

Event report: Bath World Heritage Day 2016

The splendour of Georgian society is celebrated at World Heritage Day in Bath

On Sunday 17 April the Assembly Rooms came alive with echoes from Georgian Bath for World Heritage Day.

This annual free event, which celebrates and promotes the city's World Heritage Site status, is now in its eighth year. World Heritage Day is held at a different venue in Bath each year. This was the first time the event had taken place indoors. The theme

chosen for the day was Bath's Georgian social legacy – one of the key attributes for which the city was designated a 'World Heritage Site' by UNESCO in 1987. The Assembly Rooms, which opened in 1771, provided the perfect setting for a range of themed activities and entertainments.



Over 650 visitors of all ages took the opportunity to learn Georgian dances with the Jane Austen Dancers, listen to 18th century music, gamble at the card tables, try on fancy costumes and make-up, explore displays of Georgian objects and find out more about the art and architecture of the Assembly Rooms. Craft activities

were enjoyed by the younger visitors - many a tricorne hat was spotted around town that day!

A highlight was the chance to meet Captain William Wade (Bath's Master of Ceremonies from the 1770s) and his friends - the artist Thomas Gainsborough and Mr and Mrs James Hook Campbell. However, proper standards of behaviour were not always observed as it emerged Captain Wade and Mr Campbell were rivals for the affections of Mrs Hook! At times the tension spilled over from the card tables to a formal duel with swords and pistol - the skilful stage-fighting actors of the Natural Theatre Company put on an entertaining show for the crowds!



Guided tours are a popular feature of Bath's World Heritage Day. This year there were three to choose from. The Mayor of Bath's Honorary Guides led walks around the 'Upper Town', to explain how the 'Company of Bath' shifted their focus to developments in this fashionable area in the 18th century. Within the Assembly Rooms visitors were given wonderful views of the elegant interiors of the public rooms on a Balcony Tour. 'Georgian Highlights Tours' of the Fashion Museum's brand new 'Fashion in 100 Objects' exhibition were also on offer.



A showcase was provided for Bath's many and varied heritage organisations. The National Trust with their technology partners from the University of Bath invited visitors on a virtual reality walk through Ralph Allen's landscape garden at Prior Park. The Bath Royal

Literary and Scientific Institution brought along the fascinating 18th century diaries of 'Enlightened' Bath resident, Edmund Rack. The city's major Heritage Lottery Fund projects were all represented, with informative displays and staff on hand from Bath Abbey Footprint, the Cleveland Pools Trust, the 'Bathscape' landscape partnership and the Archway Centre Project. The exciting Archway Centre development will extend learning facilities at the Roman Baths and deliver a World Heritage Interpretation Centre in the heart of the city.

