



*Some of our important choices have a time line.  
If we delay a decision, the opportunity is gone  
forever. Sometimes our doubts keep us from  
making a choice that involves change.  
Thus an opportunity may be missed.*

— James E. Faust

**T**he opportunity for Melksham Town Council to acquire the Blue Pool premises opens a town-wide discussion over the merits of either following through or walking away. If it's decided that keeping the site for the town is preferred, should it be demolished and the land used for something related to the Assembly Hall, or something completely different? Or, perhaps the building is sound enough to make minor adjustments and incorporate it into the Assembly Hall and add other community resources.

*These are questions that will be examined over the next few months, with a report back to full Town Council by 25 September, 2023.*

## HISTORY

It's important to lay a foundation to this decision by learning the history of the Blue Pool. While for ages, bathing in the river was the only offering, discussions about building a proper facility was an item agenda for quite a while. There were concerns about accidental drownings and females feeling unsafe in an unsupervised environment; a proper place to learn how to swim was reasoned by others. Still others wanted a bathing pool for the sake of those who had no other means to wash properly, yet didn't know how to swim well enough to be able to manage the currents of the Avon.

## RIVER SWIMMING

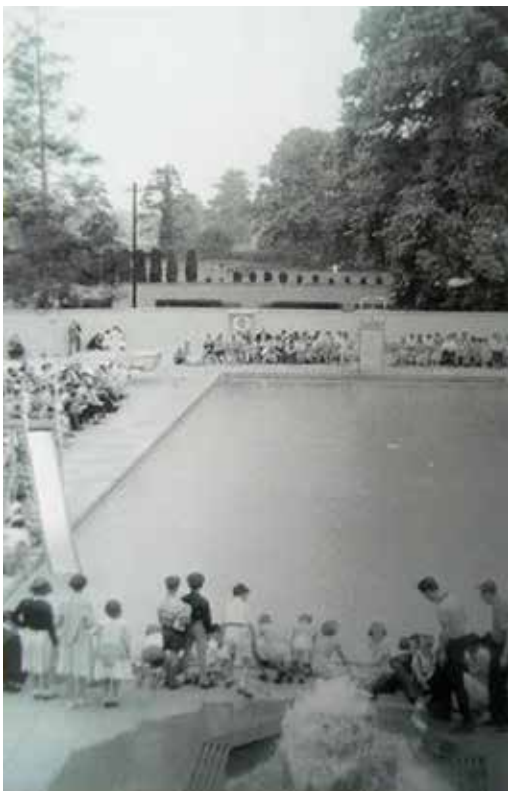
When Avon took on Melksham House in 1920, they soon established a lido in the river in the grounds beyond. It was supervised and co-ed. Melksham Urban District



Swimming in the river - July 1916



**Program for the official opening of the Blue Pool on 13 June, 1959**



**Residents attend the official opening of the Blue Pool in 1959**

Council approached the Avon Sports and Social Club asking if the town residents could use these facilities. They were turned down. Then earnest talk began about the town establishing their own “Melksham Lido” in the town side of the Avon bridge, which wasn’t maintained, and ended up being condemned in 1936.

### **FINANCIAL PROBLEMS**

Because such a venture was going to cost money that would have to be raised through an increase in rates, it was decided, following the closure of the lido, to put the vote to the rate payers. A postcard ballot asking if they would accept a rate increase to build a swimming pool for the town was sent out. A total of 154 ballots were returned. 67 were in favour, 87 against and the remaining few were spoilt.

The desire was there, the money behind it wasn’t.

### **TOO MANY DECISIONS**

The discussions for a properly built pool went on for decades with no resolution, with the exception of ideas put forward that were never followed through. Should it be a shallow pool or one that youths could dive into? Should it be constructed as a war memorial? Where should it be sited? Should it be heated by the burn waste from Avon India Rubber?

### **THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX**

A few Town Councillors who were involved in various other social organisations took up the cause, and through donations made by the Boy Scouts and the Melksham Carnival, they raised enough funds to then be fund-matched. It took around five years to raise the cash.

### **A POOL IS BORN**

On 24 February, 1959, Avon India Rubber Company Limited conveyed a portion of their property to the Urban District Council for £10.

