



**Victoria Baths**  
Manchester's Water Palace

# Newsletter

## Issue 10

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### The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

The highest award for volunteering in the UK has been given to Victoria Baths' volunteers  
– [see page 3](#)

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### A Special Place

Jennifer Dowson explains why she has left a gift in her will to Victoria Baths Trust  
– [read more on page 4](#)

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### Meet Roxy Stafford

Operations Coordinator Roxy tells us about her role and what Victoria Baths means to her  
– [see our back page interview](#)

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## Join Us Online



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## A Water Palace for the People

A brand new exhibition opened at the Baths in September. It tells the story of Victoria Baths from the 1906 opening right through to the present day and encourages visitors to get involved and support future restoration plans. Stories are featured about individuals associated with Victoria Baths, from the families who lived in the Superintendent's Flat to swimmer Sunny Lowry MBE to campaigner and Trustee Chandy Coverley.



A Water Palace for the People - new exhibition

Objects on display include Sunny Lowry's original (and at the time very daring) two-piece swimsuit made for her channel swim in 1933 and a replica of a "Save Victoria Baths" banner painted on a bedsheet.

## Events Calendar 2020:

**25th & 26th April**  
SpringFest

**13th & 14th June**  
Weekend of Words

**12th & 13th September**  
Heritage Open Weekend and Swim for Restoration

**14th & 15th November**  
Festive Winter Fair

**Guided Tours every Wednesday afternoon**  
**1st April to 28th October**

More details on tours and events will be available soon, check the Visit page on our website.

## Weekend of Words



Sarah-Clare Conlon reading at Re-Place(s) on 9th June 2019

A UNESCO City of Literature, Manchester is home to a thriving live literature scene, with thousands of people attending book launches, author readings, open mic nights and reading groups across the city. It's against this background that we threw open our doors this June for a 'Weekend of Words'.

For this first foray into the world of writing and spoken word, we were ably supported by Manchester-based writer Sarah-Clare Conlon, who we appointed writer-in-residence for Victoria Baths. Sarah-Clare became somewhat of a fixture in the building during the spring, taking in the atmosphere, sounds and reflections and gathering material for writing inspired by the building and its history.

The Re-Place(s) event provided a space for Sarah-Clare and fellow North-West-based writers – Kate Feld, David Gaffney, Phil Olsen, Joe Stretch and Lara Williams - to showcase new works all inspired by the Baths.

Over 50 writers entered our inaugural 'Splash Fiction' competition and we were delighted to award Angi Holden the winner's prize of £100 for her story 'Preserving History'.

'Weekend of Words' was supported by Arts Council England and will happen again in 2020, so if you're interested in being involved do get in touch with Chris Lee, Events Coordinator [chris@victoriabaths.org.uk](mailto:chris@victoriabaths.org.uk)



## Females Pool

Great news! With a very generous donation from Friend Mark Watson and funds from the Amazing Glazing Crowdfunder, we have been able to commission the full restoration of the first of two large windows in the Females Pool, the North Window. Two donors have come forward and offered to pay half each for the work needed on the South Window. Both are beautiful stained glass windows



Photo: Females Pool North Window in a very poor state of repair, this work will return them to their former glory and keep the rain and wind out.

## Royal Recognition

Victoria Baths, like many other community-run heritage buildings, relies on a team of volunteers who undertake all sorts of roles to save the building for future generations to enjoy.

Since the Baths closed in 1993, volunteers have cleared out debris, raised funds for restoration and much, much more. We currently have a volunteer team numbering around 50 people, all of whom give varying amounts of their time to be Trustees, Tea Room helpers and Tour Guides, as well as cleaning, maintenance, welcoming visitors to the building and running the VB gift shop. Behind the scenes, it is volunteers who look after the History Archive, Friends memberships, send out large mailings and help with fundraising appeals, amongst other office-based tasks.

We are absolutely delighted that our volunteers have been recognised by the Queen for... *“Working with passion to preserve and restore the remarkable Edwardian Grade II\* listed Victoria Baths in Manchester”*.



Juliette Bradbury, Nigel Gloudon, Janet Hough, Mandy Padfield, Vicky Hogarth and Oneta Wilson at the Queens Award ceremony, August 2019

Two volunteers, Jill Earnshaw and Cath Brownhill, attended a summer garden party at Buckingham Palace, and a group of ten attended the formal awards ceremony at Gorton Monastery in August. Juliette Bradbury and Janet Hough received the award from the Lord Lieutenant of Greater Manchester on behalf of past and current volunteers.

