

## **Q1: How did Leamington develop into a typical spa town of the mid nineteenth century?**

A typical spa town is known to be a place where mainly wealthy people would come to consume the towns spa water as a laxative. After taking the water the people would take a long stroll along the main street known as the “parade” or “promenade” or maybe go to the gardens to find suitable marriage partners.

To be given the proud name of a “spa town” the town would need to have all these essentials; firstly the most important is the own supply of water in the form of springs, wells and numerous baths and the pump rooms. The entertainment facilities would have to include a theatre and assembly rooms. There would need to be walkways and a main street along with gardens. There would have to be Georgian/Palladian/Regency architecture on all the main streets. Because spa towns would have attracted a lot of tourism there would need to be many houses to accommodate everyone, that would usually be found in circuses, crescents, squares and terraces. There would also be a need for grand hotels. Churches would also be a main part of a spa town, as people would be religious, and of course good transport links.

All of this could never happen to a town without the odd determined people who invested their lives into making a town a successful spa town.

Before Royal Leamington Spa was transformed into a spa town it was initially known as Leamington Priors belonging to the Priory in Kenilworth. It was a tiny village consisting of 300 people and 67 houses until the era of the 1800's. The land, in 1529, got passed between numerous nobles, landowners and crowns. The spring waters were first acknowledged in 1586 in the Camden Records, when it wasn't that significant, the water was described as cold and salty, but towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century spa towns were becoming increasingly famous and fashionable. It wasn't until 1786 that two friends William Abbots and Benjamin Satchwell discovered a site of a new spring called the Abbot's Saline Baths, which was later to be Smith's Baths. Over the next few years an increasingly large amount of springs were being established, some on Bath Street, High Street and Clemens Street, these were all to the south of the River Leam, and the only spring that was found north of the river was the Pump Rooms in 1810. Because Leamington was beginning to attract many tourists' grand architectural buildings and hotels had to be constructed to accommodate the large amount of people arriving everyday, and to persuade them to stay longer.

Between 1800 and 1850 Leamington grew drastically as before it became a spa town there were only 300 inhabitants but towards the end of the transformation there were more than 15,000.

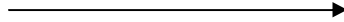
### **Springs & Wells:**

The first spring found in Leamington was in a small pond outside All Saints Church in 1480. It was named Aylesford Well owned by Lord Aylesford. He supplied people of Leamington with this special water. He charged 1d (1p) for people to take the water inside the church, but it was free to the poor outside. This was an endless supply of water. Many more people so the potential this water had on people and how it could make Leamington famous as well as themselves and they wanted the chance to make some money, but Lord Aylesford didn't want to develop any further and so left the others to exploit the land, he believed the water should be free to everyone to drink.

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The water was known to be able to cure many disorder such as; stiffness of tendons, rigidity of the joints, the effects of gout and rheumatism and various paralytic conditions.

**The back of the All Saints Parish Church in Leamington Spa.**



In Bath there are the only hot springs in Britain at the constant temperature of 46°C providing Bath with 240,000 gallons of hot sulphurous water everyday. The Romans founded the first spring before their empire collapsed leaving everything in ruins. It was established in 43ad called the Roman Spring “Aqua Sulis” The water was thought to be able to heal many illnesses, for example; rheumatism, arthritis, diseases of the liver and a wide variety of skin problems.

In Cheltenham the first spring was founded in 1718 where the Princess Hall, Cheltenham Ladies’ College is now situated. A well was dug near the spring named the Original Well or Old Well or Royal Well or Kings Well. There were also a few more wells created nearby. There was the Sherbourne Well, the Montpellier Spa founded in 1809, and the Imperial Spa in 1817.

From all the above it is notable that the transformation of a small town into a splendid spa town in the 1800's relied on its own distinguished supply of water, which was believed to be water that cleans the body of any foul substances and to help cure or heal any disorders of the body, which attracted people to come and take the waters for themselves.

