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Reinventing the Past: John Wood the Elder

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Abstract: In 1724 Antiquarian William Stukeley stated that Bath, England, was a "The small compass of the city has made the inhabitants crowd up the streets to an unseemly and inconvenient narrowness... a disgrace to the architects they have there." Within forty year of this statement Bath had become a 'Jewel in the Georgian crown' and is now a World Heritage site. Architect John Wood the Elder had a vision for the city of Bath that contained elegant streets, squares and crescents. These were not just individual buildings but they were an integrated plan that reformed a city from a place where people came to 'take the waters' of the hot springs for their health into a desirable city of elegant residences where the fashionable elite spent the social season. Wood was a prolific writer and published several books in his lifetime. In these books he considers architecture and history. He wrote a history of Bath, which was more folklore than history, that was openly challenged at the time. His history moved the historic focus of Bath away from the Romans and it emphasised the importance of the native Britons. This paper examines how Wood used architecture to memorialise the past, not through style, but through measurements and elements. He had a unique way of 'writing' history into his architectural plans and in this way he reinvented the past into a new and distinct architecture that remains aw-inspiring to this day.

Keywords: John Wood the Elder, Bath England, Architecture

Introduction

ANE AUSTEN LIVED in Bath from 1801 to 1806 and she sets two of her novels, *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*, in Bath. These books depict the city of Bath as a thriving spa resort, which was popular with fashionable society and the gentry – it was the place to be and to be seen. From this image of the city it would appear that Bath had been a well established magnet for this society; yet in the early nineteenth century Bath's popularity had only been a recent phenomenon. In 1724, William Stukeley described Bath as being a small mean city of narrow streets¹ but it became the 'Jewel in the Georgian crown.' This transformation was instigated by John Wood the Elder who as a young man in 1720s begun his architectural transformation of Bath. Wood claimed that in 1727 little had changed in Bath since the last century when "the streets and public ways of the city were become like so many dunghills, slaughter-houses, and pig-sties."² Wood planned to reshape this imperfect Bath into an elegant and fashionable city. He perceived Bath as a historic and cultural centre of the ancient Britons and he believed that the architecture of the city should reflect this ancient heritage.

Wood writes this perceived history of Bath in *An Essay Towards a Description of Bath* was first published in 1749 in two volumes. In Volume One Wood examined the details of Bath's history and development. In Volume Two he considered modern Bath, and gave a

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¹ William Stukeley, *Itinerarium Curio s um I* (London: 1724), 138.

² John Wood, An Essay Towards a Description of Bath (London: 1749), II, 216

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description of his pre-eminent role in the architectural development of the city of Bath in the 1720s and 1730s. Wood claimed that in 1725 he designed a proposal for Bath that would

make a grand place of assembly, to be called the Royal Forum of Bath; another place, no less magnificent, for the exhibition of sports, to be called the Grand Circus; and a third place of square state with either of the former, for the practice of medicinal exercises, to be called the Imperial Gymnasium of the city, from a work of that kind, taking its rise at first in Bath, during the time of the Roman emperors.³

This quote is often used as evidence that Wood referred to Roman architecture and history in Bath for his inspiration in its transformation,⁴ and since his buildings were of the Palladian style this at first appears to be supported. The quote comes at the end of Volume One; no plans are shown and the topic is not continued in Volume Two and it is out of context with the previous text, perhaps it is just a grand note to end Volume One. In his *Essay* on the development and history of Bath, Wood emphasized the roles of the ancient Britons. Although he acknowledged the Roman contribution to the city of Bath in Volume One of *Essay*, he played down the Romans' role because he claimed that it was insignificant to the development of Bath, which was already a city of importance and had been since its foundation by the British King Bladud.

King Bladud the Flounder of Bath and Stonehenge

The ancient British King Bladud was the legendary founder of the city of Bath. He was first mentioned in the highly influential Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*, ⁵ which was the oldest source for the myth, written in the twelfth century. However, the myth developed and by the seventeenth century Bladud had been established as the founder of Bath and the discoverer of the hot springs. The myth had many variations, but generally it was said that after contracting leprosy Prince Bladud had been banished from the kingdom of his father. Reduced to poverty he had to make a living as a swineherd until some of the pigs caught the disease from him. Bladud fled from his employer with the pigs and travelled until he found some hot mud that ultimately cured him and the pigs from leprosy. He returned to his father's court where he was reinstated as a prince of the realm and he eventual became a wise ruler. Later he founded the city of Bath, where he had discovered the hot mud, and built the temple of Aqua Sullis dedicated to the goddess Minerva.

At the springs in Bath Stukeley viewed an 'fanciful image' and an account of King Bladud and he claimed that it was "a silly account of his finding these springs, more reasonably attributed to the Roman."⁶ However, this was a legend that Wood took to be the history of Britain and he elaborated this history throughout his works on Stonehenge, the origins of architecture and his description of Bath. In *Essay* he goes to lengths to establish that Bladud

³ Wood, An Essay Towards a Description of Bath, 232

⁴ Cliff Moughtin, Urban Design: Street and Square (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 2003), 117; Simon Varey, Space and the Eighteenth-Century English Novel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 100; Nigel R. Jones, Architecture of England, Scotland, and Wales (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2005), 17.