Four months later, a gala was held to celebrate the opening of the Blue Pool on that piece of land. Within the first eight weeks more than 25,000 people paid admission, totalling £1,570.

### **THE MONEY PIT**

Swimming pools are notorious money pits. Wiltshire County Council had taken over operations of the Blue Pool and other area swimming pools by contracting to

West Sports Centres. In 1978, the charges didn't match the spending, and the county had lost £35,000 for staff and £18,000 for utilities. Spiralling costs were threatening to kill off centres county-wide.

### THE TIDE HAS CHANGED

Less than 10 years later, tides, or perhaps opinions, apparently turned.

The occasion is something I have not been able to pin down yet, but for X Reason, Wiltshire Council decided to keep swimming and closed the Blue Pool for two years for it to undergo a massive facelift costing a half million pounds.

### AS WE KNOW IT NOW

The re-opening day on 15 August, 1988 started with a dash and ended with a crash. The Blue Pool was closed again for several weeks after 50 people suffered cuts to their feet.

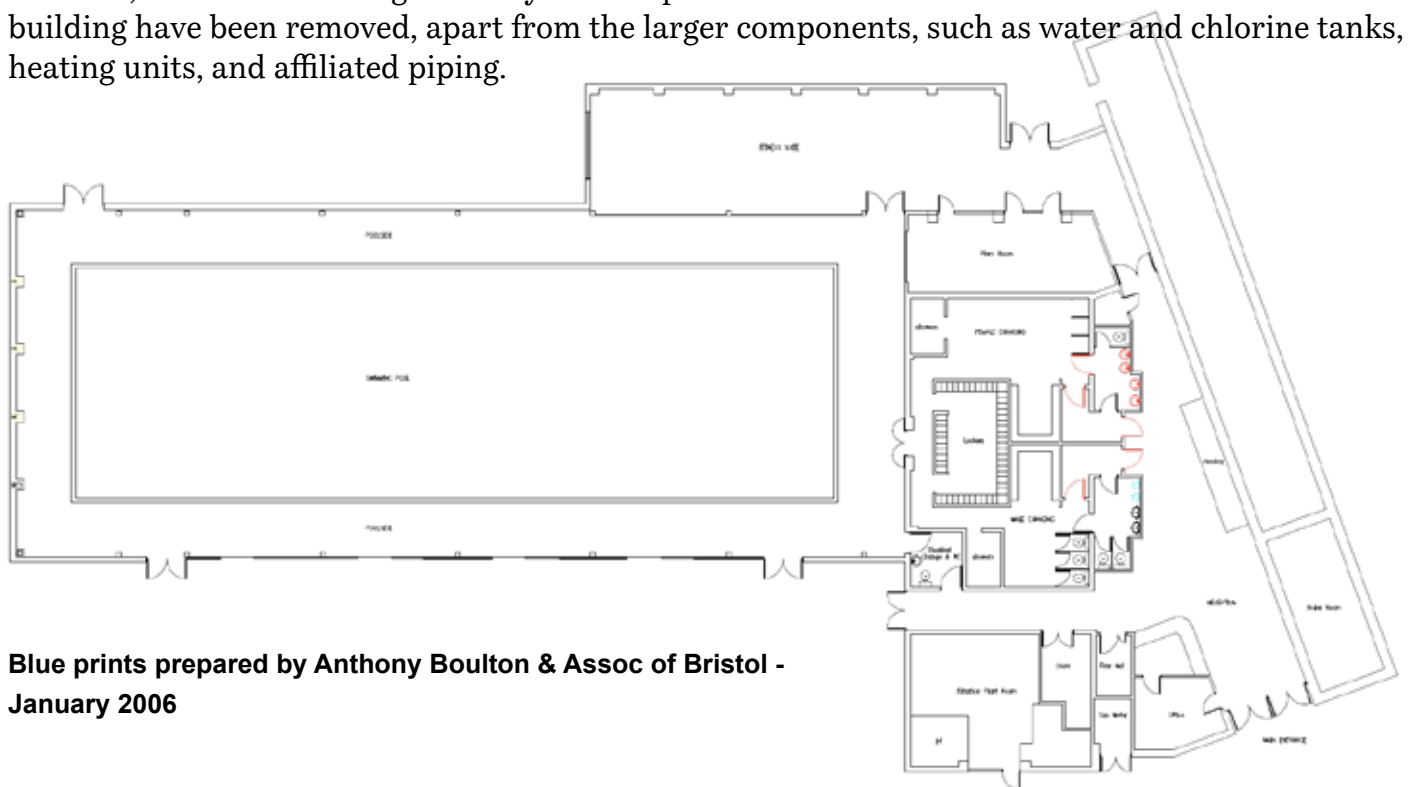
Having fixed the problems, not much has been done to the Blue Pool since 1988 except adding the roof and modifying the men's and women's changing rooms too slightly to even notice.