Leamington was supplied with an endless amount of salty sulphurous cold water, Bath has hot sulphurous water supplied at 240,000 gallons a day, and Cheltenham had natural alkaline water containing sulphates of magnesium and sodium. Cheltenham's supply of water was unpredictable, as it would sometimes dry up. This prevented it from doing as well as Leamington Spa or Bath.

### **Baths:**

There were many baths created towards the south of The River Leam in Leamington due to the facts that this was the route of the main London to Warwick road and the stagecoaches passed through this way, and the land on the south side of the river is limestone and so it makes it easier for the water to rise up and the spring water is easy to find when digging down.

William Abbot and Benjamin Satchwell were two of many people who tried to succeed Leamington as a splendid spa town. They were both the founders of "Abbott's Saline Baths" later to be known as "Smiths Baths" in 1784, which was built in 1786 in Bath Street.

The next bath to be built was called "Wise's Baths" later "Curtis's Baths" in 1790. It was built on land owned by Mathew Wise of Shrubland Hall. There were a further 13 baths built on the same location. All were demolished in 1850 due to the construction of a new railway bridge. More and more springs were found towards the south of the river.

Robbins's Well and Read's Well opened in the same year the pump rooms did, but on the other side of the river. And the last major bath to be opened on the south side of the river was called Smart's Marble Baths on Clemens Street.

In Bath there are three main baths; Kings Baths, Cross Baths and Hot Baths. The vicinity that these were all accommodated was left derelict and became silted after the withdrawal of the Romans, until 1090 when John de Villula built the Kings Baths in aid of the sick. The water would rise to 250,000 gallons a day at a perpetual temperature of 46.5°C.

The second bath was known as the Cross Bath, the rich and noble favoured it. Those who bathed here were usually serenaded while in their swimming costumes. It was famous due to the fact that before Queen Mary came and bathed in these baths she was infertile, but more about that later.

The last famous bath was the Hot Baths allocated between the pump rooms and Kings Baths on Bath Street- a street where bathers could pass between the pump rooms and the Kings Baths.

In Cheltenham there weren't any baths due to the results of the water constantly drying up.

Baths were one of the main features of a spa town, as people would come and cleanse their bodies in this "blessed" water.

Bath would have gained the most tourism due to Queen Mary becoming pregnant after bathing in the waters of the Cross Bath.

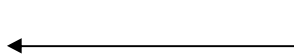
Cheltenham, would have lost out tremendously as their water was always drying up, therefore no baths were constructed

## **Pump Rooms:**

The Pump Rooms was the only spring found north of the river in 1810 on land belonging to Bertie Greatheed, “The Royal Pump Room and Baths” designed and built by Charles Samuel Smith was opened in July 1814, it was given it’s full name in 1815.



**A picture of The Royal Pump Rooms & Baths in Leamington Spa**



The founding of water on the north side of the river was a great accomplishment and the focus of the town now changed to the north side, leaving the south side to decline. To reimburse the south tried many new ways to entice the tourists back by developing and building more, but they couldn’t compete with the north. They built Ranelegh gardens, which also went into decline.

In Bath the pump rooms were opened in 1706 due to the need for a social centre, a although it was replaced in 1790 to form the present Roman temple style Pump Rooms. When coming to the Pump Rooms people were advised to drink three glasses of the water to cleanse the bodies.

Henry Skillicorne between the years of 1736 and 1748 deepened a well, and attached a pumping system and built the pump rooms over the original well. It was named the Pittville Pump Rooms after Joseph Pitt to rival Cheltenham between 1825-30.

Pump Rooms also played an important role in a typical spa town, as these singled the town out from any other town, it gave the vicinity a special building for social gatherings, and to take the special waters, which supposedly purified the body.

### **Assembly Rooms:**

Leamington Spa had two assembly rooms, an Upper Assembly room where Woodwards is now situated on the corner of the Parade and Regent Street and the Lower Assembly rooms – Parthenon is now Iceland on Bath Street. The Upper Assembly rooms were built in 1812 it used to hold balls, concerts, Billiards/Cards and reading. The Lower Assembly rooms were built in 1821 where people would go to be entertained for example; there would be balls held there and concerts, and lectures. In 1873 it was transformed into a public library.

