The Florrie rises from the flames

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Closed for over 20 years, the 19th-century Jacobean-style building in Toxteth is the oldest surviving purpose-built youth clubs in the UK. For nearly a century The Florrie was at the heart of the community, providing a centre for young people in the local area.

The building is run by the Florence Institute Trust whose members have tirelessly campaigned to ‘Save the Florrie’ for the last 10 years. The project has been initiated by the community and will be genuinely community-led throughout.

The Institute’s alumni includes Tommy Bache, a boxer who won medals at the 1958 Empire Games, and Gerry Marsden (of *Gerry and the Pacemakers* fame) who held his first gig there in the 1950s.

Thanks to the HLF award, The Florrie has been restored to its original purpose as a multi-purpose community centre, focussing on the young people in Toxteth and neighbouring Dingle.

The project restored and repaired the fire-damaged Florence Institute for Boys, a Grade II-listed building of immense heritage value, built in 1889.

The Florrie is socially and architecturally unique, but despite its high heritage and community value – locally, nationally and internationally – it was in an extremely vulnerable state and at considerable risk of complete loss.

The project has not only saved the building, but also converted it to provide a sustainable future which develops from the original use.

The new centre offers space for a wide range of activities, including workstations for start-up businesses and a heritage centre providing activities for people to learn and explore the history of the local area.

Displays telling the story of The Florrie have been introduced throughout, turning the building into living museum of local social history.

The Florrie owes its existence to former Mayor of Liverpool and West India merchant Bernard Hall, in memory of his daughter Florence Bernadine who died aged 22. Built in the 1880s, and officially opened in 1890, The Florrie was used continuously for nearly a century until it closed in 1988. An extensive fire in 1999 rendered it inaccessible to the general public.