

Heritage Services Annual Review 2009/10



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**Bath & North East
Somerset Council**

BE: Distinctive

**CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE**
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The Government Standard

Highlights of 2009/10:

- Customer Excellence Award for Heritage Services
- The Supremes exhibition at the Assembly Rooms attracted 21,670 visitors in 6 weeks
- BBC Antiques Roadshow filmed at the Assembly Rooms
- Fashion Museum saves rare Vionnet dresses from sale overseas
- World Heritage Day celebration activities organised by Heritage Services
- Record 111,383 visits to the Victoria Art Gallery
- Roman Baths voted 'Most Romantic Building in Britain' in RIBA poll
- Roman Baths awarded the 'Learning Outside the Classroom' quality badge
- Roman Baths won the Sandford Award for Heritage Education

Key facts from 2009/10:

- £3.2 million profit on £11.04 million turnover
- £7.78 million admissions income
- £589,000 room hire income
- £446,000 net catering income
- £2.44 million invested in Roman Baths Development
- £227,330 secured in grant aid
- 1.275 million visitors
- 818,000 unique web site users
- 248,558 customers bought 632,915 items
- 74,140 external room hire guests
- 22,606 pupils and adults attended teaching sessions
- 20,000+ attended Heritage Open Week events

A History of the World

This BBC / British Museum partnership took to the road this year. The BBC regions were all invited to select ten objects of local significance but which had in their own way made an impact on the wider world. Of the ten objects from the BBC Somerset area, three were from our collections:

The Pediment from the Roman Temple of Sulis Minerva;
Roman Baths Museum

Early C19 Bath Chair; displayed at the Assembly Rooms

Bronze Bust of William Harbutt 1911, inventor of plasticine;
Victoria Art Gallery



Foreword

by Councillor Terry Gazzard, Cabinet Member for Tourism Leisure and Culture

I am delighted to introduce this Annual Review, which summarises the performance, activities and achievements of Heritage Services during 2009/10.

What looked like being a very uncertain year financially due to the Recession turned out very well, with the Service returning a record £3.2 million surplus to the Council.

The latest phase of Roman Baths Development included extensive new museum displays and an enlarged and wholly refurbished Roman Baths Shop. Visitor numbers to the Roman Baths were the highest since 2000, encouraged by the weak pound, the 'stay-cation' effect of the Recession and new marketing and word-of-mouth recommendations promoting the site's new family-friendly interpretation. Museum shops, room hire and catering all performed well in a challenging environment.

The Victoria Art Gallery, the district's principal art museum and the museum most visited by its residents, also had a record year with over 111,000 visitors, attracted by another excellent exhibition programme and permanent collections made yet more accessible by the Gallery's new lift.

One of the highlights of the year was The Story of The Supremes exhibition in the Assembly Rooms, and just as exciting in the same building was the first ever catwalk show by Bath Spa University fashion students, a product of the university's successful partnership with the Fashion Museum.

'The Art of Giving' exhibition at the Victoria Art Gallery reminded us of the huge number of works of art given and bequeathed to the Council over the years in trust that they would remain in public ownership for future generations to enjoy. The acquisition by the Fashion Museum of two rare and important dresses by Parisian couturier Madeleine Vionnet was the most important addition to the Council's collections during the year.

I was very proud to go to Windsor Castle during the year to collect the Sandford Award for Heritage Education 2010 on behalf of the Roman Baths, which added to the Government's Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge awarded earlier in the year. The Service as a whole received the Customer Service Excellence Award to succeed single-site Charter Marks won in earlier years and for the fourth year running Record Office staff were voted best in the South West by users in an independent national survey.

I was particularly pleased that the Council's responsibility for management of the City of Bath World Heritage Site translated into a celebration of World Heritage Day for the first time, in April 2009. Other exciting community projects included Museums at Night in May, the national Heritage Open Days in September and our own unique Heritage Open Week in October. Less visible but no less important were museum-based projects for children with caring responsibilities at home at 'Off the Record' and for adult carers in the 'Give us a Break Project' in partnership with Adult Health, Social Care & Housing.



Councillor Gazzard at the Victoria Art Gallery

Developing the business

The Recession

The negative effect of the worldwide economic downturn suggested a difficult year for Heritage Services in 2009/10. However the weak pound encouraged both in-bound tourism and domestic tourism; some businesses thrived in the recession, particularly those who promoted actively to the domestic market early in the season, when the pound was low against the Euro and a large proportion of UK residents decided to stay at home for their holidays.

Customer behaviour changed significantly, with visitors seeking increased value for money, either through extra services or price reductions. In response to on-site developments at each museum, value-for-money ratings have improved and we worked hard both to hold entrance prices and minimize increases. Secondary spend – retail, hospitality and catering – held up well in a difficult climate.