The New Assembly Rooms, in Bath, cost £20,000 to build in 1771, it contained glorious rooms for balls, card games, tea and concerts. It is known as the “Upper Rooms”, so they are distinguished from the old assembly rooms in the lower part of town. John Wood the younger designed the advanced set of public rooms. People would gather here to dance, listen to music, drink, play card games or merely walk, talk and flirt. The chandeliers are to be known as one of the finest quality in the world.

The first assembly rooms, in Cheltenham, were built by Thomas Hughes in 1783.

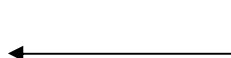
Assembly Rooms were an absolute essential in an archetypal spa town, as those who came to visit needed a splendid place to be entertained in the evenings. They were the life and soul of the nightlife. The assembly rooms in Leamington have now been replaced with shops, but in Bath The New Assembly Rooms still stand as they did over 300 years ago, for more tourists to see where people used to go to have a good time.

### **Gardens & Walks:**

There are numerous walkways and public gardens in Leamington including; Newbold Gardens later to be known as Jephson Gardens in aid of Dr Jephson who came to Leamington Spa in 1819 and helped the town to become more famous and fashionable.



**Jephson Gardens in Royal Leamington Spa**



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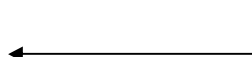
There are the Pump Room Gardens, which were created in 1810, Victoria Park, the Monkey Run and Holly Walk and Ranelegh Gardens. The Monkey Run consisted of a walkway of trees on Lindon Avenue with Iron archways, which symbolised the monkey run.

Bath also has three main places to go for walks. Orange Grove, The Parade Gardens and the Royal Victoria Park. Orange Grove was originally known as Gravel Walks, but due to a visit from Prince William of Orange in 1734 it was renamed. The Parade Gardens provided strollers with a beautiful view of the parade and Pulteney Weir and were right by the main promenade in Bath, The North Parade Road. The Royal Victoria Park was named after the 11yr old Princess Victoria.

There were again three main walkways in Cheltenham as there are in Bath. These include Well Walk, Montpellier Walk and Imperial Gardens. Henry Skillicorne completed a walkway lined with lime and elm trees called Well Walk. The walkway was laid out next to the Pump Rooms. Montpellier Walk had many shop fronts, which were divided by statues. They were designed in 1840. This would have given the walkway a much stronger architectural feel to it, and the visitors town would have really enjoyed spending their time studying them. Below is a picture of the Imperial Gardens. It is very similar to Jephson Gardens in Leamington Spa, as there is much greenery for people to see, and a quiet place to relax.



The Imperial Gardens in Cheltenham.

