Water and Cults in Ancient Times: Study, Conservation and Recovery of Historic Baths
Catherine Lloyd, Simons Associates, Bath
History: Origins
Modern Bath
Modern Bath
Continuous Spa Culture
Bath World Heritage Site
Outstanding Universal Value

- Roman Archaeology
- The Hot Springs
- Georgian town planning
- Georgian architecture
- The green setting of the city in a hollow in the hills
- Georgian architecture reflecting 18th century ambitions
The Celts – Pre-Roman Bath

• Celtic tradition and worship around natural features, water in particular – often a feminine deity

• Natural springs, holy wells and healing powers, fertility and worship of “mother earth”

• The deities of the sun, moon and four seasons
In the Mists of time – Prince Bladud
Prehistoric Bath?
The Roman City of Aquae Sulis
Amongst the most famous and important Roman remains north of the Alps... ’ICOMOS Evaluation Report 1986
A model of 4th Century Bath
Monastic control
1572 – Still a compact but wealthy wool town. Abbey Church dominates.
1779: Georgian expansion
History: Georgian
Rediscovery – excavations 1890
Then......

1890
Now......
Conservation issues

- Rising damp, salts and evaporation
- Salts in masonry increasing breakdown of the original stone
- Draw out the salts with a poultice method and consolidate original plaster and mortars
- Control humidity with a mixture of ventilation and humidification with pure water vapour
New Development Plan

• Based on negotiation to re-invest a proportion of £4 million per annum surplus generated by income
• Priorities: Conservation, Access, Interpretation and Trading (shop refurbishment)
• Constant refreshing of product – new interpretation techniques
• New Re-display – less is more
• Awards
• Continuing success
Audio Guide
Video characters
New costumed characters
Improved Access and Experience

• 2 new lifts and improved accessibility for wheelchair users
• New interpretation that can be viewed by many people together
• Temperature control in the temple precinct
• Online tools – walkthrough and interpretation of the collection, children’s area on website
• Events and lectures
- £0.5m, 12 month investigation
- new insights into Roman town plan
Cross Bath and Spring

- A pagan altar and shrine beneath the Roman cistern
- Offerings to a female deity
- Today – the Springs Foundation, special access and listed as one of the world’s Sacred Sites
THE CROSS BATH
'Water is the ultimate life, pure as crystal, the divine influx.'

Ted Hughes
¿De todos modos....que es un balneario?
Thank You