### CLOSED FOR GOOD

That is, until it closed for good last year. The pool has been drained and much of the insides of the building have been removed, apart from the larger components, such as water and chlorine tanks, heating units, and affiliated piping.



**Blue Pool in 1979; the fountain is replaced by a shallow pool for toddlers, and the slide has been removed; ladders added at the corners (photo by Tony Seager)**



**Blue prints prepared by Anthony Boulton & Assoc of Bristol - January 2006**

## Timeline of Swimming Facilities in Melksham

date	date type	regarding	location	summary	comment
28/5/1895	date of meeting	swimming club	river	public meeting held at National Schoolroom for the purpose of forming a swimming club and to ascertain the feeling in reference to the erection of a dressing room on the river bank.	use part of the upper river as the bathing place, and to invite tenders for the erection of sheds, etc. Subscriptions starting at a donation 5 guineas.
30/9/1894	transfer	parishes	Melksham Within, Melksham Without	By Local Government Board Order No. 31,684, dated 30th September, 1894, the ancient parish of Melksham was divided into two parishes, known as Melksham Within and Melksham Without	the former being the area of the Urban District, the latter, Rural District
5/8/1899	newspaper publish date	swimming club	river	Melksham is fortunate in possessing a capital site for such a purpose (of holding competitive swimming events), the river being wide and the water sufficiently deep to allow scope for good diving.	With practice, there is no reason why the Melksham Swimming Club should not turn out a number of competitors who will be able to hold their own against other from any part of the country
27/06/1903	date of incident	safety	river	In response to the death of an 8-year-old boy who drowned: It is a pity that a town of the size of Melksham, and which is growing rapidly, and has so many industries, cannot boast of a proper public bath, where children could bathe in safety, and be taught to swim	Perhaps the authorities will now devote a little time and consideration to the important question of providing a public bath.
10/08/1907	newspaper publish date	swimming and bathing	river	Now with a swimming club, there should be bathing facilities, especially for persons learning to swim	
04/01/1919	newspaper publish date	War Memorial	somewhere in town	Letter to the Editor by J W C Ferrebee, Secretary and Treasurer Melksham Swimming Club: Suggests a public war memorial to honour those who died or were wounded during WWI for Melksham should take the form of Public Baths. To be covered in the winter and used for meetings, lectures, dancing, gymnasium, etc.	At the time, the only provision for swimming was "Melksham Lido" in Avon with primitive dressing sheds and some diving appliances placed at the bank of the river adjoining Scotland Road. No accommodation for women or younger learner swimmers : too deep and too dangerous.
14/04/1921	meeting date	Avon Sports and Social Club Lido	pool in the river at the rear of Melksham House	J W C Ferrebee request anyone interested in swimming to attend meeting	attention members of Melksham Swimming Club
29/06/1923	newspaper publish date	Melksham Lido	in Avon at end of Scotland road	Spencer's Aquatic Section improved bathing station in Scotland Road: concrete paths laid round various dressing rooms, modern quay edge has been made the whole length of the river frontage; two lawns of substantial size laid where bathers may sun bathe or use a medicine ball. New chute of last year improved. dimensions of backwater reduced and covered	On 3 July, 1935, visitors to gala will be able to see Miss Cecilia Couzens, champion diver of England, who will give an exhibition
22/07/1932	opening day	Avon Sports and Social Club Lido	pool in the river at the rear of Melksham House	Grand opening. Mixed swimming introduced; now open 7 days a week; properly organised swimming club	swimming costumes must be worn, changing room huts
12/08/1935	date of letter	bathing place	somewhere in the area	Letter to the Editor by "Deep End": concerned about reports of drownings; stressing a bathing place is needed in the area; mentions George Ward seems to be the only one pushing for it	
20/08/1935	date of letter	Spencers Lido	in Avon at end of Scotland road	Letter to the Editor responding to "Deep End" by Reginald W Trowbridge, Hon Secretary Aquatic Section Spencers Sports Club: For 10 years now, maintained a bathing and boating station at Scotland Road	30-40 children each year taught to swim; membership fee nominal, around 150 members (Personally, I don't think Trowbridge understood the point of Deep End's letter.)
15/09/1936	public debate	swimming pool	meeting at New Hall, Market Place	George Ward, Urban District Council, argues that Melksham needs its own pool and not one that's in a river on the town side of Avon Bridge; realised it may be in opposition to Ratepayers, but with increasing population, there may not be a need to raise rate to obtain the funds; prefers pool to be placed at King George V Playing field; river Melksham Lido had been condemned by medical officer some time ago	In the past, Major Fuller offered to sell 17.5 acres of land near Melksham House, but offer turned down because they could not find £200 to build a roadway. Suggestion that Mr Fuller be re-approached about offer. Postal ballot to be sent out to get rate payers reaction to pool idea
14/11/1936	newspaper publish date	swimming pool	proposed somewhere in Melksham	Results of postcard ballot: 67 in favour; 87 against. Total received 154; a few spoilt	returns noted as being disappointing and voting cannot be taken as an official opinion of the Association as a whole



