

SINCE CLOSURE

Judy Goldsmith: The baths were closed in 1977, it was a cost cutting exercise by the council and because Jacob Wells were the oldest baths still in use they were the first to go. Everybody ignored the warm baths because they didn't think there was any value to them and there was just focus merely on the swimming pool. A large space, which was floored over used first of all for a school of circus skills, then by the Scottish National Ballet.

Narration (by Tot Foster): The floor was taken from another Bristol pool. Judy Goldsmith shows Jeff Mogg, son of the long time Bristol pools manager Tom Mogg, around.

Judy Goldsmith: You're looking underneath your roller skating floor, it's literally sprung because at the end of scaffolding at the top are springs. It's as it was in Bristol South Baths, a sprung floor quite literally.

Jeff Mogg: That's amazing isn't it. And it's still in use?

Judy Goldsmith: They wondered where it went.

Narration: For over 30 years the pool then became the main space for the Bristol Dance Centre.

Julie Hardy: My sister did ballroom dancing; she had quite a medal and things from here. She's five years younger than me so it's a strange thought that I was, maybe 10 years before, swimming in the pool and she was dancing over the top.

Heather Watts: I came here to the Fandangos, which were termly shows to actually showcase what happened in the Dance Centre. Numerous types of dance went on here, everything from break dancing to flamenco. There were at least 17 dance practitioners, each of them doing a different type of dance. And it was also used for shows that were going to happen at the Hippodrome, rehearsals here. It was a world class Dance Centre.

Narration: That was Julie Hardy and Heather Watts. The deal the council had with the dance centre was that they needed to maintain the building, but that just wasn't sustainable.

Heather Watts: To begin with there was funding available for these expressive things that are really important in people's lives. Then there wasn't that sort of funding stream so they didn't have sufficient income to keep a building of this age in the condition it needed to be; and there were holes, it was not watertight. Neighbours also saw the

director on the roof, trying to make it watertight and he was obviously doing that because he didn't have the money in the budget to be able to get a builder in to do it. The building had got to such a poor state of repair that there was no other choice really, but to say that "this is it for us, we can't do anything more with it", which is a pity, sad.

Judy Goldsmith: The dance centre handed back the keys in 2016.

Narration: Then the Jacob's Wells Community Hub, Sally Silverman, Judy Goldsmiths and Heather Watts stepped in.

Judy Goldsmith: Well basically it's three of us in the Jacob Wells Community Hub. We are all residents and we're all volunteers.

Heather Watts: We were approached by Bristol City Council to act as caretakers, which we weren't able to do because that was too big a job. And then the lookouts went to Artspace Lifespace who specialise in derelict buildings that need a bit of nurturing.

Narration: A non-profit organization, Artspace Lifespace, has leased the building temporarily from the council.

Judy Goldsmith: We have been looking for somewhere as a community centre for a long time, Artspace Lifespace allowed us use of one of the spaces in it. Well we've had lots of meetings involving seventy local people; we are empowering local people to get what they want out of the building.

Audrey Stazaker: I used to pass here and think what a shame it's closed, why is it closed?

Narration: Audrey Stazaker helps at one of the community groups that uses the Hub space, a weekly craft club.

Audrey Stazaker: It was Sally that started it actually, she's so good, and I passed here one day and I thought the door's open and I heard a voice say "come on in" and that's how it all came about. Earlier this year we had a guy that came in and he was showing us how to carve wood and so we were there, chopping away, making a mess of course. I think we're having one of our girls come in and she's going to show us how she draws, the right way of drawing. And we had different events here, we've had open days, so it'd be nice if we could go on doing it.

Narration: On those open days there was plenty of local support. Councillor Paula O'Rourke in 2017.

Paula O'Rourke: And look at the potential of this building; we've got to do all we can to help to preserve this as a community space.

Narration: The future is looking rosy, a charity, Fusion, are planning to take over the site from autumn 2018 and will include a space for the Community Hub in their new Leisure Centre.

Judy Goldsmith: The plans for the future are very exciting because Fusion, who rescue old swimming pools and run leisure centres throughout the UK, are excited about our historic baths. It won't just be a swimming bath, the swimming pool will probably be smaller than it was because everybody still wants the dance facility with sprung floors, a community space and most excitingly of all for us is a community café.

Narration: Judy, Sally, Heather, Audrey and many of us are looking forward to a new space where everyone and anyone can come together.