

Brampton and District 50+ Forum

Report of the meeting held on Tuesday 7 March 2023 in Brampton Community Centre Café. There were several new faces at the meeting, with a total of 30 people attending. The meeting took place after a lunch of soup, sandwiches and fruit salad in the community café. Towards the end of lunch the assembled group sang 'Happy Birthday' to one of the long-standing members who was celebrating her 94th birthday.

Ann Oswin, welcomed members and the two guest speakers Trudy and Alan Lindsay from [Friends of Carlisle Victorian and Turkish Baths](#).

Trudy gave a fascinating account of the history of public baths, illustrating her talk with photographs of the people and places being mentioned. There is now a new projector in the community café which helps in this regard. With increasing industrialisation in Victorian times many workers lived in small terraced, often damp, housing and with very poor sanitation and washing facilities. This was true in Carlisle with many of the factories being built in the Caldew valley in the area known as Wapping, a word probably derived from the Anglo-Saxon for a marshy place. [The local railway junction was known as Bog Junction.] The gas works, Shaddon Mill, with its famous Dixon chimney, Cowan Sheldon and other major works were all in this area. The first public baths were the idea of Kitty Wilkinson, a laundress, in Liverpool. In 1846 an Act of parliament was passed encouraging local authorities to build public baths and washhouses. After a committee from Carlisle visited Liverpool, Carlisle Corporation baths were built in 1884, the £6000 cost coming from profits from the gas works. An area adjacent to the baths was set aside for the Turkish baths, which eventually opened in 1909. There were objections to the cost but health was thought to be more important. The Turkish baths in Carlisle today remain much as they were when built. No precise number is known, but over 700 Turkish Baths are thought to have been built in the UK. Today only twelve remain in operation and Carlisle's Turkish Baths are one of only nine of the twelve that are open to the public. It has some features found nowhere else. The interest in baths for swimming followed. In the 1970s an additional swimming pool was built alongside the Victorian facilities.

Alan then described the recent changes to facilities: the opening of the Sands swimming pools and the subsequent closure of the James Street pool. The Victorian pool and Turkish baths building is Grade II listed and will survive the demolition of the surrounding 1970s buildings. The Carlisle Station Gateway Project will deliver a new station entrance facing what is currently the rear of the Public Baths. Alan described how the 'Friends' group proposes to develop the existing facilities, attracting new users to the Baths and increasing the regeneration impact of the improvements to Carlisle Railway Station. He explained not only how the heritage of the building would be preserved but how its value to the local community would be increased and how it would be a unique destination for visitors, especially those arriving by train.

At the end of the talks the members showed their appreciation in the usual way.

In lieu of payment to the speakers, the Forum made a small donation to Friends of Carlisle Victorian & Turkish Baths.

The date of the next 50+ Forum meeting has yet to be confirmed but will probably be in April or May 2023.