n the nineteenth century, the use of pools or baths was functional rather than for leisure. In the 1830s, Limerick Baths were in Henry Street, and opened from six in the morning until ten at night. A portable bath with hot water and attendant was provided to any part of the city for people who could not leave their homes. The charges were advertised as follows:

- Fresh Warm Bath: 2s 6d or 12 for £1
- Salt Warm Bath: 2s 6d or 10 for £1
- Fresh Cold Bath: 1s 8d or 15 for £1
- Salt Cold Bath: 2d or 12 for £1
- Fresh Shower Bath: 6d or 5 for £1
- Salt Shower Bath: 1s 6d or 24 for £1
- Hot Air or Steam Bath: 3s 6d or 8 for £1
- Sulphur or Chlorine Bath: 3s 6d or 7 for £1
- Nitro Mur Acid Bath: 4s 6d or 6 for £1
- Harrowgate Bath: 5s 6d or 5 for £1

While baths run on a commercial basis provided a service for those who could afford to pay, there was also a need for bathing facilities for the poorer classes. On 17 October 1860, in the Munster News and Limerick and Clare Examiner newspaper, the medical doctors of Limerick published an open address to the Mayor and Corporation of Limerick. They bemoaned the lack of ‘baths and washing accommodation to the people at large’. It was their opinion that ‘it would be of great benefit to the citizens, if the Corporation provided baths. It would also reduce the medical expenses as well as promoting the cause of cleanliness and hygiene’. The doctors also hoped that if the baths were established it would be an example for the County of Limerick to follow. The address was signed by Thomas Westropp MRCS, 6 Upper Mallow Mallow Street, and countersigned by W.H. Murphy, Daniel Griffin, Arthur H. D'Esterre, W.H. Gore, T.J. Gelston, Robert Fitzgerald, Thomas Carey, R. Haines, J. Carroll, James O'Shaughnessy, John Wilkinson, William Westropp, Vernon Russell, Robert R. Gelston, Samuel Hunt, Joseph Parker, E.H. Homan, Robert Frith, Miles V. Burke, Bernard Kavanagh, Stephen McMahon, Edward Homan, Jonathan Elmues, Thomas Nash, Amos Vereker, J.W. Bouchier, Thomas Kang, M. Brodie, Daniel Tracy, John Allen.

Four days later, in the same newspaper, the address by Dr Westropp and his thirty one fellow doctors was welcomed, by the proprietors of 'The Turkish Baths' on Military Road (now O'Connell Avenue) and Westland Street (possibly Westland Row). They boasted that they were the pioneers of the sanitary movement, by establishing Turkish Baths in the city. They were extending their service to the working classes by the erection of another Baths establishment, now nearly completed. They hoped their 'new baths would be within the reach of the poor man and cleanse the inside of the body as perfectly as other baths could cleanse the outside'. Fortunately the newspaper carried a description of the baths, which had been established in 1859, for its readers who had not visited them, and left a wonderful insight into the operation of the Turkish Baths.
"The Turkish Bath
In Limerick"

We believe the population of Limerick in general do not know so much as they might about the handsome building which stands on the Military Walk, and is designed in a somewhat more novel style of architecture than they have been accustomed to mark. It has a handsome and imposing front, richly stained glass windows, and the roof is surmounted by numerous little pointed turrets or minarets, while vases and other architectural ornaments rest on graceful columns at the several angles. No doubt, many of the more intelligent class, who frequent the popular promenade in the vicinity, know that it is "The Turkish Bath," and can judge for themselves that it has externally a very 'beautiful' appearance. But beyond that, many know little of its interior construction, or in what material respects it differs from the ordinary baths to which they have been accustomed. People have some delicacy in entering establishments merely to see them, and several would deem the intrusion as improper as to walk into Cruise's Hotel and ask to be shown the state rooms of the gorgeously fitted up Rattan House, in the erection and provision of which the Proprietor has expended so large a sum, and the whole value of the Bath depends, and the Bathers exchange their clothing for a towel and a pair of wooden slippers, and to this room he subsequently returns. The second room to which the bather is introduced is the first stage of the bath, and it is beautifully fitted up ocean steamers of the Peninsular and Orient Steam Company. In this chamber the Bather exchanges his clothing for a towel and a pair of wooden slippers, and to this room he subsequently returns. The second room to which the bather is introduced is the first stage of the bath, and it is elegantly furnished with marble slabs and mattresses. The light is admitted from the roof of stained glass, of various tasteful designs, and it tends to produce a dreamy and tranquillising state of mind favourable to the equal circulation of the

**NEW TURKISH BATHS**

**NOW OPEN,**

SARSEFIELD STREET,

(Late Brunswick Street).

**NEW TURKISH BATHS**

**Also,**

HOT AND COLD WATERS, RECLINING,
SHOWER WATERS, NEEDLES, AND VERY LARGE PLUNGE BATHS.

**ADVERTISEMENT**

For the Sarsfield Street baths, *Limerick Chronicle*, Thursday, 29 December 1887.

Tasteful elegance that must be seen, and the operations explained, in order that all may be fully appreciated.

