

Newsletter

Issue 3 June 2018

Reflecting back on the previous year

THE
ROMAN
BATHS
FOUNDATION

A message from the chair

“The Archway Project is the first project at the Roman Baths that the Foundation is supporting. It’s much more than a building project. There is a lot happening behind the scenes, to open up new spaces to the public and to create the Learning Centre and World Heritage Centre. This includes conservation of in-situ Roman remains, excavations and engagement with local residents and community groups. Your donations helped make all the following highlights happen – thank you!”

David Beeton, Chair of the Roman Baths Foundation

“This is my first real find and a dream come true.”

In February 2018, some of the largest excavations at the Roman Baths took place for over 30 years resulting in the discovery of a mosaic. Cotswold Archaeology carried out the works with support from volunteers of Bath and Counties Archaeological Society (BACAS). This included ground radar and resistivity surveys, before opening up some trenches and re-excavating some 19th and 20th century drains. This allowed them to investigate the deposits through which the drains were dug.

Volunteers ran 20-minute tours of the archaeological works at regular intervals. This gave visitors access to the excavations taking place in vaults, which are not open to the public. Visitors were able to see many spaces and features that the Archway Project will transform and open. In total, 21 volunteers contributed over 150 days of activity from trowelling and photogrammetry, to delivering public tours to 1,329 visitors.

BACAS volunteer Fiona Medland discovered the in-situ Roman mosaic. She said: *“This is my first real find and a dream come true.”* The mosaic is in the project area called the Exercise Court. The small cubes of stone (1cm²) are a creamy buff colour, made from local stone, and carefully laid. The discovery shows that right from the beginning, the Roman Baths was a special place to visit and decorated to a refined standard.



The in-situ mosaic discovered in February 2018 by a volunteer.

21 volunteers
1,329 visitors
1 mosaic discovered

Conserving in-situ Roman remains in the Investigation Zone

Conservation work took place in the York Street undercroft. The Project Team contracted conservation experts to clean algae and pollution from part of a low Roman wall and doorway (a *stylobate*). This was originally part of a colonnaded walkway along the south side of the Roman Baths site. Other works include extensive re-pointing and filling of voids in some unstable Roman cross walls. These walls divide up the large space that will become part of the Investigation Zone.



Transforming the stylobate and doorway in the Investigation Zone - before and after.

Revealing the oldest coin discovered at the Roman Baths



In September 2017, Cotswold Archaeology undertook a small programme of archaeological investigations in the York Street tunnels. These informed the design of the walkways over the Roman remains in the new areas that will open to the public – the Exercise Court and the Investigation Zone.

The archaeologists discovered some really wonderful finds: two coins dating to the reigns of Valentinian I (364-375AD) and Valens (364-378AD) and a nail cleaner with a rare incised 'peacock' design (4AD). The nail cleaner is a rare find connected with personal hygiene from the bathing complex.

The Team discovered a third coin during the excavations. Conservators cleaned the coin to reveal the coin's design. It is a silver Denarius made in Rome in 85BC. The coin is dated 128 years before the Roman invasion of Britain, and long before the Roman Baths were built (around 65-75AD). This means that it is the oldest coin discovered at the Roman Baths!



The coin before and after conservation.

2,102 years old
The age of the oldest
coin found at the Roman
Baths

Bringing the Laundry to life in collaboration with Bath Spa University

Third year Heritage Management students from Bath Spa University carried out an oral history project called *Talking Laundry* with local people who have memories of the Bath City Laundry. Using the memories that they collected, they held an exhibition to give people more insight into this part of Bath's history. Students talked to the visitors about their discoveries. Their research will feed into digital interpretation about the Victorian Spa buildings. The students will produce this next year, to bring this part of Bath's spa history back to life.

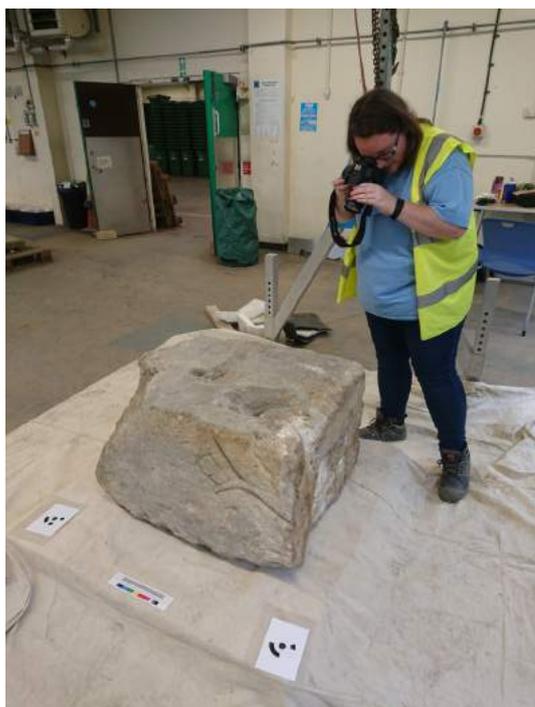
Second year Heritage Management students from Bath Spa University researched the Victorian spa. They discovered interesting information such as a film featuring some of the old spa treatments. Visitor books added to the story about the treatments and Swallow Street's time as a Victorian Spa.



Students captured people's memories and transformed them into an exhibition about the Victorian spa building.

The students were very pleased with their experience: *"The experience was positive and informative, especially working with the Roman Baths and creating connections in preparation for next year. Some of the most interesting aspects of the project included gaining access to the Swallow Street site, as it gave us a behind-the-scenes look at the site that we can use for a point of reference in how the Archway Project will change things in the future."*

Using 3D photogrammetry to create new learning resources



3D photogrammetry taking place.

The Collections Team began the process of cataloguing, moving and conserving the stone collection. They captured a range of information about each of the 200 stones: photographs, size, unique features, and conservation needs.

After cataloguing, the Team contracted Cliveden (conservation specialist) to move the stones safely to a secure facility in Pixash, and to clean them. They photographed the stones from all angles: a process known as 3D photogrammetry.

The images will become a part of a digital learning resource, which children and young people will use in the Investigation Zone. The information will also instruct how and where to display the stones in the Investigation Zone.

200 stones
catalogued, moved and
photographed

Helping local people improve their wellbeing at the Roman Baths

The Project Team continued to deliver *Wellbeing Wonders* with the Stroke Association and the Carers' Centre. This seven-week course uses the Roman Baths and the collections, to help people from these groups improve their wellbeing.

***“Absolutely loved it,
didn't want it to end.
Felt a part of the
place.”***
a course participant



Wellbeing Wonders participants enjoyed the collection, the surroundings and the company on their course.

What's next for The Archway Project?

The Project Team will appoint the main contractor in August 2018. The Invitation to Tender stage of the procurement process is currently live. The successful bidder will carry out the redevelopment works for the learning space and the other project areas.

Visitors to the Roman Baths will be able to see the works happening in the Exercise Court thanks to new interpretation and a window in the doors to the Exercise Court. There will be other ways to keep up with the action too: watch this space.

The new areas will now open in 2020. The change in opening date is due to other projects in the local area, which are outside of the Project Team's control. Your donations remain ring-fenced for The Archway Project.



Visitors will be able to see works in progress.

Keep in touch

To find out more about the Foundation or to discuss your donation, please contact:

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You can read the updated privacy notice at www.romanbaths.co.uk/foundation.
The Roman Baths Foundation is a registered charity No. 1163044.