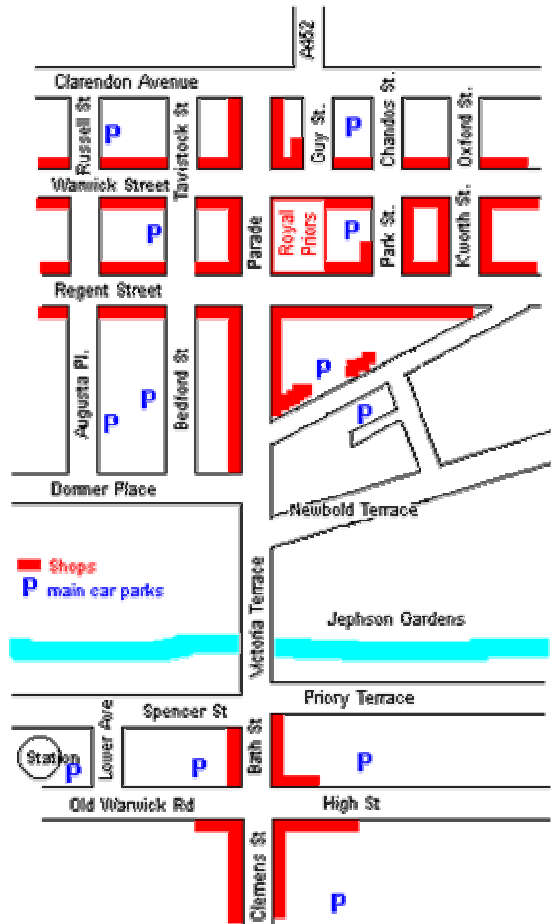


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The Gardens and walkways in a spa town are essential because after consuming the water, people enjoyed taking walks around the town, and the gardens needed to be spectacular soothe tourists would enjoy their stay and come back again.

### Main Street/Promenade:

There is one main street in Leamington, which is the parade; this is the place where the young, hopeful women would stroll after taking the waters to find suitable husbands.



A street map of Royal Leamington Spa

Whereas Leamington only had one main street Bath had four; Grand Parade, North Parade, South Parade and the Queens Parade. The parades were also very much vital as these were the streets the young and hopeful could search for their marriage partners. Gentry would also come to Cheltenham and stroll along the Promenade and the Montpellier for marriage hopefuls.



The parades or promenades were the essential roads for seeking husbands or wives. These streets would be used to stroll along in your finest clothing and try to tempt others into marriage. The architecture on these streets would be very elegant and stylish so to fit in with the wealthy peoples manner.

### **Important Individuals & Developers:**

There were many important people involved in the developing of Leamington Spa, including Lord Aylesford, Benjamin Satchwell, William Abbotts, Bertie Greatheed and the Willes family.

Both William Abbotts and Benjamin Satchwell were responsible for the commercialising of the spa water so people all over the country new of the of the water and would come to taste it. Lord Aylesford on the other hand was dead against the commercialising of the water and thought it best to leave the water to be free for everyone, but things didn't work out for his idea.

Bertie Greatheed was the man who owned the land north of the river where the spring was found and the pump rooms built on them. He wanted to take advantage of the growing popularity of the town. This wouldn't have happened if he didn't have the backing from important men such as bankers and businessmen

The Willes family also contributed tremendously for the development of Leamington as they donated land for Jephson Gardens and Holly Walk to be built.

There were two main men who helped the development of Bath, Richard "Beau" Nash and Ralph Allen.

If it wasn't for the arrival of Richard Nash in 1704, Bath may not have been what it is today. He was professional gambler with a renowned past. He recognised Baths potential, but the spa resort needed to be more sophisticated and entertaining if it were to stay in fashion.

In 1705 Richard was appointed Master of Ceremonies. In this new role he was given, he introduced new higher standards of polite behaviour and encouraged better facilities for visitors. He made sure that every street was lit and cleaned, that promenades were laid out and assembly rooms were constructed as well as a pump rooms.

He banned rowdy old customs such as cock fighting and bull baiting, as they weren't seen to be in a polite society.

Ralph Allen was the man who was able to reform the postal service. With the hefty profits he made, he enhanced the river navigation and made quarrying of pale Bath stone at Claverton and Combe Down. This stone was perfect for Bats architect John Wood.



There were many people who gave their lives to help the development of Cheltenham into a spa town, a few of them are included; Henry Skillicorne, Thomas Hughes, William Skillicorne, Henry Thompson and Joseph Pitt.

Henry Skillicorne came to Cheltenham in 1738 and married the daughter of the well owner and decided to exploit the water commercially. Between 1738 and 1742 he

deepened the well and installed a pumping system. He built the pump rooms over it, and built a billiard and ballroom above it. He also laid out Well Walk lined with elm trees. William Skillicorne builds on his father's ideas and built more buildings near the well.

Thomas Hughes built the assembly rooms in 1783.

In 1809 Henry Thompson developed the Montpellier Spa. There were the Pittville Pump rooms built in competition with the Montpellier Spa created by Joseph Pitt. He had planned to build 600 houses, but ran out of money.