Promotion to the domestic market

The Roman Baths conducted an ambitious “out-of-home” regional marketing campaign in the spring/summer of 2009. Advertising the new people-led interpretation on buses, trains and railway platforms throughout the area supported the uplift of 5% in visitor numbers.

Summer exhibition, Assembly Rooms:

We continue to develop the visitor offer in the Assembly Rooms by sourcing blockbuster exhibitions in the summer. In 2009 the exhibition was *The Story of the Supremes from the Mary Wilson Collection*, a display of 50 glittering stage costumes worn by The Supremes over the three decades of their fame. Curated by the V&A, the exhibition placed the mega-stardom of this black girl-band in the context of the struggle for civil rights in America during the 1960s. Mary Wilson herself travelled from the USA to open the show in a whirlwind of events and interviews, which generated unprecedented media interest, especially on TV. It was accompanied by an active Heritage Services events programme and many related activities from partner organisations in Bath and Bristol.



The Supremes exhibition in the Assembly Rooms, August 2009
Paul Gambaccini interviewed Mary Wilson as part of the exhibition launch



Social Media

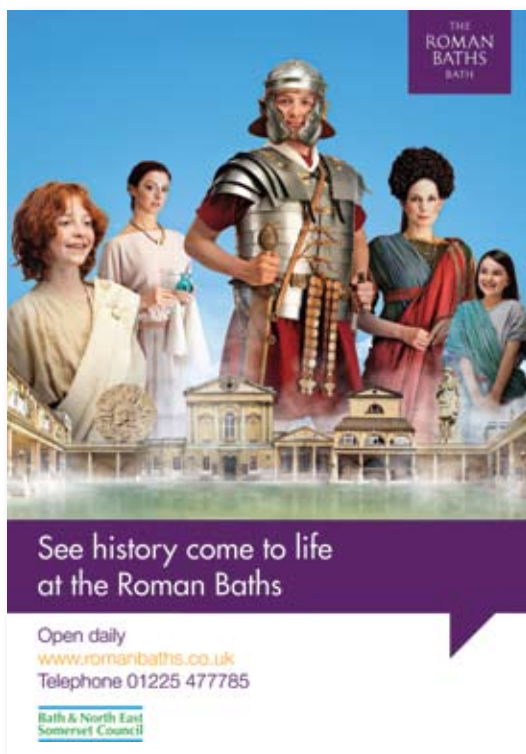
We piloted viral marketing campaigns on the internet during the *Supremes* exhibition by commissioning video with YouTube-friendly content and spreading the message through sites such as Facebook. This has since been developed using new social networking tools. There is now a Visitor Review section on the websites, where visitors can upload their videos, photos and leave comments, and Facebook pages for the Roman Baths, Fashion Museum, Victoria Art Gallery and Bath's Historic Buildings. An online photography competition has been developed for the Fashion Museum, with entries from the UK and overseas.

'Spas Ancient and Modern' Package

Sales of this combined visit to the Roman Baths, Pump Room Restaurant and Thermae Bath Spa grew so much during the year that we appointed Bath Tourism Information Centre as booking agent. The TIC sold nearly 2,500 tickets in a ten month period, 81% up on the same period the year before. As a result of this success, Heritage Services and Thermae Bath Spa have co-operated in a joint TV marketing campaign in the Thames Valley area in 2010, with enquiries directed to the TIC.

Economic impact research.

In addition to the exit surveys on quality of visit conducted each year, we participated in an independent economic impact survey organised by Dr Peter Dawson of the University of Bath. His estimate of the economic value of the Roman Baths to the Bath area in 2009 was £92 million. It was already known that the Roman Baths is the biggest driver for the tourism industry in Bath, but the impact is even greater than realised.



Roman Baths poster

Market Research and Performance Measurement

Performance measurement

Heritage Services measures its business performance against comparable large visitor attractions nationwide through a financial benchmarking initiative organized by the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions (ALVA). In 2009 the site once again performed in the top 25% of ALVA attractions for 5 of the 6 key indicators of profitability, demonstrating a level of return amongst the highest in the country, together with labour costs amongst the lowest of all ALVA attractions. The site also performed in the top quartile for other measures of income, including admission income per visit (average admission price). For the second time in the last three years, retail sales per square metre of floor space generated by the Roman Baths shops were the highest of all ALVA members.

In 2009 Heritage Services again performed well above the median of all ALVA attractions in all areas of visitor revenue and activity other than secondary spend (retail and catering). The Service again performed in the top quartile for key measures of income and profitability, including net contribution and retail spend per square metre, whilst labour costs overall were still amongst the lowest of all ALVA attractions.