## Timeline of Swimming Facilities in Melksham

12/04/1937	meeting date	swimming pool	somewhere in Melksham	No provision has been made in the current budget for a public recreation ground or swimming pool, about which much has been said and written in recent months.	the prospect of a swimming pool will not be forgotten, but when circumstances permit, full and generous consideration would be given
02/07/1938	gala date	Spencers Lido	in Avon at end of Scotland road	photos of Rover Scouts enjoying Spencer Swimming Pool at swimming rally	
08/05/1945	correct year	Spencers Lido	in Avon at end of Scotland road	Spencer's pool closed to public since end of WWII	
01/01/1949	correct year	proposed open-air swimming pool	King George's Field, near Avon Factory	Melksham Urban District Council surveyor's sketch [412036]	proposed swimming pool that was never built
12/03/1952	meeting date	Spencers Lido	in Avon at end of Scotland road	Strong possibility that River Avon bathing station of Messrs Spencer may be reopened this year, stated in meeting at Sports Club. It's been closed since the end of the war (8/5/1945).	marked improvement shown in recent river analysis
06/09/1952	newspaper publish date	swimming pool	somewhere in Melksham	Melksham Urban district Council carnival float tableau reminds spectators the carnival was in aid of the town's Swimming Pool Fund	"Please contribute generously" - bring the seaside to Melksham
29/03/1954	meeting date	swimming pool	somewhere in Melksham	F B Day, Chairman of Urban District Council, calls public meeting to discuss fundraising for swimming pool	also to hear a report of the Fund Raising Committee
22/09/1954	event date	swimming pool	somewhere in Melksham	Whist Drive held in Assembly Hall in aid of the Swimming Pool.	fund-raising
10/02/1955	date of letter	swimming pool	somewhere central in Melksham	Letter to the Editor by J H Marti: Development plan must be accepted; it will be possible to have the long-wanted swimming pool, and in a central position.	from a diagram in another article he wrote, it appears he was using the pond by Melksham House as the swimming pool location
27/06/1955	meeting date	swimming pool	somewhere in King Georges Playing Field	Two sites found for swimming pool, children's paddling pool plans going ahead and should be complete by next summer	once they have a definite site, it would give an added incentive to raise money for it
30/07/1955	newspaper publish date	swimming pool	King George Field, by north-eastern boundary	Site for swimming pool fixed at King George Field at north-eastern boundary (where skate park is now)	since site is fixed, now time to start fund raising efforts - A J Mortimer
06/08/1955	newspaper publish date	Melksham Lido	Lowbourne House	Letter to the Editor, A G Dodimead: River polluted and councillors warn summer bathers not to swim there. Writer asks if councillors won't find source, and no one gets far with a pool scheme, why not take Dr Rumbold's Lowbourne House and turn that into a park?	all talk and not action
15/10/1955	newspaper publish date	swimming pool	somewhere in town	Letter to the Editor from Francis Day: questions sincerity of fundraising for new pool by Mr Greenman, Secretary of the Swimming Pool Fund Raising Committee	the only group showing interest in raising money is Carnival Committee
28/04/1956	newspaper publish date	paddling pool	King George Field	Tender accepted of Messrs A Mortimer & Sons of £728 10s 6d for construction of children's paddling pool	
02/06/1956	newspaper publish date	paddling pool	King George Field	Contracts for erection of park shelter and paddling pool said to be proceeding satisfactorily	
07/07/1956	newspaper publish date	paddling pool	King George Field	Photo of children splashing in new paddling pool	not grand opening but near to opening date
14/07/1956	newspaper publish date	paddling pool	King George Field	Paddling pool polluted after only three days of use	Council authorises Sanitary Inspector to treat the water and purchase testing equipment; council to approach various district schools for their co-operation in preventing misuse of the pool
14/11/1956	meeting date	bathing pool	somewhere in town	Trades Council requests Melksham Urban Council examine possibilities of providing a bathing pool for the town, using direct labour methods; spec suggested by Edmund Aldridge estimated to cost £801 16s	"This is not an attempt to embarrass the Council in any way; it is an idea for obtaining a pool for this town by a different method, one which we believe has not been considered before."

