central Harrogate's most popular pubs. The gorgeous Fountain Court was less fortunate, as in 2000 it was demolished to provide parking for nine cars.