Market research

Exit surveys on visitors' perceptions of quality of visit are conducted annually in spring, summer and autumn among a representative sample of Roman Baths and Fashion Museum visitors. The scores for display and interpretation have always been high, helped by exceptionally popular audioguide results. This year the biggest change is in the scores for "Likelihood of recommending friends to visit" at the Roman Baths; 91% of visitors now say that they would definitely recommend the Roman Baths to their friends, against a nationwide average of 76%. This is a significant result because it is well known that the best promotion of all is word-of-mouth recommendation. This change is clearly a result of the Development Plan changes, which is a very positive sign for the future.

In addition to exit surveys, the Service invites customer feedback on all of its services and these create a detailed picture of the visitor experience, with weaknesses in provision identified and addressed.

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Councillor Gazzard opening the refurbished and enlarged Roman Baths Shop with Retail Services Manager Judith Zedner and sales staff Lilian Macrae and Lina Matulionyte.



Museum Shops

In February 2010, the doors opened on a refurbished and expanded Roman Baths Shop. It has a contemporary new look and is more disabled-friendly. The shop was one of the smallest of any major visitor attraction in the UK, so we have expanded it by over 10% to display more stock and increase the amount of circulation space. Hearing loops have been installed in the cash desk. This is the first time in ten years that the Roman Baths Shop has been refurbished. The new expanded shop takes a completely new approach to the way products are presented and the role the shop plays in the overall visitor experience.

New affordable souvenirs for children are selling well in the new shop, strongly branded to the site, they feature fun captions including some in Latin. A new range of t-shirts featuring text and iconic images from the Roman Baths has been printed to appeal to the teenage market. Vivid colours and styling add to the appeal in our highly contemporary new shop.

The new design also makes the most of its on-street entrance to attract local resident shoppers and tourists not visiting the Roman Baths. The new product ranges and new retail experience compete with the best on the high street and have already led to an increase in sales.

Sales Supervisors and Sales Assistants received intensive training over the Winter in retail skills including active selling, merchandise layouts and display and security awareness.



Sales Assistant Francesca Warlow at the Fashion Museum shop

Customer Care

For the first time Heritage Services put in one cross-Service application for the Government's new **Customer Services Excellence Standard**. The assessor praised the Service and wrote:

"Heritage Services has built successfully on their previous experience of Charter Mark and had little or no difficulty in making the transition to the new Standard. Particular credit is due to the Bath Record Office in being able to demonstrate compliance with the Standard with no previous history."

"Heritage Services have clearly demonstrated that they deliver an excellent standard of service to their customers and are worthy of certification to the Customer Service Excellence Standard."

"The excellence of your service delivery is overwhelmingly confirmed by your customers and by independent accreditation and compares well with similar organisations. You have a comprehensive strategy for engaging and involving your customers in planning and improving your services and you achieve high levels of customer satisfaction for all your main services."

"Staff observed at all locations were well motivated, well led and delivering an excellent level of service in a cheerful and friendly manner."

The Roman Baths, Fashion Museum and Victoria Art Gallery were again accredited under Visit Britain's Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme (VAQAS). Each site was highly commended by the assessor:

"No visitor should leave the Roman Baths disappointed, this is an attraction where standards of excellence are evident in all areas and ongoing plans will ensure that these standards are not only maintained but improved."

Staff training on disability, equality and diversity awareness is paying dividends as visitors tell us how well they have been looked after and that their special needs are being met.



Heritage Hospitality

Following a record year in 2008/09, the effects of the credit crunch and global recession resulted in a slight reduction in income from private hire in 2009/10. A reduction of 10% had been anticipated but the buoyancy of the domestic market and the resilience of the weddings and private party sector helped mitigate the effects of the downturn.

Due to the reduction in conferences and large corporate parties, the total number of people attending events was down on 2008/09. The Heritage Hospitality team worked throughout the year with caterers Searcy's to maximise opportunities by creating a number of carefully designed packages and undertaking new marketing initiatives to maintain repeat custom and attract new business. The post of Sales Manager, jointly funded with Searcy's, has continued to generate significant new business opportunities.

The Wedding Open Day, first run in 2008 in partnership with the Register Office at the Guildhall, was repeated and expanded, resulting in c.£8k of new business with a similar outturn for the Register Office.

Notable events during the year included a corporate dinner with tickets to the spectacular opera in the Roman Baths, an initiative aimed at charities; a meet-the-buyer conference forum jointly hosted with Bath Tourism Plus and the Bath Spa Hotel, and some alternative Christmas party packages. The latter complemented the already successful programme of parties run in previous years and helped maintain market share in a difficult economic climate. The BBC's Antiques Roadshow came to the Assembly Rooms in 2009 and this, along with other regular events such as the Bath International Festival, MozartFest and the Children's Literature Festival, were all high profile events attracting large audiences.

