History Detectives
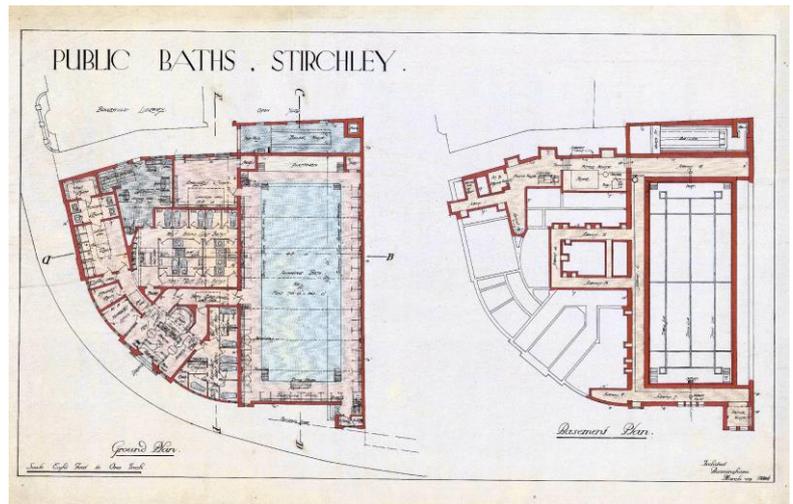
Around Stirchley Baths you will find evidence of the building's history. There are memories written on the walls, photographs, old notices and objects to find. There are also shapes, patterns and original details on the building for you to spot.

Use the original architect's plan to help you explore the building. The plans were drawn up in 1909; what has changed since then?

You do not have to do this activity in order, but you should go into each area.

Let's Explore!

Entrance Foyer

1. Look at the architectural plan. Has anything changed in the physical layout of the area since 1911?

2. Where did Edna live?

3. How much did it cost for a first class private slipper bath for an adult male in 1911?

(FACT: The letter 'd' means 'penny' in old money. The answer is equivalent to 2.5p in new money. If you could afford a first class ticket it probably meant you were wealthier than most. As a first class ticket holder you may have got extra hot water, more time, more privacy and a towel.)

4. How much did it cost for a girl's second class swim?

(FACT: The answer is equivalent to less than 0.5p in new money. If you bought a second class ticket you might have only been able to swim later in the week when the water was a bit grubbier! First class would have swum after it was first cleaned of course!).

Look just outside the front doors.

5. What date was Stirchley Baths built?

(FACT: It was the Cadbury Brothers who gave the council the land and money to build the public baths on this spot.)

Face the ticket kiosk and look at the plans.

6. Who would have used the left hand door?

Corridor towards the café

Look for the black and white photograph.

1. What are people doing in the swimming pool?

2. If they were not dancing on water, what were they dancing on?

3. What did the man's girlfriend become?

(FACT: During WWII and in the winter months of 1940s and 50s they used to have regular dances here – it was advertised as Stirchley Ballroom.)

Café

1. Where can you find the gold hand?

2. What year did they give up digging to find water?

(FACT: This was the first swimming pool in the whole of Birmingham that was on the mains supply of water, rather than taking water from a well.)

3. What years were the two ceremonial keys presented?

(FACT: The Baths closed down in 1988 as parts were structurally unsafe. The Council did not have the money to repair them. The building stood empty and in a state of disrepair for 28 years and re-opened on one of these dates as a community hub.)

4. Look at the map – if you live in the area, can you find your house, or your school?

5. What did they have in the Baths that they did not have at home?

6. Use the architectural plan to see what was originally on the site of the café. What would have been directly below you in the basement?

7. According to the plans, next to the café is a kitchen, what would that area have been originally used for?

8. Who would have used the washing baths located in what is now called the Cinema Room?

Corridors to Main Hall

1. How much did it cost for a bar of soap and a bath?

2. From here, can you use the plans to locate where the Ladies First Class Baths would have been? What is there today?

3. Can you find the room called the Large Community Room? What originally would you have been stood in, according to the plans?

Main Hall

1. Name two types of ballroom dance you could do on top of the swimming pool.

2. How many lengths of the pool did the person (Paul) swim daily?

3. If he worked here 5 days a week, how many lengths did he swim each week?

4. According to the plan what were the original measurements of the swimming pool? Is it the same length today? What has changed in the layout of the building?

5. Look up at the changing cubicles. Are these the only ones they had here when the pool first opened? According to the plan, where else were the changing cubicles?

Did you get all the answers right?