



"Los Baños" Archaeological Museum was inaugurated on the 24th of May 2005 as an Archaeological Centre and was recognized as a Museum on the 10th of May 2008. Its creation had as principal objective to preserve and protect the archaeological remains of Alhama's Baths. Their recovery and valued enhancement has brought together important contributions to the study of hydrotherapy and its architecture in different periods of its history.

The thermal complex has been reconstructed through a series of excavation and restoration projects, that took place in the 1990's and is related to the environment of San Lazaro Church and the Castle. These projects have created a collection of monuments that

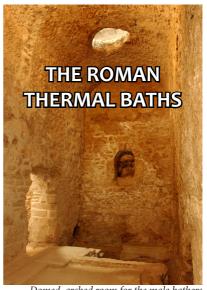
integrate a modern building, a garden with water as the main attraction and the remains of the baths as an onsite museum. In the museum, it is possible to find on display a selection of archaeological artefacts, composed of different pieces from archaeological excavations in Alhama. These materials bring us closer to different cultures from the First Century BC until the 1930's.

The architecture constitutes an example of conservation of the patrimony, the remains show a complex of Roman rooms, reused in the Islamic and Christian period, until the construction of the new hotel - spa in the 19th century. The archaeological remains were declared a Historic - Artistic Monument of National Character (B.I.C) in 1983.

In the first century AD, the Romans built an important thermal complex that would be used until the fourth century, thanks to the thermal springs that flowed at the foot of the Castle. The material culture of this period, glasses, plates, coins, ornaments, etc. show us the splendour of Iberian and Roman settlements in this area.

The thermal baths were probably one of the Roman's favourite leisure places, to bathe, to have massages, to talk, take exercise, etc. to achieve the wellbeing of body and spirit.

The most relevant of Alhama's



Domed, arched room for the male bathers

thermal baths lies in the existence of a complex with two different areas: one of them for recreational use and the



other for the medicinal bath, with separated spaces for each sex. In the first of them the common bathrooms of the Roman world with the gradual change of temperature have been conserved (except the apodyterium or changing room which has disappeared). The other rooms were brought together with restored original structures from 2000 years ago: the cool room (frigidarium), warm room (tepidarium), heated room (caldarium) and the swimming pool. The rooms received the heat through an oven (praefurnium) from which the warmed air circulated under the flooring and through the walls by means of cameras of air.

The second area is the most important and consists of two domed rooms of great monumentality (influence), that are the centre of the complex, with a common swimming pool and skylights in each, to

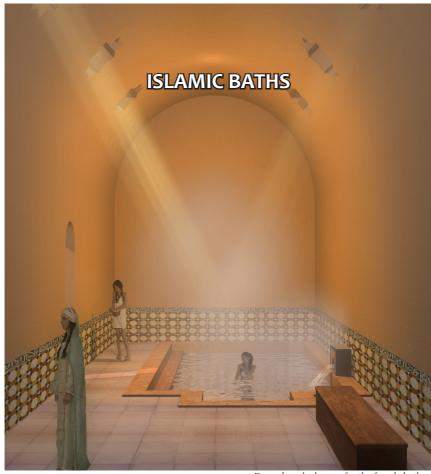


A Roman "jar" of Iberian tradition. 2nd to 3rd centuries AD

regulate the lighting and temperature of the thermal environment. Other connecting apertures favoured keeping the same temperature in each room and boosting the healing effects of the waters.



Gnathia cup of the 3rd century BC



Domed, arched room for the female bathers

In the Islamic world, the bath (hammam), was a reflection of the splendour of the society, which fulfilled the religious obligatory rules of purification before the prayers. It also became a place of health and relaxation and a meeting place of conversation about personal and family life and other

social aspects.

In Alhama, following the tradition of Roman baths, the same domed spaces were reused, leaving archaeological evidence as the incorporation of new skylights on both sides of the vault to regulate the beneficial environment. These were next to the arched roof of the

female bath and over the Roman structures of the bath of leisure, which were recovered thanks to archaeological works undertaken in the first Islamic cemetery (maqbara) of the XII and XIII century.

The name of Alhama means thermal springs water (Hamma).



Flask. 9th century



Front of the Hotel-Spa. 19th century

At the end of the middle ages, the baths entered a phase of decline until the construction of the great Spa- Hotel complex in 1848. The building had three floors and was built over the domed area, adapting the ancient domed bathrooms and re-using again these spaces. In the basement area, there were located the bath rooms and modern facilities of showers, steam baths, different spa treatment and a public swimming pool separated from the rest of facilities of the private complex, destined as a bathing place for the poorest. In the other three floors there were the rooms, kitchens, dining rooms, social areas and all kinds of luxuries and comforts for the bathers.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, the modernisation of the villa and the Hotel - Spa enjoyed a deserved reputation which attracted bathers from the whole of Spain. Most notably were the visits of important personalities of high society or illustrious figures such as the Nobel D. Santiago Ramon y Cajal. In the 30s the splendour of the Spa was to be ended abruptly with the disappearance of the spring and the conversion of the building into a hospital during the Spanish Civil war. In the forties the building began deteriorating and became neglected until its demolition in 1972.

THE BATHS: NEW COLD? PLACES



Theatre, music, stories, exhibitions, recitals, meetings ... all these activities are part of the Cultural Programs that the Archaeological Museum organizes using a leisure space in a historic framework. The baths, occupied and reinvented by different cultures during more than 2.000 years of history, nowadays show the visitors of all ages a vision of the history of Alhama from the multiple points of view of culture and leisure.



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