Ongoing optimisation and development of the website resulted in a significant increase in traffic to www.bathvenues.co.uk. The direct interface between the website and the room booking system

ensures that all enquiries are captured efficiently and seamlessly. In addition, a series of interactive 360° photos now complements the existing showreel films.

Catering

During 2009-10 the Service undertook an exhaustive catering tendering procedure, advertising throughout the EU for a suitably experienced company to provide catering services in the Pump Room restaurant and Assembly Rooms café, private and party catering in both buildings and outside catering services from the Assembly Rooms kitchens. In addition the caterer was asked to commit to working with the Council to develop a Roman Baths café in a Council-owned building close to the Roman Baths.

The new contract was won by Searcy's Restaurants Limited, the incumbent caterer, against stiff competition from a select list of other suitable companies. The financial return to the Council further improves on the terms of the previous contract and the new caterer will bring considerable investment and industry expertise in the development of the new café, which will begin in 2011.



Top left: Conference dinner set-up in the Guildhall Banqueting Room

Top right: Antiques Roadshow filming at the Assembly Rooms.

Left: Searcy's chefs at work in the kitchen

Financial and Business Review

Key aspects of performance in the year:

- £11 million income;
- Net income per Bath & North East Somerset resident: £18
- Net income per Bath & North East Somerset Council Tax payer: £42
- Net income per staff member: £28,300

Financial performance

Heritage Services operates as a business unit within the Council and prepares its accounts on a full absorption basis. In 2009/10 we returned a net profit of £3.2 million to the Council after meeting all operating costs as well as a full allocation of overhead, including corporate costs. Turnover increased by 6% on the previous year due to strong growth in admission income driven both by increased numbers of visitors and an increased spend per visitor.

In 2009/10 we implemented the fourth annual update of our five-year Business Plan 2006-2011 for medium term investment in the Council's heritage assets to ensure the continued delivery of key income streams. This focused investment on a few key areas: the Roman Baths Development Plan; meeting the Council's statutory obligations to its heritage assets, improving the experience for daytime and evening visitors, and being more energy efficient.

Significant savings in the cost base were made in previous financial years to mitigate the pressure on profits due to increased staffing and utility costs. Further stringent controls on expenditure, particularly maintenance, ensured that the impact on profitability of these ongoing pressures was reduced. Staffing costs have increased significantly since implementation of the Single Status agreement in 2007/08. Although the profit target was adjusted to reflect this, the overall profitability of the Service was adversely affected. Ongoing increases from inflation, back pay and on-costs must now be funded by the Service, adding to the pressure on the cost base in future years.

	2009/10 £0,000	2008/09 £0,000	
Annual income	Actual	Budget	Actual
Admissions	7,780	7,387	7,046
Retail and other sales	1,663	1,647	1,652
Room hire	589	530	599
Catering	447	450	450
Other income	524	494	631
Total	11,003	10,508	10,378
Annual expenditure			
Employee costs	2,965	2,892	2,826
Premises and transport	748	848	860
Merchandise for re-sale	777	793	771
Supplies and services	949	789	895
Revenue re-investment	707	448	402
Building maintenance	520	512	528
Agency and contracted services	395	375	309
Voluntary sector support	39	37	32
Finance & debt charges	150	150	69
Drawdown from profit reserve		(109)	
Total	7,250	6,735	6,692
Net surplus before overheads	3,753	3,773	3,686
Overheads			
Internal overheads (expenditure)	-1,933	-1,961	-1,902
Internal income (recharges)	1,381	1,385	1,333
Net internal overheads	-552	-576	-568
Annual surplus, including internal overheads	3,201	3,197	3,118

Grant awards secured for 2009/10 were as follows

Recipient	Source	Purpose	£
Roman Baths	Wolfson Foundation	Roman Baths Development	80,000
	Designation Challenge Fund	Sign language tours	10,000
	Two Tunnels Project	Bladud statue display, Parade Gardens	5,000
Victoria Art Gallery	The Art Fund	Purchase of works of art	10,500
	MLA/V&A purchase grant fund	Purchase of works of art	17,500
	Friends of the Victoria Art Gallery	Purchase of works of art	2,450
	Woodmansterne	Conservation of work of art	3,880
Fashion Museum	The Art Fund	Purchase of Vionnet dresses	31,350
	MLA/V&A purchase grant fund	Purchase of Vionnet dresses	50,000
	The Crinoline Group	Purchase of Vionnet dresses	1,000
	West of England Costume Society	Purchase of Vionnet dresses	1,650
Learning & Programmes	MLA	Heritage Events Co-ordinator	5,000
	MLA	Events Co-ordinator activities	8,000
	MLA	Learning links	1,000
Total			227,330