For a town to be able to take the big transformation into a spa town, it needed willing individuals who put their lives into trying to make their town the best spa town around. If it weren't for these people, springs wouldn't have been found, so baths couldn't have been created so there would have been no need for main streets with fancy architecture. If it wasn't for these individuals, today we may not even now of a "spa town".

### **Important Doctors:**

Leamington had two main doctors who encouraged the taking of the spa waters.

These were Dr Jephson and Dr Hitchman.

Dr Jephson arrived in Leamington in 1828, his motive was to keep spa towns prosper. He attracted a lot of wealthy people to come and take the waters and take a long walk along the main streets to cleanse and to stay healthy. Jephson Gardens was built in his name to thank him for his constant hardwork to make Leamington a noble spa town. Dr Hitchman also helped Leamington develop, he used to write guide books and explained that spa water from Leamington would help to heal many disorders, he used to describe the elaborate architectural work on all the streets and how the buildings were all set out.

There was one main doctor in Bath called Dr Oliver. He invented some biscuits called "Bath Oliver Biscuits"; these supposedly helped those who overindulged in rich foods.

Dr Short and Dr Lucas were tow main doctors in Cheltenham during the transformation to a spa town. Dr Short concluded in 1740 that the water of Cheltenham was the best in the country.

Dr Lucas came up with numerous treatments for diseases that the water could heal.

### **Hospitals:**

There was only one main hospital that was set up in Leamington Spa called Warneford General Hospital.

In Bath there was the Royal Mineral Water Hospital for both the rich and poor alike. There was a deposit of £3 to pay on entry. It was here that Dr Oliver prescribed his biscuits.

In Cheltenham there was the Victoria Hygiene House.

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Hospitals were very important because when the ill went to hospitals, it was drummed into the patients head that the spa water would help them to get better, and so most patients were treated by been given the spa water and told to do a little exercise.

### **Theatres & Entertainment:**

As well as the upper and lower assembly rooms, Leamington had numerous other facilities, which kept the visitors entertained. There was the Theatre Royal on Bath Street, Clarendon Street Theatre, and the Steeple Chase founded by Jack Myton Wager.

Bath had much the same as Leamington did, they had a Theatre Royal along with “Garrick’s Head” pub, was originally the home of Beau Nash. Next door lived his mistress Juliana Popjoy, who he went to live with as he lost everything on a turn of a card.



This is now Theatre Royal in Bath. Once was Beau Nash’s Home.

Cheltenham the same as Bath and Leamington Spa also had a Theatre Royal.

## **Hotels:**

Every fashionable spa town needed a splendid hotel to accommodate wealthy visitors, these hotels had to be top class as they would have to impress the visitors, which would make them come back.

Leamington had many grand hotels including; New Inn opened in 1786 by William Abbotts on the corner of Bath Street, it was later known as Bath Hotel.

Bedford Hotel was opened in 1811, it once stood in the place of Midlands Bank, and it was one of Jack Myton Wagers creations.

The Regent Hotel named after the Prince Regent who paid a visit. It was completed in 1819, with 100 bedrooms and 1 bathroom.



Copps Royal Hotel was opened in 1827 with 100 beds, it stabled 50 horses, could hold 40 carriages. It was demolished in 1847 to make way for the new railway bridge over Clemens Street.

Manor House Hotel was first used as a hotel in 1847 it changed its identity to a school then a hotel again.



The last hotel was the Crown Hotel on the High Street it was converted from a parish vicarage to a hotel.

Bath and Cheltenham didn't have as many distinguished hotels like Leamington did, this may have held them back, as there would have been a great need for many grand hotels if the spa town was to expect wealthy visitors.

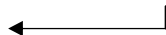
## **Architecture & Architects:**

Many houses towards the end of the 18th century would usually be situated in crescents, circuses, terraces and squares.

A few examples in Leamington are Lansdowne Crescent, Lansdowne Circus, Clarendon Square and Newbold Terrace.



