

Rules for drinking the waters

*'At early dawn prepare to rise,
And if your health you really prize,
To drink the waters quick repair,
then take a walk to breathe fresh air,
Hie thro fields – or promenade
Round pump rooms grand, or colonnade.*

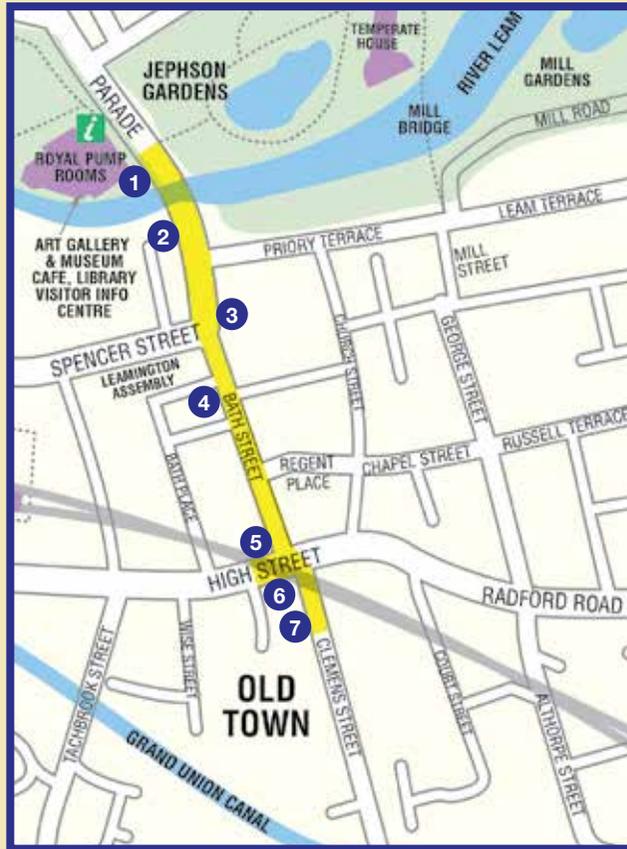
*A second glass now take – what then?
Why! Take a pleasant walk again,
The Waters, exercise and air,
Will brace your nerves, your health repair.*

*Then to your breakfast haste away,
With what keen appetite you may.'*

These 'Rules' were published by James Bisset in 1814. He was a Scottish businessman who moved to Leamington in 1811 and wrote a guidebook and verse promoting the new spa resort and its attractions.



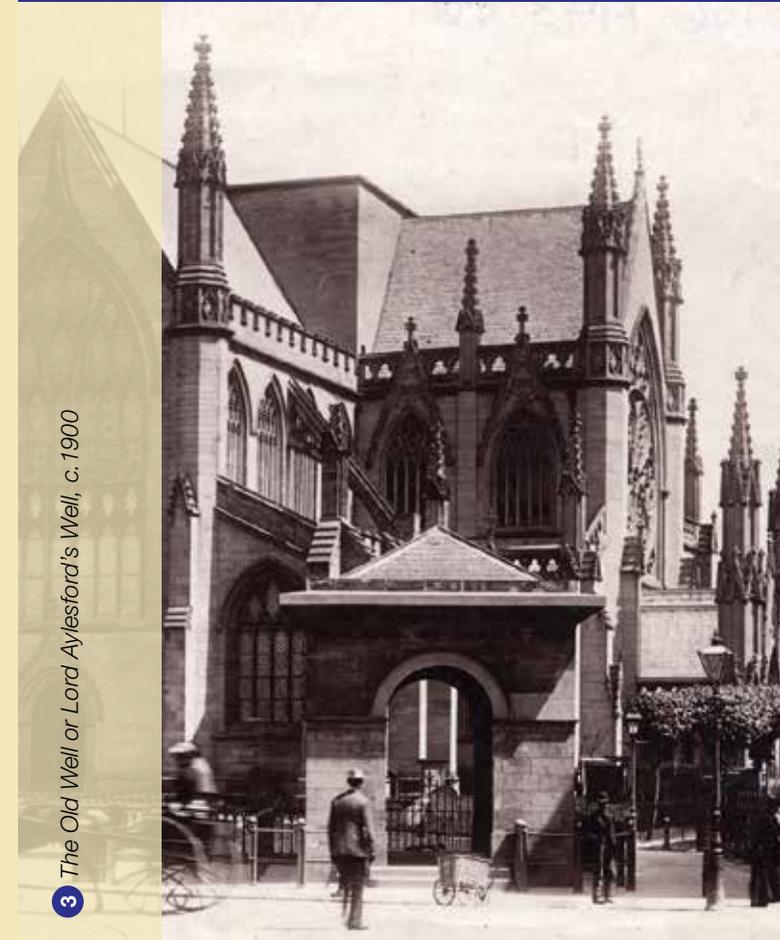
Portrait of James Bisset by an unknown artist, 1793



This walk should take approximately 20 minutes.