Admission figures

	2009-2010	% +/-	2008-2009
Roman Baths	881,757	+ 5%	839,994
Fashion Museum	90,859	- 1%	92,079
Victoria Art Gallery	111,383	+ 6%	105,318

Visitor Numbers and Admission Income

Roman Baths visitors were the highest since 2000/01, substantially exceeding the anticipated level of 848,000. Fashion Museum numbers fell slightly below the planned target, representing a stabilisation of hitherto declining visitor numbers at around 2006/07 levels. The Victoria Art Gallery had a record year; its ever growing reputation for excellence is due mainly to its top quality exhibitions programme, and in a time of recession it also benefitted from being a free attraction.

Admissions revenue grew substantially due to higher visitor volumes, above-inflation price increases and an improved spend-per-head due to the increased proportion of individual (non group) visitors. Group visitor numbers of 286,000 were up 4% on 2008/09 but were a

smaller proportion of overall visitors due to the greater increase in individual visitors. Group visitors still totalled 32% of all Roman Baths visitors and generated a total income, including net secondary spend, of c.£2.25 million.

The growth in individual visitors was most noticeable during the high season and was consistent with the increase in domestic holidays taken by UK residents, known as the 'stay-cation' effect, which was particularly marked when the Pound was exceptionally weak against the Euro in early summer 2009. Visitors paying the main headline price, which accounted for 45% of admission sales, were 6% above target, and concession sales (students, senior citizens, children) were also up.



New model of the Roman Baths and Temple in the Museum



Still from a new film projection in the Museum

Roman Baths

The fourth year of the five year project has seen major changes in presentation and interpretation and further measures to improve accessibility. The Development has two key objectives – to maintain the Roman Baths status as a leading visitor attraction and to improve its accessibility for all visitors.



Amphitheatre style seating now allows more people to view the famous Temple Pediment in comfort. Accompanying projections show how the Pediment might have appeared in Roman times. New people-led interpretation emphasises the human dimension of life at the Baths and Temple complex and explores its relationship with the Roman town of *Aquae Sulis*. An additional 100 objects are on display following the changes.

In the West Baths the construction of a new viewing platform and walkway has altered the look and feel of the site and provided a more accessible way of viewing the Roman remains, particularly the oval bath and Stall Street bath.

A new audio tour has been introduced with commentary spoken by Alice Roberts. The tour is provided in eight languages and this now includes Russian, reflecting a steady increase in visitors speaking that language.

Other improvements include re-decoration and new lighting in the Reception Hall, where the magnificent late Victorian dome is now beautifully illuminated.

The large object store at St John's Road, which houses the historically important collection of old spa equipment, was opened to the public on six occasions during the year.

Public tours of the museum stores and visits to the tunnels surrounding the Roman Baths took place every month and several additional private tours also took place.

Volunteers spent more than 1300 hours working with collections to improve the quality of documentation of museum objects, organise archaeological excavation archives, assist with display preparation and help at special events.

Recent acquisitions.

These include a sugar bowl from The Grand Pump Room Hotel, which was demolished in 1959 and a 19th century token of The Bath & West of England Society. The Roman Baths collection contains 20,000 coins, medals and tokens dating from the Iron Age to 1997.



Public tunnel tour behind the scenes at the Roman Baths.

Modified environments give long term protection to Roman remains

Victoria Art Gallery

A record-breaking 111,383 visits were made to the Gallery in 2009-10, beating the previous record of 110,900 set two years ago. Contributing to this success were the hugely popular Kurt Jackson and Sophie Ryder exhibitions, the latter featuring indoor and outdoor sculptures. 'Unpopular Culture: Grayson Perry Selects from the Arts Council Collection' also drew crowds and continued the trend of buoyant sales in the Gallery's newly refitted shop.

The 'Schools Art' show contained over 100 pieces by young artists from local secondary and special schools. The aim was to present the show as professionally as other exhibitions, hence all the pictures were framed and many for sale. The pupils were involved in every stage of the exhibition process, from selection to display and marketing.

The Leslie Atkinson exhibition included remarkable paintings of the Bath Blitz. Atkinson came to Bath as a naval camouflage officer in 1941 and was here after the 1942 blitz when he did some remarkable paintings of the bomb damage. On one occasion, while drawing the Circus, he was mistakenly arrested as a spy!

