

Inspirational Stories – Tadcaster Swimming Pool Trust

The Background

Tadcaster Swimming Pool Trust was set up in 1992 by the residents of Tadcaster. The group included the head teacher from the Secondary School, a Doctor and a local business man. The main aim of the group was to establish a public swimming pool in the town. The need for a swimming pool was established by an annual questionnaire, where the residents highlighted a swimming pool as their number one priority for five years running.

The District Council had decided to open a swimming pool 15 miles away from Tadcaster, with a very limited bus service. This frustrated the residents and the members of the group, so they decided to set up the Trust without the support of the District Council.



Tadcaster is a brewery town and is home to three breweries, Sam Smiths, John Smiths (Heineken) and Coors. The three organisations are the main employers in the town and own the majority of land and buildings in the area. The Swimming Pool group had contacts within these organisations and started to alert them to the cause. All of the breweries were really interested in the scheme and wanted to be part of the plans. The breweries came forward and gave money, land and materials to get the project off the ground. The group worked with a brewery architect to help manage the planning and building of the facility. The building was originally a limestone barn and was updated and modified to become a swimming pool. The cost of the build was £2 million.

The Trust

The ethos of the Trust was always to be operated and managed by volunteers and to be a charitable organisation. The Trust knew that this was an unusual decision but they had the confidence that the residents would pull together to help operate the facility.

The group who had first started to raise awareness about a pool in Tadcaster had now formed the Trust and became the Trustees. The Trustees understood that a small number of paid staff would need to be employed to co-ordinate and manage the volunteers. The Trustees needed a specialist manager who had experience working with volunteers within the leisure industry. They appointed a manager who relocated to Tadcaster.



The manager was in his post nine months before the facility opened to help with the project. Although the role involved on site supervision of the build the main role was to raise awareness of the voluntary roles required when the facility was open.

A recruitment drive started by establishing what roles were required and what qualifications were needed. Leaflets, letters and presentations were delivered to the residents of Tadcaster and the surrounding villages to help fill the roles. The response was fantastic and volunteers came forward to fulfil roles such as receptionists, lifeguards, gardeners and IT staff. The volunteer lifeguards were trained at a local ladies prison and were qualified by the time the facility was open. The manager recruited another six members of salaried staff to assist with the operation of the building. They all had specialist skills such as a Swimming Development officer, Fitness Manager and staff with Pool Plant qualifications.

Evolution

The facility was finally opened on 10th December 1994 and consisted of the following:

- 25m x 13m Main Pool
- 12m x 7m Teaching Pool
- 16 Station Fitness Suite
- A social area for meetings and parties

In the first three years the Trust organised a support fund from the town council until the customer base had been established. After the first three years the Trust received no ongoing support from any grant organisation or the District Council.

The Trust launched an apprentice scheme which recruited and trained local young people. The scheme has been so successful that it still operates today. The apprentices complete training and qualifications on everything from lifeguarding, swimming teaching, fitness instructor and pool plant operations, as well as the day to day running of the facility. The majority of apprentices have moved up through the positions at Tadcaster Pool and have then gone on to manage their own facilities.

Key Issues

The Trust continued to operate making a small surplus until 2007 when there was a tile failure in the main pool. The tiles had lifted from the main pool floor and the water ripped through the rest of the bed, lifting the remaining tiles. The facility closed until an investigation took place. The outcome was that the concrete screed had been put down incorrectly and had air pockets. The tiles had then been laid onto this surface masking the fault. The experts were unsure why the tiles lifted 13 years later, but said it could have been a slight shift in the concrete bed.

The estimation costs for the work to be completed were £150,000 and would take approximately three months to complete. This involved the removal of all the tiles and



concrete screed in the main pool, then everything had to be put back in place and water tested. The insurance company would not pay out as they said it was a latent building defect which had been in place from day one! The original building firm were not in business anymore so a claim couldn't be made against them. This left the Trust to find £150,000 to get the facility open again. Unfortunately some redundancies were made and only four members of the management team were kept on to start the fundraising process.

Fundraising

The Trust set its sights on raising the money through various events and grant applications. The main fundraising event was the 'Sponsor a tile' appeal. The main pool contained 10,000 tiles and each tile was sold for £5 each. People from the entire region came forward to put their name to a tile. The tiles were sold in three months and along with grant money from Sport England, Selby District council and other local companies, the money was raised for the work to start. The facility was closed for eight months and it affected other businesses in the town as they saw a fall in business. The whole community came together and completed fun runs, car boot sales and even bake sales. It clearly showed that the whole town depended on and valued the facility.

Since the tile failure in 2007 the Trust had to rebuild the staff team and volunteer base. All but one of the salaried staff were re-recruited and the team of volunteers came back to the pool. The Trust re-opened in February 2008 and had to build up its customer base again. The Trust continued to build up the attendances and in 2012 achieved their best year ever.

Key Achievements

- Architecture and lighting awards
- 18 years of operation without any ongoing financial support
- 110 volunteers who help operate the facility
- Re-opening after the tile failure
- Approved training centre for lifeguard and swimming teacher training
- Aquamark/swim21 awards for our lesson scheme and swim squad
- 950 children on the swimming lessons each week
- Provide discounted swimming lessons for seven schools in the area
- Award winning apprentice scheme
- Duke of York winners
- Provide swimming and fitness facilities from 7am – 10pm every day.



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