



Keeping Afloat

Moseley Road Baths is
OPEN
for swimming!
See timetable!

The scaffolding is up and work has started on a long-term series of capital works, supported by a number of organisations who are investing in the long term future of the building. Jo Dimitri from the National Trust explains more.

Work has begun on the first phase of an ambitious £32.7m masterplan to transform the Grade II* Listed Moseley Road Baths and Balsall Heath Library. Over the past 4 years, the Moseley Road Baths Coalition has been developing 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.

In this first phase, funding has been provided to initiate a 2.5-year programme of capital restoration. Urgent repairs to the Boardroom 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 and are due to run until June this year.

The investment, totalling over £700k, will enable essential repairs to the Boardroom 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.

This phase of the transformation of Moseley Road Baths and Balsall Heath Library also received a major boost with the allocation of £15.5m of Levelling-Up funding which will be used to fund further capital works to the baths and library.

Initial works to the Baths include essential repairs to the building fabric to prevent further decline, as well as restoration of some of the historic

Continued on page 2

The 'coalition of the willing' is made up of:

- Moseley Road Baths CIO
- Friends of Moseley Road Baths
- Birmingham City Council
- Historic England
- World Monuments Fund
- The National Trust

This ground breaking group of community, national and international heritage organisations have been working closely with Birmingham City Council to prevent the closure of the Baths, and to re-imagine a future in a fully restored building with swimming at its heart.

As a group of organisations, they all bring their respective skills, funding, advocacy and energies to the table and are now spearheading an ambitious programme of works to secure the long-term future of the building.

Continued from page 1

interiors and the installation of lifts to the upper floors so that more of the building can be accessed. There will also be major improvements to the Library, including a physical connection to the Baths to help boost the range of facilities on offer.

The second phase of the masterplan, starting around early 2025, will aim to bring the entire Baths into full use by 2030.



"The Levelling-Up grant is an enormous step forward towards a fully repaired and fully functioning Baths as part of the Balsall Heath Neighbourhood Plan, progress that was started by the Friends in 2006. It will enable a significant increase in the benefits in health, education and recreation which the combined Baths and Balsall Heath Library can bring to the local population in Balsall Heath and a better life for Balsall Heath residents."

Joe Holyoak, Chair of the Friends of Moseley Road Baths



Meet Lucy Reid recently appointed Chair of Moseley Road Baths CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation)

My name is Lucy Reid. I live locally, my children have swimming lessons the Baths, and I have been closely involved behind the scenes since 2016 when the forerunner to the CIO - Moseley Road Baths Action Group - was set up.

For the last few years, I have chaired the steering group of what we call the 'coalition of the willing.' Back in 2017, when we formed, I don't think that any of us thought the odds for saving the Baths were especially favourable! And yet despite what seemed to be an insurmountable set of challenges - not least a global pandemic, plus a plant that's on its last legs - we are very firmly on a positive trajectory towards a fully restored Baths: November's Levelling Up news was a hugely welcome moment.

In my day job, I am an Assistant Director of Operations at the National Trust. The NT exists to look after special places so that people and nature can thrive.

Although perhaps more normally associated with big stately homes, coastline or places like the Lake District, our work is also about being a good partner organisation in cities. I really love working with people to make things happen, I love Birmingham, and I really love the Baths.

As a trustee and as chair of the CIO, I hope to bring useful experience from years of leading small arts organisations and running large visitor attractions, driving major projects in operational listed building heritage sites, working with volunteers and building strong advocacy networks. I know MRB, the local area, the team and the capital project very well, which I hope will be useful. This is an exciting but also challenging time as the capital projects really gather pace. So we are currently reviewing how we work as a CIO to ensure we are setting ourselves up to be a sustainable and strong organisation for the future: our aim is that the Baths is a great place to swim, volunteer and work - the best local pool in the world.

