

Moseley Road Baths

PRESS RELEASE

INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR HISTORIC BIRMINGHAM BUILDING

World Monuments Fund has announced that Moseley Road Baths in south Birmingham is one of only two buildings in the UK selected for inclusion on the 2016 World Monuments Watch. The list is published every two years in order to focus attention on sites of architectural significance around the world that are under threat. Supporters fighting to keep the Baths open, have welcomed the news as recognition of the architectural importance and social significance of the Edwardian building.

Moseley Road Baths is the oldest of only three Grade II* listed swimming pools in Britain. It was opened in 1907 and the building is believed to contain the only surviving example of a laundry room with its original drying racks. In an age before laundrettes, local people would have used the room and the racks for their clothes washing.

The ground floor includes a set of pre-war private slipper baths, said to be unique. There are no other examples remaining of this type of bathing facility that was used by local people until 2004. The cubicles contain cast iron baths, some with ropes still hanging over them to help people get in and out as well as the bell system used to call attendants if bathers were in difficulties.

There are two swimming pools, one of which is still in use by local people and schools throughout the week. Both have ornate, cast-iron girders supporting the roofs and the now disused Gala Pool is lined by glazed brick dressing boxes. Only one other pool in Britain still has these; wooden partitions were more common in Victorian and Edwardian periods.

The application for World Monuments Watch listing was submitted by the Friends of Moseley Road Baths (FMRB). The group has been campaigning to keep the swimming pool open since 2006. Dates for closure of the building have been announced by the owners, Birmingham City Council, on numerous occasions but each time, action has been postponed. FMRB members have raised the profile of the Baths with a series of arts events and open days while a number of organisations have used the building for filming.

An application for Heritage Lottery Fund support was due to be submitted but this had to be abandoned after Birmingham City Council withdrew its support. The building is now expected to close before the end of 2016.

Commenting on the inclusion of Moseley Road Baths on the 2016 World Monuments Watch, Mark Gunton, Treasurer of the Friends of Moseley Road Baths said, 'Obviously we're delighted to have been included but we know that this isn't the solution to the crisis facing Moseley Road Baths. We still have to work hard to get organisations and individuals to commit to saving the building, keeping it open as an active swimming pool and to finding additional activities to make it a viable concern. The great thing about the Watch listing is that it focusses attention on our campaign and hopefully will help to open new doors for us so that we can protect this wonderful part of Birmingham's history'.

For further information, please call Mark Gunton, phone number 07801 444075