



Keeping Afloat

Join the Friends of
Moseley Road Baths!
Get involved!

www.friendsofmrb.co.uk
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National Lottery players make a splash!

In the latest piece of good news for Moseley Road Baths, the National Lottery Heritage Fund has awarded development funding of £477,050 for a major restoration and development project at the Baths.

Developed by a 'coalition of the willing' led by the National Trust, the project promises to complete the transformation of Moseley Road Baths, creating the best local pool in the world, with a positive ripple effect across the community.

This first stage of National Lottery investment will allow the partnership to fully develop their ambitious £32m *Diving In* project, which by 2028 will return swimming to the Gala Pool for the first time in 25 years and adapt other spaces, including the old laundry and slipper baths, to host fitness and wellbeing classes, a gym, cultural and arts events.

It will also include the development of cultural programmes with Balsall Heath library, focusing on families and older people, to share cross-generational experiences of Balsall Heath and Moseley Road Baths, as well as learning for primary schools.

The funding will support the development of a Volunteering, Skills and Participation model with diverse opportunities to support activities and operations across the two buildings.



**Moseley Road Baths is
OPEN
for swimming!
See timetable!**

"I'm so proud of the work done by so many organisations working together to breathe new life into this amazing building, though of course this project has always been about far more than this; it is a real community asset, run by and for local people but open to everyone."

Cllr Mariam Khan, Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care, Birmingham City Council

Moseley Road Baths under wraps...



Work continues on the first phase of an ambitious £32.7m masterplan to transform the Grade II* Listed Moseley Road Baths and Balsall Heath Library as part of a long-term vision to restore and reimagine the Baths and Library so that they continue to serve local people as well as appeal to tourists.

Urgent repairs to the Committee Room and Money-taker's flat within the Baths (enabled by a Repair Grant and specialist support from Historic England and City Council funding), as well as vital improvements to the building façade (supported by the World Monuments Fund) started in December 2021 and are due to run until June this year.

The investment, totalling over £700k, will enable essential repairs to the Committee Room and Manager's Flat, where rainwater is leaking from the rapidly deteriorating roof onto the original parquet floor and causing the stunning stained glass windows to rust; the much needed works to the front of the building will also include repairs to the oriel window.

'These Baths were built as a demonstration of civic pride, and that's what they will be once again for the city.'

Lucy Reid, Chair of MRB CIO

Pool of Memories

Janet Lewis shares some of the history of the 'Committee Room and Money-taker's Flat'

Have you noticed the wide staircase, behind Reception, with its mahogany handrail, wrought-iron balustrade, tiled walls, stained glass windows and a panelled wood ceiling? Such elegance surely merits further exploration but – sadly – that's not possible at the moment: the upstairs space in the Baths has been closed to the public for some time because of its shocking state of disrepair. Now, at last, there is some good news: part of the second floor is going to be rescued, with generous funding from Historic England.

Measuring an impressive 27ft x 18ft, the large Committee Room was originally designed for the use of swimming clubs that used the Baths. On occasions, the Corporation's Parks and Baths Committee met here. A now-demolished flight of stairs used to link the flat and central ticket office below. In this way, monies taken from the public at the kiosk window on the ground floor could be removed quickly and efficiently to a safe located inside the flat. Interestingly, the first two money-takers were women: a Mrs Annie Milner and a Mrs C Hidden. The flat consisted of a sitting-room, two bedrooms, kitchen/scullery and lavatory so it is likely that both ladies lived there with at least one other family member.

Unfortunately, in subsequent years, the flat was occupied only intermittently. By 1985, the last tenancy had ended, the Council having deemed these living quarters unsafe. The Council then used the flat for storing documents. Current repair work will see these areas brought back into use – we look forward to sharing more good news soon!

Cold Water Swimming



Halfway through the first length I could literally feel the stress, tension and fatigue coming off me with each stroke. I love it when the mental health reset is so visceral.'

*Birgit Kehrer
Cold water swimmer*

Due to a broken fan on the boiler MRB had to close down its usual programme of swimming from Feb 22nd to April 11th. Rapidly the building fell into in darkness as the temperature of the pool and the building plummeted. But staff at the baths were not to be thwarted by this set back and came up with the brilliant idea of providing cold water swim sessions.

Cold water swimming is getting more and more popular and usually involves an early morning visit to a lake or safe stretch of river. The sessions were extremely popular, there were mainly female cold-water swimmers who enjoyed the opportunity to do something a little different but there were a couple of MRB regulars who attended too. MRB ran 16 sessions and had nearly 150 swimmers – the youngest was a ten year old and the oldest a woman in her 70's. After they had taken their plunge, swimmers were provided with hot drinks and biscuits in the tearoom afterwards. All the feedback has been really positive with many wishing it could carry on!

Moseley Road Baths has shown, yet again, how it can adapt to the many challenges that it faces!

Remembering Steve Beauchampé

On March 6th 2022, the 2nd anniversary of Steve's sudden and unexpected passing, a small group of friends, family and colleagues gathered in the Gala Pool to reminisce about the many facets of his life.

Steve's involvement with the Friends of Moseley Road Baths cannot be summed up merely as the author of our Pool of Memories book. Even before the Friends' inauguration, Steve was involved in several sports publications, through the Played in Britain project. His knowledge and passion for the Grade II* listed Baths was fundamental in the progress the Friends made over the years in keeping the building in the Birmingham public's conscience.



This was frequently reflected in the tours Steve guided through the building. For someone who did not actively seek attention, he shone as a public speaker, his voice resonating within the Edwardians walls.

This was the first time, since Steve passed, for a proper occasion to remember him, after numerous lock-downs and regulations prevented group meetings. It was a fitting tribute to someone we are proud to have called our friend.

A permanent memorial plaque for Steve will be located within Moseley Road Baths.

Moseley Road Baths Alive!

Dancing with the pink flamingos: the importance of why

Roxie Collins shares a volunteer's view of a 'Balsall Heath Second Saturday' event...

Today is Balsall Heath Second Saturday, celebrated by the many cultural organisations in the heart of Balsall Heath. The programme of workshops and taster sessions offer clay sculpting, arts activism, exhibitions, dance, sound baths, bicycle repairs, music and crafts, with an invitation to respond to environmental and political themes. It's wonderful to see so many venues club together to create a mini festival feeling between The Old Print Works, Ort Gallery, Sundragon Community Pottery, The Gap and Darkroom Birmingham.

Joe counted 45 fiesta guests of all ages through the Gala pool doors – no, wait, 53... another family group of eight has arrived! These children and their adults are drawn to the emptied Gala Pool for cake-fuelled dancing and dress-up for the Alice In Wonderland-inspired Tea Party organised by Shelley of Leaf Creative Arts.

Workshop leader Norman shared his steel pan musicianship, enabling guests to learn then perform short compositions to enthused onlookers, contented tea drinkers and energised dancers (my six-year old daughter is amongst them); colourful floral garlands swaying in time with the beats. Who needs heating when gazing at a giant wall hanging of straw beach huts and palm trees along a sandy coastline, sun shining, listening to a steel pan chorus while dancing with prop flamingos?

I feel a feeling of satisfaction, a feeling of purpose, in the recognition that every encounter, every experience has an impact on people's lives, and today felt like a good day for new encounters and shared memories.



To see what's on, visit www.moseleyroadbaths.org.uk – many activities need to be booked through Eventbrite. To find out more about Balsall Heath Second Saturday, visit www.secondsaturday.org.uk. 'Moseley Road Baths Alive' is supported by the National Lottery Community Fund.

