

Harlow to K2 and beyond

A voluntary, national project to record the story of the UK community sports and leisure centre

Sponsored by S+P, International Sports and Leisure Architects

Giant jigsaw of centres coming together

The Sports Leisure Legacy Project is like a giant jigsaw picture, with all the pieces coming together piece by piece. Billingham Forum, which opened on Teesside in 1967, has been at the centre of some recent and valuable project contacts. Conscious of its significance to the story of early 1960s centres, we contacted Gordon Bates, Chairman of Tees Active. As a result we were able to make contact with Geoff Bott, the first Forum Director, and his then deputy John Williams (who subsequently became Manager of the first UK leisure pool at Bletchley). This then led us to Griff Jones, one of the 'few' as Manager at Oldham in 1966 and later the first manager of Bletchley and John's predecessor, and then on to Alan Burridge, one of the first Watford Sports Centre managers, later of the Sports Council. See more details of some of these early managers on the initial website due soon.

The project aims to cover each decade – so we are still in search of facts and stories about centres for every decade from 'Harlow to K2 and Beyond'. A small selection of visits is also planned during the year to centres old and new to add perspective to the story. To achieve a first class record it is vital that we assemble the most salient facts, photos and examples. To this end we have recruited a volunteer researcher – Liam Goodley, of Inspire Leisure, who will assist in research and copy writing.

Send any information to liam@lrinternational.co.uk

Architects to the fore

A great source of information for the Project is those architect firms that have spanned most of the 6 decades. As well as our esteemed sponsor, we have been in touch with FaulknerBrowns and Saunders. Indeed the well-known Bill Stonor, a key player for FB for over 50 years, has provided a splendid decade by decade profile of the centres FB designed.

Tales of the unexpected...

Catering and Bars have figured prominently on the sports & leisure centre scene across the decades. It has itself been an interesting facet. Much has changed over the years with vending playing a significant but not exclusive role. Sports halls also lent themselves to big functions. Tell us your experiences!



The first Carlisle Sports Centre 1969 - converted drill halls were amongst the first centres



Bletchley Leisure Centre 1973 – the UK's first leisure pool



Crowtree Leisure Centre 1977 – Europe's largest public centre with 2M annual visitors. Sadly demolished in 2014



Catterick Leisure Centre [MOD] 2009 – typical of some new multi-agency centres

STOP PRESS

Initial Website

The Project's initial promotional website is due to go live in a few weeks. The full story on the website is planned to be completed by the end of the year.

Special features in planning

In addition to the main record in 12 chapters additional features are planned for the final website –

- 100 Game Changers to record significant contributors to UK sports & leisure centres [nominations invited]
- 'Centres of the Decade' listings
- '6 Decades Photo Gallery'
- Architects' Choice

EDITORIAL PROTOCOL

For the smooth running of the project, an Editorial Protocol has been adopted to cover operational matters, including editorial content; copyright and ISBN registration.

The Sports Leisure Legacy Project is run through L&R International Management on an entirely voluntary basis