Lansdowne Crescent



Bath has much the same allocation of houses; here is a picture of Royal Crescent and Circus:

Cheltenham again has much the same architecture as Bath and Leamington, but they have slightly more streets that are laid out as circuses, crescents, square and terraces. They have a Suffolk Square Lansdowne Crescent, Royal Crescent Clarendon Square Royal Crescent Wellington Square and Imperial Square.

A typical building of the end of the 18th century would have had 3 or 4 storeys with either a triangular, segmental or flat topped pediment.

The first floor windows would be Sash windows, which are in two halves that either could have been pushed up or pushed down. The second floor windows would have been Casement/French windows that would have been pushed outwards to let air into the room.

Every regency building would have had columns or capitols with either a Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, Tuscan or Composite style.

The veranda or canopy of the house would have usually been made of lead sheets supported by iron. The typical regency steps would have been lipped or curved projecting forward. Next to the door there would be a boot scraper that would remove mud from shoes.

The front door would be made from solid oak with a glass fan light over the door to let light into the hallway, a brass door knocker would be in the centre, it would generally have a lions head on it.

There would be no letterbox as all mail would be hand delivered.

The typical regency ironwork on the railing tops would be Arrowhead, Spearhead or Fleur de Lys

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Most of the houses would be white from the front, Bath had no problem with this as they could make white stone, but Leamington couldn't and so used something called Plaster Stucco to give it that white effect.

Architects would concentrate on making the front of the houses look more appealing as that is where everyone would be looking; they left the backs without and plaster stucco on it







These buildings all had to be designed by some very talented architects, who were willing to make their town succeed as a splendid spa resort.

In Leamington it was all down to C.S Smith for producing such magnificent architectural buildings. But it was William Thomas who designed Lansdowne Crescent and Circus.

Bath's main architects were John Wood the elder and his son. John Wood the elder planned Queens Square in 1729, Royal Crescent in 1767 and Royal Circus in 1704 and his son carried on his work and created the Assembly Rooms in 1767.

Without these talented architects Bath, Cheltenham and Leamington Spa, would never had such beautiful buildings to entice people to the town. These were an absolute essential to the transformation of the town because they relied on the architects to produce such huge, magnificent buildings to capture visitors to make them stay longer.

### **Important Visitors:**

It was all down to the important visitors to make a spa resort famous, because if there was a rumour that a famous person was seen at a certain place, people would flock to that area to see for themselves what is so enticing here that made that special person come.

Leamington had numerous famous people come to visit the greatest visitor to Leamington was Princess Victoria who stayed at The Regent Hotel. Napoleon III came and bought a house on Clarendon Square for his family to live in, and he also bought the house right next door for his servants to stay. Leamington had continuous visits from Charles Dickens who would come and deliver lectures at the assembly rooms. Leamington Spa was renamed Royal Leamington Spa on 19<sup>th</sup> July 1838 due to a visit from royalty.

Bath had a lot of royalty who came to visit the town including Queen Anne who was thought to be infertile, but after bathing in the waters of the Cross Bath conceived and gave the King an heir to the throne. Prince William of Orange visited and Gravel Walk was renamed Orange Grove in respect to the Prince. Queen Mary and Princess Victoria also are some royalty who visited the town.

Cheltenham didn't receive as many royal visits as Leamington and Bath did, but they did get a visit from George III and Queen Charlotte in the 1780's.

### **Conclusion:**

The main factor that helped Leamington Spa convert from a normal tiny village to a magnificent spa town with its glorious architecture was the important individuals who gave up most of their time and money to invest into making this town succeed as a spa resort.

Without the help of Lord Aylesford, William Abotts and Benjamin Satchwell, Dr Jephson, Dr Hitchman and C.S Smith maybe the place we live in today might have still been that tiny village over 500 years ago.

The doctors are mostly to thank because they were the ones that the population listened to saying that spa water is great to clean the body of harmful substances.

I also think that if it wasn't for the important and famous people who visited Leamington may not have been as big as it is today, because back in the day when spa towns were fashionable people would usually flock to the places that important people went to see what was there to make those famous people go.