



The Hammam



The Ice Fountain

LEISURE PROJECT

TURKISH BATHS

At York Hall, London

CLIENT:

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

ARCHITECT:

ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN SERVICES LTD

COST:

£4,000,000

History

The Turkish Baths in York Hall (originally a starch factory) were first opened in 1929. A £4 million redevelopment programme by Greenwich Leisure Ltd with Tower Hamlets council has transformed the neo-Georgian brick building in Bethnal Green into a new multi-roomed spa and health treatment facility.

The First Turkish Baths

A traditional Turkish bath only uses wet heat. The water is heated in copper cauldrons built over a furnace. The steam from the cauldrons permeates the hot room, and the flue gases from the furnace run under the floor of the hot room and up through the walls.

The Rooms

The facility at York Hall consists of five treatment rooms, a central hammam, steam rooms, a series of dry rooms that increase in heat (the tepidarium, caldarium and laconium), monsoon showers, a plunge pool and an ice fountain.

Victorian Era

In the Victorian period baths equipped with both dry heat and wet heat rooms were first introduced to Britain. Such baths are referred to as Victorian Turkish Baths. In the 19th century, London is said to have housed more than 100 similar facilities.

Thermal Environment

The temperature in the hot rooms rises the deeper you go into the baths. The design temperature of the tepidarium is 50–71 °C, that of the caldarium is 71–82 °C and that of the laconicum is 82–104 °C. Electric heaters are used in the air handling equipment to attain the high temperatures. Steam generators are used for the steam rooms, and the plunge pool has a chiller to cool the water to 10 °C.