

I wonder how many residents of Dore are unaware that there is a heated outdoor public swimming pool only 7 miles away at Hathersage – quite a lot from my experience.

It is, perhaps, surprising to find a village with a population of less than 2,000 that has a large (33m x 10m) public swimming pool but Hathersage is just such a village.

In the 1930's a local business man and philanthropist, Mr George Lawrence, gave a number of gifts to the village, tennis courts, a bowling green, a bandstand, an additional hall at the village War Memorial Hall, the laying out and equipping of a playing field, £5,000 towards building a Methodist Chapel, and, in 1936, a swimming pool.

Mr Lawrence was a self made man who started his working life as a newspaper seller and ultimately came to own one of Sheffield's most successful razor blade manufacturing companies, George H Lawrence Ltd who produced the well known "Laurel" blades.

He was a committed Christian who took an interest in the welfare of his employees. At the time of the Sheffield blitz he was at home in Hathersage but felt that he should go to his factory and check on the safety of his employees, taking with him food and drink. Unfortunately the premises received a hit killing 9 of the 13 who were in it, including Mr Lawrence.

His gifts to the village all survive, although the tennis courts have been converted to an all purpose, all weather recreational area on which other games as well as tennis can be played.

At the beginning of the war the swimming pool was requisitioned by the government, although for what purpose it is not clear, but by April 1940 it had been de-requisitioned and was being prepared for reopening. Over the years the pool has, at times, proved to be something of a double edged sword, providing not only excellent recreational facilities but considerable funding problems. In the autumn of 1947 the pools finances were reported as being in "dire straits" with £100 required by the following March to keep the pool open. This was apparently raised as the pool remained open, but over the following years there were constant financial difficulties with the threat of imminent closure ever present. Meetings were called to consider the levying of an additional rate to finance the pool and to consider permanent closure. The threat of closure was eventually alleviated in the mid 1950's by a group of volunteers who gave their time and expertise to save costs.

In the early 1980s Derbyshire Dales District Council (in whose area Hathersage lies) agreed to give financial assistance to the pool and since then High Peak Borough Council, whose area abuts Hathersage, have also contributed. With these contributions the pool's future now looks secure.

The pool today is very different from its early days when Health & Safety was largely unheard and only one lifeguard was employed; the water was heated by means of a coke boiler which was not capable of raising the water temperature above 18°C (65°F) although a period of hot sunny weather could raise the temperature as high as 20°C (68°F); the shower had cold water only; the pool was only open from Whitsuntide until the first Saturday in September and admission charges (in 1950) were 1s 3d (6p) for adults and 4d (1.5p) for children (no reduced prices for the elderly).

Nowadays there are at least three lifeguards at the pool at all times, a gas boiler keeps the pool water at approximately 28°C (82°F), the showers have heated water and the pool is open from the Saturday before Easter until the end of September. Admission prices have increased to £4.40 for adults, £2.20 for children and £3.00 for seniors with a family ticket priced at £11.00. Season tickets giving an unlimited number of swims during the season are available for regular swimmers.

Over the last few years the Parish Council and local people have raised over £100,000 to replace the 1936 changing facilities and install new toilets. Fund raising continues and further refurbishment is planned. Hathersage swimming pool is one of a rapidly dwindling number of outdoor pools. The Parish Council is determined to keep it open to give local residents and visitors alike the opportunity to experience outdoor swimming, a pleasant experience in almost all weathers with a water temperature of 28°. Indeed swimming on dull or even wet days when there are not as many swimmers as on hot sunny days can be most enjoyable.

When not in the water visitors can relax on the lawned area next to the pool or partake of refreshments from the café.

More details, including opening times, can be found on the Parish Council's website, www.hathersage-outseats.org.uk, on www.hathersageswimmingpool.co.uk or by phoning the pool on 01433 650843.