The circumstances attending the establishment of the Baths in Limerick may be briefly related. The great popular favour which the original establishment at St. Anne's Hill, Blarney, acquired produced a desire in other parts of the Kingdom to obtain like facilities for curative and healthful purposes. But that which would appear to be every body's business might have turned out to be nobody's, had not our energetic and enterprising fellow citizen, Mr. Samuel Wormleigh, undertaken, in conjunction with Dr. Barter, to build and fit up the Bath of which we now propose to give a brief account.

"Entering by the side door in Charles Street* and through the office, where the intelligent chief attendant supplies every information that can be desired, the visitor is introduced into the first of three chambers of which the Bath apartments consist. This is called the Divan (the apotheosis of the Romans); it is open to the atmosphere, and furnished with elegantly upholstered couches and sofas, in enclosed chambers, somewhat resembling the state rooms of the gorgeously fitted up ocean steamers of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Company. In this chamber the Bather exchanges his clothing for a towel and a pair of wooden slippers, and to this room he subsequently returns. The second room to which the Bather is introduced is the first stage of the bath, and it is elegantly furnished with marble slabs and mattresses. The light is admitted from the roof of stained glass, of various tasteful designs, and it tends to produce a dreamy and tranquillising state of mind favourable to the equal circulation of the

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blood. This room is heated from 120 to 130 degrees, but the air though dry it is respired with perfect ease and here a most agreeable sensation is felt - a sort of quiet languor begins to be experienced, and in this state the party remains until perspiration is freely and fully produced. Not until that time is thoroughly arrived is he allowed to enter the third chamber. This is called the sudatorium, that is, the sweating room. On the occasion of our Reporter visiting it, the heat of the apartment was raised to the excessive pitch of 155 degrees. Yet there was no painful effect, no difficulty of respiration. The feeling was rather a strong desire to perspire, which materially assists in freeing the pores of the skin, while it calls into activity all the sinews and muscles of the body. During the profuse perspiration in this chamber, cold water is drunk abundantly - a large tumbler full three or four times, or oftener. Contiguous to the heated chamber are recesses containing fountains, which are supplied with hot and cold water, so arranged that the water may be mixed to the exact temperature most agreeable to the requirements of each individual, and also giving off a sufficiency of moisture to prevent the hot air from being too dry. Here the cooling, refreshing, and cleaning process takes place. The bather then returns for a few minutes into the dry air of the heated chamber, to secure a perfect reaction, and is then conducted back to the Divan and the atmospheric air, where, on couches already described, he enjoys a luxurious tranquility. This part of the process may be termed the ionic stage, in which the highest amount of physical gratification is experienced. The time spent in the bath is usually about two hours altogether, but of course it may be somewhat shortened at the wish of the bather.'

'There are separate suites of the apartments for ladies, constructed like those described, but perhaps more richly decorated, and the bathers are waited upon by respectable female attendants.'

'It would scarcely be within our province to offer remarks upon the medicinal properties of the Turkish Bath. We have every reason, however, to believe that, used discretely, under medical advice, it operates effectually as a curative agent in many diseases, and even to those in perfect health is a source of recreation and luxurious indulgence.'

The Turkish Baths appear to have closed down in the late 1880s. They were established in 1859 and were remodelled in 1872, still under the management of Richard Barter and S. Wormleighton, to make them 'one of the finest for its size, one of the most perfect institutions of the kind in Ireland.'

Like all successful ventures, the baths soon had competition in the form of imitators. In November 1887, D. Taylor of Eden Terrace opened a Turkish Baths at Sarsfield Bridge. Twenty men were engaged for seven months in the erection of the baths. During the construction, Taylor sued a mason, Peter McNamara, for refusing to finish the work. The action proved unsuccessful. Despite this, it was boasted that the brickwork in the baths was 'the finest to be seen anywhere.' In 1914 the baths were advertised as being under new management, open from 8 am to 8.30 pm, owner Michael O'Brien, and continued to be so advertised until 1925.

In 1899, when the firm of Richard Smith & Co. on Sarsfield Street went into liquidation, Spillane's tobacco factory took over the premises. They had been manufacturing tobacco in William Street for seventy years and acquired and refurbished the Sarsfield Street premises in order to begin the manufacture of cigarettes, as well as continuing to manufacture their famous Limerick Roll and Garryowen Plug. Over time they acquired the neighbouring premises on Sarsfield Street, including the Turkish Bath building, and by 1930 were operating from Sarsfield Street only. In 1958 Spillane's tobacco factory closed down. The company, which began manufacturing in 1829, was acquired by the Dublin firm, Murray & Co., who transferred all the machinery to its Dublin factory. The lovely brick building, which spanned from Sarsfield Street to Honan's Quay and became famous for its trade mark, two red setter dogs at its entrance and the legend 'Smoke Craven A Cigarettes', was finally demolished. It is now the site of Dunnes Department Store and practically all memories of Limerick's Baths are now gone.

* Charles Street is now St Gerard Street.

SOURCES

1. The Limerick Herald newspaper, 26 June 1832.
2. The last mention of the Turkish Baths at Military Road in local trades directories is in 1886, when the manager / superintendent was James Connolly.
5. The Munster News and Limerick & Clare Advocate newspaper, 29 April 1899.