

Paul Simons



Paul Simons trained at the Architectural Association in London in the 1970's and became a Lethaby Scholar at the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. He has spent his career in heritage management, cultural tourism and the work of preservation trusts (Vivat Trust, Clevedon Pier, Brunel's Bristol Old Station, Arkwright Society and currently Cleveland Pools Bath). He has worked in tourism in Bristol, Norwich and in 1994 moved to Bath as Executive Director of Tourism, then being seconded as Project Director of 'Thermae Bath Spa', Bath's Millennium Project in 1998. Since 2003 he has been in consultancy and is currently the Chair of the Scientific Committee of the European Historic Thermal Towns Association, one of the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes and since 2013 he has been the Secretary General of the Great Spa Towns of Europe, now a new UNESCO World Heritage Site. He is a member of ICOMOS, the City of Bath World Heritage Advisory Board and is currently working on World Heritage nominations in Spain and the Caribbean. Until 2015 he was a Director of McCurdy & Co, historic timber framed building specialists who built the replica of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London.

His talk will be on "The Great Spa Towns of Europe – transcending boundaries."

The World Heritage nomination of the Great Spas of Europe became a possibility in 2010 following an ICOMOS conference held in Baden-Baden. That spa town, along with others in Belgium, Czech Republic and France had looked with some envy at the inscription of the City of Bath as, at that time, the only spa town on the World Heritage List. However, this timing also coincided with the move to consider thematic, serial nominations which may, or may not, also cross national boundaries. At that time relevant examples of 'serial transnationals' to look at included the Frontiers of the Roman Empire, the buildings of Le Corbusier, the Pile Dwellings of the Alps and the Wadden Sea, challenging concepts in themselves but nothing prepared the steering groups for the complexities of presenting whole, economically vibrant historic cities and towns with a common purpose and continuing living spa tradition. That was the start of a fascinating journey and learning experience that has only just begun with the success of the nomination in July 2021.