Juliette said *“It was a wonderful, memorable ceremony, I found it quite emotional. There are so many inspirational people in Greater Manchester.”*



## A Round of Applause for United Utilities!

Our Swim for Restoration weekend in September raised over £4,000 for the Restoration Fund and we want to say a special thank you to United Utilities who very generously agreed to offer us the water for the pool at no charge. Believe it or not, filling a pool this size can cost up to £900 in water alone, so we're extremely grateful for their support.

Thank you too to the wonderful team of lifeguards who volunteered their time to come over from Hathersage Pool in Derbyshire for the day and look after our swimmers. It is gestures like this that make it possible to have swimming here from time to time.

Jane Cheetham brought her 15-year old daughter Jodie and her Uncle Syd for a swim and her husband Bill to spectate.



Photo: Mark Prime

Syd, now in his eighties, learned to swim at Victoria Baths with his two sisters, so wanted to visit for a trip down memory lane. *“Thank you to all the team for a wonderful experience on Sunday – we all loved every minute”* wrote Jane afterwards.

Boys from Manchester Grammar School and girls from Manchester High School for Girls took part in the first swimming gala at Victoria Baths



Swimming Gala in 1974 (Top) and Swimming Showcase in September 2019

for over 26 years, followed by a lively water polo match by Stretford Water Polo club.

This event contributed a fantastic £800 towards the overall fundraising total for the weekend.



## Meet Operations Coordinator Roxy Stafford



Roxy Stafford

**Hi Roxy, can you tell us a bit more about yourself and how you first became aware of Victoria Baths?**

*I first visited the Baths back in 2014 for the Vintage Home Show. The building's character took my breath away so when I saw a job advertised, the draw of being able to work in such a historic building was too strong not to apply. I have a degree in Art History and, after*

*several years working in investment banking, I really wanted to do something to fulfil my love of history. Four years later (with a break to have my son), I still experience those moments of awe when I take a minute upstairs.*

**Can you tell us about an average day in the life of the Operations Coordinator?**

*I can't say I've had an 'average day' yet as it's so varied! My main responsibility is for our volunteers and I've been trying to meet with them all, no easy feat considering we have over 50 helping here. I've taken over responsibility for the Tea Room which has been fun. I sit on a number of committees and facilitate monthly Friends Forum meetings.*

**The Tea Room is looking very lovely these days, are you planning any further improvements?**

*Thank you. I have been so lucky to have inherited a team of volunteers who love working in there and are brimming with ideas to make it*

*even more special. We're in the development stages of offering a cream tea on Wednesday afternoons, which is very exciting. The Tea Room is often the place where visitors share their memories of the Baths, so I'm thinking of how to better capture these wonderful recollections. We are also hoping to start hosting community groups such as parent and baby meet-ups.*

**How do you see volunteering developing in the future at Victoria Baths?**

*I really want to expand on the volunteering opportunities we have on offer. As well as public-facing roles, events and history, we hope to increase opportunities in administration, maintenance, gardening and digital engagement/ social media. I'd also like to improve our working relationships with other heritage buildings e.g. arranging volunteer swap days.*

If you would like to get involved with volunteering at Victoria Baths just email [roxy@victoriabaths.org.uk](mailto:roxy@victoriabaths.org.uk)

## A Special Place in my Life

Jennifer Dowson has been involved with Victoria Baths since visiting and taking a guided tour in 2008. She has recently updated her will to leave a legacy to Victoria Baths Trust and is happy to share her reasons why. Jennifer explains "When I recently updated my will, it did not take long for me to realise that there are

two very special places in my life - Victoria Baths and Hare Hill (a National Trust property). So whereas I give to various other charities on both an ad-hoc and monthly basis, in respect of my will the beneficiaries will be Victoria Baths and Hare Hill - places which have become very important to me

both in terms of restoration and preservation, and where I have made some very good friends. If I can help, even a little, to contribute to their future, then that is something I am more than happy to do."

If you're thinking about leaving a gift in your will to Victoria Baths and have any questions, Gwyneth is here to help by phone or email [gwyneth@victoriabaths.org.uk](mailto:gwyneth@victoriabaths.org.uk).

You may like to advise her, in complete confidence, that you have named Victoria Baths Trust as a beneficiary. We always recommend seeing a solicitor if you're thinking of writing or amending your will.



Jennifer Dowson

## Contact us

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