## Timeline of Swimming Facilities in Melksham

20/12/1956	meeting date	swimming pool	somewhere in town	A J Mortimer, Chairman of Melksham Urban Council announced at meeting that a further £175 had been received for the Swimming Pool Fund as a result of the 1956 carnival, bringing total to £2,199 13s.	Although not as high as previous year, Council pleased with respectable sum
01/01/1959	correct year	social club		Melksham Amateur Swimming Club formed in 1959	
24/02/1959	conveyance date	land	Market Place (current site of BP)	conveyance of the land in this title made between the Avon India Rubber Company Limited and The Urban District Council of Melksham for £10	contains restrictive covenants; possibly having to do with the roof mentioned in 1985
13/06/1959	opening gala	Blue Pool	Market Place (current site of BP)	Blue Pool grand opening; Smith & Lacy, Ltd, of Corsham, were the contractors; the pumps, chlorinator and filter were provided by Gilliam & Co of Length - 33 1/3 metres Width - 35 feet Depth - 3 feet, 6 inches to 7 feet, 6 inches Within the first eight weeks, more than 25,000 people paid admission, which totalled £1,570.	Messrs Avon India Rubber Co Ltd made the site available for a nominal fee; with the help of Councillor A J Mortimer (Chairman), the Melksham Carnival Committee raised £5,011 in funds; and the purchase was made complete by the Melksham Urban District Council; pictures [475760] and [161527] shows diving board and life guard seat at far end, and slide at close end, with shallow fountain in front of pool; changing rooms on the left
24/07/1962	gala date	Blue Pool	Market Place (current site of BP)	photo of swimmer Jennifer Jones winning senior girls breast-stroke at Shurnhold School annual gala at Blue Pool	seems to be random leisure photo
22/02/1966	meeting date	swimming club		Melksham Amateur Swimming Club formed in 1959 are to carry on despite recent fears that they would have to wind up through lack of support. Meeting only attended by 17 people.	Urban Council charges £31 10s for use of pool or 36s a night. On a public night the council probably takes six times less than on our club nights.
27/06/1975	newspaper publish date	Blue Pool	Market Place (current site of BP)	Photo of family enjoying Blue Pool outdoors in summer sun	seems to be random leisure photo
01/01/1979	correct year	Blue Pool	Market Place (current site of BP)	Photo by Tony Seager [586052]	photo shows diving board and life guard seat at far end; no slide, but in/out ladders at all four corners; fountain replaced by shallow pool; dressing rooms as before
06/07/1979	newspaper publish date	leisure centres	various	West sports centres confessed today that they are losing a fortune. The biggest drain on cash are the swimming pools. Experts estimate that it would cost nearly £2 a swim to make a profit. Spiralling heating costs are now threatening to kill off centres, which are often a town's community focal spot.	Melksham: the Wiltshire County Council-run centre lost £35,000 last year. "The charges don't match the spending--it's as simple as that," said spokesman Tony Darby. The biggest outlays are £35,000 for staff and £18,000 for heating, light and water. (This is probably Blue Pool and Christie Miller combined)
05/02/1985	newspaper publish date	swimming pool	Market Place (current site of BP)	Town to splash out on new fun pool. West Wiltshire District councillors have set aside £245,000 to turn Melksham's swimming pool into a fun pool for youngsters. Subcommittee chairman Councillor Graham Payne said research showed shallow pools were most popular and pointed out that serious swimmers already stopped using the Blue Pool.	they were criticised for ignoring the wishes of townspeople, who want a more expensive project to include a practice pool for serious swimmers in the scheme. Councillor Ian Drew told the Environmental committee the fun pool with an overall depth of no more than three feet, was useless without another deeper pool. He stated there could be a serious accident with teenagers diving into a shallow pool.
20/02/1985	meeting date	Blue Pool	Market Place (current site of BP)	Plans to turn Melksham swimming pool into a fun pool for youngsters have been sunk. Originally the intension was to make the blue pool into a free form swimming pool on a riverside theme. But instead last night's meeting of West Wiltshire District Council's Environment Committee decided to refurbish the present pool.	A plea by councillor Ian Drew (Lab, Melksham) to deflect the matter for more discussion was turned down.