'TAKING THE WATERS'

A self-guided trail



3 The Old Well or Lord Aylesford's Well, c. 1900



www.warwickdc.gov.uk/royalpumprooms

The Route

This trail takes you around the sites of the bath houses frequented by rich visitors 'taking the waters' for the benefit of their health. A mineral spring was first recorded in Leamington in 1480, but the waters were not developed commercially until more springs were found at the end of the 18th century. By 1816 five more had been discovered south of the river Leam and one just north, at the Royal Pump Rooms. The exploitation of spa water springs led to the transformation of the small agricultural village called Leamington Priors into a fashionable resort which, in 1838, was permitted by Queen Victoria to call itself Royal Leamington Spa.

(P) Information plaque



The Royal Pump Room and Victoria Baths, c. 1840

1 Royal Pump Rooms

The Royal Pump Rooms opened in 1814 as the 'Pump Rooms Baths'. It offered the chance to drink and bathe in the spa water. There was also an assembly room used for dances, concerts and other entertainments. Later a Turkish Bath and swimming pools were added. Today the building houses an Art Gallery & Museum (including displays about the history of Leamington), Library, Visitor Information Centre, café and assembly rooms. Outside, near the bridge over the river Leam, is a fountain providing the only publicly accessible spa water in Leamington. Cross the bridge to Robbins' Well public house.

2 Robbins' Baths (P)

Robbins' Well public house is on the site of the fourth bath house established in Leamington. A spring was discovered here in 1804 and the baths opened in 1806; they were later rebuilt as part of Victoria Terrace. There were six marble baths with dressing rooms, a large cold bath, children's baths and reception rooms. Robbins' Baths eventually closed due to competition from the Royal Pump Rooms. Cross the road to All Saints' Church.

3 Lord Aylesford's Well (P)

In front of All Saints' Church is the site of the Old Well or Lord Aylesford's Well. A spring used for bathing and drinking was recorded here in 1480. It became renowned for the treatment of hydrophobia (rabies). In 1803 the Earl of Aylesford built a small stone well house; there was a charge for spa water dispensed inside while that outside was free. A new well house was built in 1813, improved in 1828, and rebuilt in 1891. It was demolished in 1961. Since 2007 the sculpture 'Spring' has marked the site of the original well. Cross the road and continue along Bath Street, stopping opposite Gloucester Street.



Bath Street, Bath Hotel, Theatre and New Assembly Rooms, 1822

4 Abbotts' Baths (P)

William Abbotts and Benjamin Satchwell found Leamington's second spa water spring here. The original single storey bath house was opened in 1786 and rebuilt 40 years later, providing eight baths for hot

and cold bathing, shower baths, a douche bath, a hot air bath and a vapour bath. The business was later taken over by James Gould and renamed Gould's Original Baths and Pump Rooms. Continue up Bath Street to the junction with High Street.



Cops' Hotel, High Street, The Market and Wise's Baths, 1822

5 Wise's Baths (P)

The baths were built over a spa water spring found in 1790 on the property of Matthew Wise. They were later enlarged and became known as Curtis's Baths, after Mrs Curtis who managed them. They were closed in 1847 and demolished three years later to make way for the new railway line. Cross High Street to the corner where it meets Clemens Street.

6 Read's Baths (P)

This is the site of Reads' Baths (later Lee's Baths), which were founded in 1806. They were refurbished to provide Leamington's first Turkish Bath in 1861. Continue a short distance along Clemens Street.

7 Apollo Rooms

Number 6, the Apollo Rooms, was previously known at different times as Smart's Marble Baths, Imperial Sulphuric Baths, New Marble Baths or the Imperial Fount. The building opened in 1817 and included an assembly room and a library as well as baths.

This brings you to the end of the trail around the sites of Leamington's old bath buildings.