The Gallery's collection already included two Atkinson paintings of bomb damage in Bath. These were included in the 2005 exhibition 'Blitzed', which led to his daughter Julia Gibson contacting the Gallery, to show us more of Atkinson's work. Julia curated this year's exhibition and was so thrilled by the public response to her father's work that she kindly offered the Gallery a selection of the paintings. Her generous gift will greatly enhance our collection of 20th century views of Bath.



Joseph Southall, San Giorgio, Venice 1939, tempera

Following installation of a lift, April 2009 saw the opening of a new upstairs display space, giving more space to exhibit objects from the collection. This year's displays included 'Bath Railway Posters' featuring promotional images of the city commissioned by the Great Western Railway, and 'The Art of Giving', celebrating important donations by local people including Lutz and Pamela Haber, who also made a significant financial contribution to the Friends of the Victoria Art Gallery.

Significant acquisitions for the collection were two drawings by William Heath Robinson, a Victorian stained glass panel and three oil paintings – 'Corsham Towers' by Peter Lanyon, 'Catherine Place' by Paul Methuen and 'Treen 5' by Robyn Denny.

The Gallery's Friends grant-aided the conservation of Jeremiah Davison's full length portrait of the 'Princess of Wales', which was re-hung in the Guildhall Banqueting Room at the same time as the newly restored 'Abduction of Helen' and 'Death of Dido' were re-installed in the Aix-en-Provence Room.



Louise Payton of Hayesfield School with her dad and her portrait of him, at the opening of the Schools Art exhibition



The Abduction of Helen after Guido Reni (1575-1642)

The Fashion Museum

Displays

The displays of historic and contemporary fashions at the Fashion Museum are changed regularly so as to showcase different objects from the museum collections. This year changes included an edited display of a selection of the Fashion Museum's well-known Dress of the Year collection which unveiled fashions by Karl Lagerfeld for Chanel, Kate Moss for Topshop, Prada, Marni and Giles. Other names on display included Ossie Clark, John Galliano, Alexander McQueen and Versace as well as designs for men by Missoni, Armani, Paul Smith and Thom Browne. A display of album covers from the same years set the designer fashions in contemporary context. The display was updated during the year to include the addition of the 2009 dress by Antonio Berardi, which was selected by Lucy Yeomans, Editor of *Harpers Bazaar*.

In October the Fashion Museum arranged a small display case of work by 1960s design duo Foale and Tuffin, including loans from the designers.

Study facilities

The Fashion Museum Study Facilities are used by people of all ages, backgrounds and interests to study objects in the collection close up. In addition, the partnership with Bath Spa University gives its Fashion students regular access to the collection, while some come from further afield, such as the group from the University of Notre Dame from Indiana, USA.

Individual researchers have included Cathy Hay, a re-enactor and a skilled dress-maker and embroiderer, who studied an embroidered yellow silk evening dress by Worth worn in 1902 by Lady Curzon, Vicereine of India. Cathy recreated the dress to wear at a convention in Los Angeles in 2009, and wrote about the project:

"The research involved photographing the entire pattern across the dress so that I could reproduce every inch of it accurately. I copied the leaf pattern by eye from my photo, traced it onto huge sheets of tracing paper and transferred it through to the silk directly. The decoration is hand-sewn onto the dress, as on the original. Each leaf takes about 45 minutes to do and I need to do six leaves a day".

Cathy reported back after the Los Angeles event:

"This would not have been possible without the ability to come and see the dress in person and handle it at a study table; not only have I learnt a great deal, but those reading my blog say that it has been a fascinating journey for them too!

Volunteers

This year 15 work experience students helped to add records of over 4,000 museum objects to the collection management system. The West of England Costume Society volunteers reorganised the Study Facilities reference library, ensuring that the books are now much more accessible for visitors.

Acquisitions

The Museum acquired two 1930s evening dresses by celebrated Parisian couturier Madeleine Vionnet. The dresses, which originally belonged to Lady Foley who bought them directly from Vionnet in the 1930s, were acquired with grant-aid from the MLA/V&A Purchase Grant Fund, The Art Fund, the West of England Costume Society and many private individuals. The dresses went on display at the Fashion Museum in December 2009.

Two rare 1930s evening dresses by Paris couturier Madeleine Vionnet, acquired by the Fashion Museum in 2009



Cathy Hay modeling her copy of the Worth evening dress



Bath Record Office

For the fourth year running, Record Office staff were voted best in the South West by users in an independent national survey. The Public Services Quality Group survey of visitors to UK Archives is the most comprehensive survey of archive users in the world. The Council's staff scored highest in the region for quality and appropriateness of advice; friendliness and helpfulness; best service for document delivery; copy services; and best website.