## Timeline of Swimming Facilities in Melksham

17/10/1985	newspaper publish date	new swimming pool	to be built near Avon factory on council-owned King George V playing fields	West Wiltshire district council Councillor Harry Johnson (Conservative Melksham) last night asked a full meeting of the council investigate the feasibility of building a at King George V Playing Fields But council chairman Mrs Mary Pearce (Conservative Trowbridge) moved that the matter should be referred the next meeting of the council environment committee Meeting And councillors agreed suggestion by Melksham Labour councillor Mary Salisbury that any feasibility study should given least three months.	The idea building a pool and using the waste heat that currently pumped into the river was first suggested at a meeting of Melksham town council committee two weeks ago. The plan for a covered pool and outdoor fun area had been forward by the local Chamber Commerce But the scheme had with opposition from town council chairman Mr Maurice O'Gorman because the district council are already considering extensive renovation plans for the town's <del>outdoor Blue Pool</del>
31/10/1985	newspaper publish date	new swimming pool	to be built near Avon factory on council-owned King George V playing fields	Waste heat from Avon Rubber may be used to warm the water in a new swimming pool; could be run cheaply with the waste factory heat, claimed Councillor Harry Johnson. Councillor Maureen Weston said there was a big demand for a covered swimming pool and fun pool for all-year use.	Melksham's present Blue Pool is outdoor and a covenant on the building prevents any proposals to roof it
01/09/1986	month and day correct	swimming pool	Market Place (current site of BP)	Swimming Pool closed for two years for a facelift costing more than half a million pounds.	
27/01/1988	newspaper publish date	Blue Pool	Market Place (current site of BP)	Leisure Centre advert for "Indoor pools at Warminster, Westbury, Bradford-on-Avon, and this summer the new blue pool opening in Melksham. Heated outdoor pool in Trowbridge, Leisure Centre at Castle Place Trowbridge, Sport Centre at Warminster"	indication that there is a roof over Blue Pool
20/04/1988	date of rights granted	deeds	Market Place (current site of BP)	The land is subject to the right granted by a deed made between West Wiltshire District Council and Bailey Employment Service Limited	possibly dealing with right of access?
15/08/1988	opening day	refurbished swimming pool	Market Place (current site of BP)	Former Melksham Mayor Maurice O'Gorman opened the refurbished swimming pool after it had been closed for two years. Then quickly closed it again because 50 swimmers scratched their feet on the bottom of the pool; closed until further notice. Pool had closed in September 1986 for a facelift costing more than half a million pounds.	swimming baths have been plagued by setbacks since they closed for modernisation two years ago; had to shut again only hours after reopening; the problems that delayed the opening turned out to be worse than they thought
15/08/1988	opening day	new swimming pool	Market Place (current site of BP)	Swimmers were celebrating the opening of a new pool today.	Pool, closed since 1986, dogged by delays, will not be completed until October. But West Wiltshire District Council decided to open early for the rest of the school holidays
18/08/1988	planned date	swimming pool	Market Place (current site of BP)	Work on renovating the council swimming pool has been dogged by delays, but closure to be suspended for 2-3 weeks so children can enjoy a dip during school holidays, to make most of good summer weather	from wording, it doesn't sound like they have enclosed the pool yet
01/04/2001	date of title	transfer	Market Place (current site of BP)	A transfer of the Town Hall, Market Place made between West Wiltshire District Council and Melksham Town Council contains vendors restrictive covenants.	
01/01/2006	month and year correct	addition to locker room	Market Place (current site of BP)	Blue prints prepared by Anthony Boulton & Assoc of Bristol to add two basins to men's facility and four basins to women's facility; also a total of five entrances to these facilities	instead, two basins and two urinals in men's installed; two basins and one toilet for the women's. Other than this, the Blue Pool remains almost exactly as the 2006 blue prints indicate
01/04/2009	date of council change	transfer	all	The new unitary authority, Wiltshire Council, comes into being. Wiltshire County Council, Kennet District Council, North Wilts District Council, Salisbury District Council and West Wilts District Council cease to exist	
14/05/2009	title	title	Market Place (current site of BP)	Proprietor: Wiltshire Council per Land Registry	



