How to prevent rust in water baths.

Clifton tanks as well as immersed parts, are made from type 304 stainless steel, an extremely versatile general purpose grade of stainless steel. It is the excellent forming characteristic that has made this grade dominant in the manufacture of laboratory and industrial water baths, as well as domestic sinks and saucepans. Type 304 stainless steel is highly suitable for applications where hygiene is important; it exhibits good heat resistance and excellent resistance to corrosion.

However, despite resistance to general surface corrosion, stainless steel is susceptible to specific types of corrosion, in particular pitting (small pin hole style corrosion) and stress corrosion cracking. It can also undergo general corrosion in specific environments, such as one containing hydrochloric or sulphuric acids.

Stainless steel is protected by its high content of alloying elements, primarily chromium and nickel. Chromium is the most important with respect to corrosion resistance, although the nickel assists in allowing the chromium to do its job. The chromium forms an oxide layer on the surface of the steel, which inhibits further oxidation. This layer adheres extremely well to the metal substrate, but it is essential that it remains intact, and must be protected from various forms of damage.

If the surface chromium oxide layer becomes damaged, oxygen present in water can partially reform the oxide layer, so it is advisable to ensure that water is always fresh and well oxygenated. Baths that will be out of use for an extended period should be emptied, and all moisture should be wiped from the bottom of the tank.

In some cases a brown layer may appear on the surface of a stainless steel tank. In most of these cases this is not rust, but it may be a surface deposit of minerals from the local water supply, or ferrous particles or salts that have fallen into the tank. These surface deposits can often be removed by using a household cleaner such as Duraglit or Silvo metal polish.