Visitor figures equalled those of 2008/09, which were a record 25% increase on 2007/08. The continued high level of usage demonstrates the enthusiasm for research of local residents and visitors, for leisure, commercial, and academic interest. Enhancement and updating of the website provided an opportunity to add many more local images. Better arrangement of user-guides has made it easier to navigate catalogues of our extensive archive collections.

The year's acquisitions included records of Bath Scout Group 1911-2005; Women's League of Health & Beauty (Bath branch) 1938-1998; a Bath surgeon's commonplace book c.1730; a music manuscript book of James Cantelo of Bath 1789; and a ledger of attorney Thomas Symons for Bath clients including John Wood and William Oliver 1772-1784.

Behind-the-scenes work by volunteers has made more fascinating documents accessible to researchers. The sorting, listing, and transcribing of historic records by 12 local volunteers continued throughout the year. One volunteer has transcribed the Spanish correspondence of Michael Langton, a merchant of Bath and Cadiz around 1810. The transcript formed the basis of a conference-paper delivered by teaching staff at Cadiz University on the history of business accounting.

Closer links with Bath Spa University's history and heritage degree courses resulted in new teaching sessions given by the archivists and the introduction of student work placements in the Record Office. Students from the University of Bath's faculty of architecture came in higher numbers than ever to study historic plans of Bath buildings. Lectures to local community groups, history societies, and secondary school pupils were given to promote public awareness of the rich resources of the archive collections.



Band of 1st Bath Scout troop, 1916

Document helps Council with VAT refund

During the past year, Bath City Council budget books from the 1990s and other documents have been studied by a Council Financial Analyst. The documents provided evidence that helped the Council secure a VAT refund of over £1.2 million from HM Revenue & Customs. This is the second year that archive documents have assisted with VAT refunds, which now total over £6 million.

Bath City Council budget books used to list charges for Council services, in addition to income and expenditure for each department. They are one of the many collections in the custody of Bath Record Office, where they are made available to the public and to Council staff. The records are used for the evidence they provide about the history of the area including its finances, the built environment, its communities, and personal and family history.

This volume is one of a series of budget books produced by the former Bath City Council



Learning and Programmes

The Roman Baths has won its fifth Sandford Award, which recognises outstanding contributions to heritage education and learning with the historic environment. We also won the new 'Learning Outside The Classroom' quality badge, a national accreditation combining the essential elements of provision – learning and safety.

Formal and informal learning activities continued this year on all sites. Children in groups attending teaching sessions numbered 9,889 at the Roman Baths, 1,567 at the Victoria Art Gallery and 1,781 at the Fashion Museum. A further 9,369 people have taken part in community activities at these museums.

Special activities included sessions with adult carers and 'Off the Record', a local group for children and young people with caring responsibilities in their homes, working with artist Laura McCafferty and her exhibition 'Drawing with Fabric' at the Fashion Museum. Other projects included museum tours and art sessions for the 'Give us a Break Project' in partnership with the Adult Health, Social Care & Housing Partnership.

Working with the Built Heritage Team, the Story of the Stones family event at Stanton Drew included story-telling, pottery making, a flint knapping demonstration and geophysical surveys run by the Bath & Camerton Archaeological Society and the Council's Archaeological Officer. Stanton Drew Primary School make a model of a stone circle which was displayed at the event which was attended by 200 to 300 local people.

Work at our museums continued with the School Improvement Team on the Able Pupils Extending Opportunities scheme (APEX). A summer school in July 2009 taught the skills needed to set up a museum display; the group visited exhibitions at all three sites and chose objects from the Roman Baths' collection to develop a display in the Roman Baths Education Room.

Eight 'River Avon' workshops for local primary school children, supported by Wessex Water, took place at the Victoria Art Gallery, working with Bristol-based artist Andrew Hardwick.

A grant from the Museums Libraries & Archives Council enabled the development of a GCSE local history pack in partnership with the Head of History from Oldfield School. The pack will use visual and textual resources from our museum collections.

We also worked on three accredited day schools with the Department of Archaeology & Anthropology at Bristol University. Two days looked at Roman artefacts, while the third day's theme was Bath & the Roman Empire – the most popular of the year's day schools.

Lectures and presentations

Heritage Services staff gave around 50 lectures and presentations during 2009/10. They contributed to programmes organised by Bath Spa University, Bristol University, Portsmouth University, the Ironbridge Institute, West of England Costume Society, Bath & Camerton Archaeological Society and 'Connections through Culture' conference in Beijing. Other audiences included schools, colleges, local history groups, townswomen's guilds, local visually impaired groups and visiting American universities from North Carolina and Tennessee. These talks covered a wide variety of subjects to do with our museum and archive collections, the history and archaeology of the district, conservation, interpretation, heritage management, marketing and business planning.