## Official copy of register of title

Title number WT275105

Edition date 15.05.2009

- This official copy shows the entries on the register of title on 01 JUN 2023 at 12:29:46.
- This date must be quoted as the "search from date" in any official search application based on this copy.
- The date at the beginning of an entry is the date on which the entry was made in the register.
- Issued on 01 Jun 2023.
- Under s.67 of the Land Registration Act 2002, this copy is admissible in evidence to the same extent as the original.
- This title is dealt with by HM Land Registry, Weymouth Office.

### A: Property Register

This register describes the land and estate comprised in the title.

#### WILTSHIRE

- 1 (02.10.2008) The Freehold land shown edged with red on the plan of the above title filed at the Registry and being Melksham Blue Pool, Market Place, Melksham (SN12 6ES).
- 2 (02.10.2008) The land has the benefit of the rights reserved by but is subject to the rights granted by the Transfer dated 1 April 2001 referred to in the Charges Register.

### B: Proprietorship Register

This register specifies the class of title and identifies the owner. It contains any entries that affect the right of disposal.

#### Title absolute

- 1 (14.05.2009) PROPRIETOR: WILTSHIRE COUNCIL of Bythesea Road, Trowbridge, Wiltshire BA14 8JN and of DX116892, Trowbridge 3.

### C: Charges Register

This register contains any charges and other matters that affect the land.

- 1 (02.10.2008) A Conveyance of the land in this title dated 24 February 1959 made between (1) The Avon India Rubber Company Limited and (2) The Urban District Council Of Melksham contains restrictive covenants.  
*NOTE: Copy filed.*
- 2 (02.10.2008) The land is subject to the rights granted by a Deed dated 20 April 1988 made between (1) West Wiltshire District Council and (2) Bailey Employment Services Limited .  
*NOTE: Copy filed.*
- 3 (02.10.2008) A Transfer of the Town Hall, Market Place dated 1 April



Title number WT275105

## C: Charges Register continued

2001 made between (1) West Wiltshire District Council and (2) Melksham Town Council contains vendors restrictive covenants.

*NOTE:-Copy filed under WT201248.*

End of register

**These are the notes referred to on the following official copy**

The electronic official copy of the title plan follows this message.

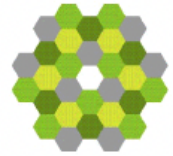
Please note that this is the only official copy we will issue. We will not issue a paper official copy.

This official copy was delivered electronically and when printed will not be to scale. You can obtain a paper official copy by ordering one from HM Land Registry.

This official copy is issued on 01 June 2023 shows the state of this title plan on 01 June 2023 at 12:29:46. It is admissible in evidence to the same extent as the original (s.67 Land Registration Act 2002). This title plan shows the general position, not the exact line, of the boundaries. It may be subject to distortions in scale. Measurements scaled from this plan may not match measurements between the same points on the ground. This title is dealt with by the HM Land Registry, Weymouth Office .

HM Land Registry  
Official copy of  
title plan

Title number **WT275105**  
Ordnance Survey map reference **ST9063NW**  
Scale **1:1250 enlarged from 1:2500**  
Administrative area **Wiltshire**



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