CHRISTMAS ATTRACTIONS			
SPRINGFIELD BALLROOM Corner of SEABOARD ROAD and STAFFORD ROAD, SPARKHILL			
Dancing Every Night	8 till 11-30 p.m.	2/6	
Xmas Eve	8 till 1 o'clock	4/6	
Boxing Night	8 till 11 p.m.	2/-	
Thurs. 27th December	8 till 11 p.m.	2/-	
Moseley Road Baths SUPER BALLROOM MOSELEY ROAD, BALSALL HEATH			
Dancing Mon., Wed., Fri. & Sat.	8 till 11-30 p.m.	3/-	
Xmas Eve	8 till 1 o'clock	4/-	
Boxing Night	8 till 11 p.m.	2/-	
Fri., 28th December	8 till 11 p.m.	2/-	
Fri., 28th December 8 till 11 p.m. 2/6 Sat., 29th December 7-30 till 11-30 p.m. 3/6 Grand New Year's Eve Dance 8 till 1 o'clock 4/6 Sat., 29th December 7-30 till 11-30 p.m. 5/- E.A.F. Bomber Command Dance Orchestra 13 Paces Directed by Sgt. Leslie Douglas Goodall's Famous Dance Band Directed by Henry Goodall New Year's Eve Dance 8 till 1 o'clock 4/-			

Pool of Memories

'Dancing Days'



Jenny Austin was a volunteer on the 2010-2013 Friends of Moseley Road Baths' heritage project, 'Pool of Memories', which aimed to preserve memories of Moseley Road Baths. The project involved local schools, tours of the building, a drama project, publication of the 'Pool of Memories' book by Steve Beauchampé and included over 60 recorded oral history interviews. Here, she shares one special memory from Howard Edwards.

We met Howard Edwards at a Friends of Moseley Road Baths hosted Open Day. Howard was a self-taught musician who played drums with dance bands for over 60 years. His stories of playing in the swing era were fascinating and myself and Steve went to record them at his home in Hall Green in 2010.

Howard described his first impression of Moseley Road Baths: *"It was different to any other Baths - it was a beautiful building"*. He still had photos and dance programmes from his days in Henry Goodall's dance band, including the images above. In the 1940's, after his day job at local firm Willmot-Breeden's, Howard would play at Moseley Road Baths 'Super Ballroom' and other venues across the city. Many swimming baths were routinely closed in the winter months, boarded over and used for other activities.

Band names he remembered were the RAF Bomber Command Dance Orchestra and the famous trumpeter Nat Gonella, who played at Moseley Road Baths and other venues on the Moseley Road. You could get there by tram or bus and it cost 2 to 5 shillings to get in (10-25p) and then you could tango, foxtrot, waltz and quickstep the night away.

"We were playing at St Paul's Church three times a week, so when they converted the Baths for dances in winter 1946, we got the chance to play there and I really enjoyed it. We played in the big pool with the balcony. It was a good crowd, always packed, hundreds there. We'd play for about three hours, ballroom dancing, up to four nights a week... we stopped playing at Moseley Road Baths in 1948."

Moseley Road Baths' pools were last boarded over for dancing in 1952, and now, 70 years later, we are hosting live music and community events at the Baths again - as well as the all-important swimming of course!

Moseley Road Baths Alive!



Floristry classes, children's yoga sessions, jewellery making, tai chi, art exhibitions and drama debating are not activities you would expect to see in many swimming pools, let alone in the grandeur of an empty Edwardian swimming pool.

However, Moseley Road Baths has always adapted and changed to suit the needs and interests of local residents, and the 'Moseley Road Baths Alive' programme of health, wellbeing and 'pop-up culture' activities is very much in that tradition.

Programme Co-ordinator Emily Butler, has been connecting with local folk and a range of organisations across the community to develop an eclectic line-up of events to bring visitors both old and new into the building, to experience some of the great things on offer. Emily has also supported development of a new monthly festival for the area, 'Balsall Heath Second Saturday' on the second Saturday of each month.

'It has been a joy to work in this historic building and with the local community to re-imagine how we use this beautiful space. There's a real demand for creative, interesting activities helping people to connect with one another as well as relieving stress and anxiety increased from the impact of the pandemic. It has been such an honour to be a small part of the journey of Moseley Road Baths.'

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.

Join the Friends of Moseley Road Baths! Get involved!

The Friends of Moseley Road Baths have been campaigning since 2006 to keep the building open and restored with swimming at its heart. A great deal has been achieved over the years and there is more to be done. We welcome swimmers and non-swimmers from Balsall Heath or afar to help us with developing the plans for the future of the baths, organising events, caring for the building and promoting the baths and swimming.

Currently we are helping organise a tea dance, a memorial service, decorating the gala pool, organising tours, hosting a Heritage Forum meeting and developing the idea for a museum.

Bring your skills and maybe learn new ones. We look forward to hearing from you!

www.friendsofmrbs.co.uk
contact@friendsofmrbs.co.uk
07948 513 776