Children at work in the Fashion Museum



Heritage Events

Partnership work with independent museums and attractions

A further grant of £13,000 from the Museums Libraries & Archives Council Museum Development Fund continued to support our **Heritage Events Co-ordinator** post and the six community activities it organises with the collaboration of 36 other museums and heritage sites in Bath & North East Somerset.

2009/10 saw over 26,000 people both local residents and visitors benefit from the six collaborative events at the many museums and heritage sites in Bath & North East Somerset.

Bath's first **World Heritage Day** (April) was celebrated in 2009. Over 2,000 people enjoyed the day which included guided tours of the Abbey Floor and Tower, Mayor's Guides special walks around the historic city and a special National Trust walk at Prior Park. On Kingston Parade the Ermine Street Guard demonstrated their drill and weaponry, followed by Roman characters from the Roman Baths.

The third national and international **Museums at Night** event was held in May. Eight museums opened late into the night: at the Museum of Bath at Work visitors enjoyed a recital of radiophonic music, romantic music was performed at No1 Royal Crescent and visitors enjoyed a taste of ancient cookery at the Roman Baths. Visitor numbers were 1,386 over the day and evening events.

The national **Heritage Open Days** weekend in September 2009 was the largest yet with 19 sites across the district attracting over 3,000 visitors. For the first time in many years visitors were able to visit the grounds, Chapter House and Refectory of the Carthusian Hinton Priory which dates back to the 13th century. Other highlights were the behind-the-scenes tours of the Little Theatre Cinema and the opening of the Somerset & Dorset Railway Heritage Trust Museum.

Our very own **Heritage Open Week** celebrates the amazing range of collections and sites in Bath & North East Somerset. There were 107 events at 24 heritage sites and museums over 9 days in October half-term. This popular week saw over 14,000 local residents taking part in activities such as guided tours, explorer trails, sculpture sessions, a fossil hunt and lots of art and craft activities.

Heritage Feast, a new event this year, the museums of B&NES into a community setting at Southside Youth Centre. The central theme was food – visitors could try food from Roman, Georgian and World War II periods and the museums held object-handling sessions and activities relating to one of these three eras. One of the Museums Libraries & Archives Council funding criteria for collaboration between local museums was to work in an area with a high rating on the deprivation indices. The event received invaluable support from the Council's Catering Services, Youth Service and Stronger Communities team.



Deputy Chair of Council Councillor Sarah Bevan leading a Heritage Open Days activity explaining local democracy in the Guildhall Council Chamber



Heritage Open Week activity at Saltford Brassmill



A Radstock Museum volunteer explains mining equipment to a youngster during Heritage Open Week 2009



Chair of Council Councillor Bryan Chalker with a Horstmann car at the Museum of Bath at Work during 'Museums at Night 2009'



Visitors enjoying a guided tour of the 14th century Englishcombe tithe barn during Heritage Open Days 2009.



Professor Heard's 'Peerless Magic Lantern Show' at the American Museum during Heritage Open Week



World Heritage Day – the public meet the Ermine Street Guard

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Front cover photographs:

- 1 The Fashion Museum's 2009 Dress of the Year by Antonio Berardi
- 2 Visitors enjoying the display of Bohemian glass at the Victoria Art Gallery
- 3 World Heritage Day on April 18 2009 with the Ermine Street Guard on Kingston Parade
- 4 Mary Wilson at The Story of The Supremes exhibition at the Assembly Rooms
- 5 New merchandise displays in the new enlarged Roman Baths Shop
- 6 Bath Spa University fashion students' catwalk show at the Assembly Rooms
- 7 Wedding of Ayesha Chawdhry and Raj Manek at the Roman Baths
- 8 Assistant Archivist Lucy Powell in one of the Bath Record Office archive stores
- 9 Visitors trying out a new museum interactive at the Roman Baths
- 10 Pump Room chef Ian Anderson, Visit Britain's Face of British Tourism 2010
- 11 Sixties designers Foale and Tuffin, subject of a Fashion Museum display in 2009
- 12 Getting to grips with Roman glass during Heritage Open Week 2009
- 13 Visitor Services Assistant Philip Harper giving a tour of the Guildhall roof for Heritage Open Days
- 14 Artist Sophie Ryder with her wire drawing 'Open Hand II' at the Victoria Art Gallery

To receive regular information on events, exhibitions and new developments, log on to one or more of these websites and subscribe to our e-newsletters:

www.romanbaths.co.uk
www.fashionmuseum.co.uk
www.victoriagal.org.uk

This Annual Review can be made available in a range of community languages, large print, Braille, on tape, electronic and accessible formats.

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