⁵ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, trans. Lewis G. M. Thorpe (Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 1966), 80–81.

⁶ Stukeley, Itinerarium Curiosum I, 139.

was the eighth or ninth king of Britain from Brute, the Trojan prince who settled Britain after the fall of Troy. Bladud had travelled to Greece and learnt the teachings of Zoroaster. Wood claimed that Bladud was a colleague and friend of Pythagoras and he brought back to Britain the Pythagorean philosophy of numbers and elements, and that it was Pythagorean philosophies that instructed the Britons in the liberal arts and sciences.⁷

Wood stated that the remains of temples surrounding Bath indicated that Bath was the metropolitan seat of the learned sect of the Druids. He added the Druid connection to the myth of Bladud. The mysteries of the Druids had been brought back to Britain with Bladud, who established Bath as a centre for the Druids and was an Arch Druid himself. The temples were built as stupendous models of the Pythagorean planetary system which were used to study and celebrate the heavenly system.⁸ Bladud set up a university at Stanton Drew,⁹ a stone circle ten miles west of Bath, which the Druids dedicated to the sun for this purpose. These temples or models of the planetary system were built to represent the revolution of time and this architecture originated from Jewish works.¹⁰ Wood claimed that the Temple of the moon at Stanton Drew (Figure 1, circle D) was built in the image of the Second Temple of Jerusalem.¹¹ Bladud was also familiar with the architecture of ancient Greece, which had been introduced to the west by Pythagoras. These complex ideas were important to Wood's philosophies and directly influenced his architectural designs and his ideas on the origins of architecture.

⁷ Wood, An Essay Towards a Description of Bath, 7–40.

⁸ Wood, An Essay Towards a Description of Bath, 148; John Wood, Choir Gaure, Vulgarly called Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain, Described, Restored and Explained, (London: 1749), 11.

⁹Wood, An Essay Towards a Description of Bath, 148.

¹⁰ John Wood, *The Origin of Building or the Plagiarism of the Heathens Detected* (London: 1741), 221; Wood, *An Essay Towards a Description of Bath*, 148

¹¹ Wood, An Essay Towards a Description of Bath, 156.



Figure 1: Wood's plan of Stanton Drew which he claimed was built to the Pythagorean system. The circle A represents the sun, the circle B is the image of the earth and circle D the moon, the stone H represents the Planet Mercury, E Venus, G Mars, C Jupiter and F Saturn¹² Drawn by the author from Wood, *An Essay Towards a Description of Bath*, unpaginated.

Wood conducted a survey of the existing ruins of Stonehenge and from this survey he reconstructed the plan of Stonehenge. He demonstrated in his book *Choir Gaure*, *Vulgarly called Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain, Described, Restored and Explained* published in 1747 that Stonehenge was a model of the Pythagorean planetary. The two outside rows of stones, the first of 30 and the second of 29 represented the length of the lunar months.¹³ The pillars of the third row represented one of the decads of days the months are divided into. Four of the pillars refer to the four quarters of the moon, as well as the sides of the tetrahedron that presented the element of fire, and the remaining six pillars represented the six days of the moon's age. The nineteen stones of the fourth row represented the lunar years in the cycle published by Meton in 432BC.¹⁴ Every stone, angle, alignment and number was symbolic of the Pythagorean system of the movement of the heavens. The meeting that the ancients called the Harmony of the Spheres "was celebrated by the British Druids at the end of every nineteenth revolution of the Earth about the sun; and at the end of every two hundred and thirty fifth revolution of the moon about the earth."¹⁵

¹² Drawn by the author from Wood, *An Essay Towards a Description of Bath*, unpaginated.

¹³ A lunar month is the length of phases of the moon from new moon to full moon it is in fact approximately 29.53059 days but perceived to be 29 and 30 calendar days

¹⁴ The Term Metonic Cycle is properly applied to the cycle of 19 twelve-months reinforced by seven intercalary months. Alexander Philip, *The Calendar: Its History, Structure and Improvement* (Bibliolife, 2009), 43.

¹⁵ Wood, Choir Gaure, Vulgarly called Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain, Described, Restored and Explained, 87.



Figure 2: Wood's ground plan of his reconstruction of Stonehenge¹⁶ Drawn by author from Wood, *Choir Gaure, Vulgarly called Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain*, Described, Restored and Explained, 66.

According to Wood, the temples of the Druids, such as Stanton Drew and Stonehenge, and Christian churches were "founded on one and the same plan, and both had their origin from Jewish works."¹⁷ The greatest of these Jewish works was the Temple of Solomon it was also the origins of architecture.

Wood and the Origin of Architecture and the Temple of Solomon

For Wood to understand the city's history was to understand its sense of place which was indivisible form the modern city's development both culturally and architectural. The origins of architecture were equally significant; after all Bladud had introduced the architecture of ancient Greece to Briton. However, in his *The Origin of Building or the Plagiarism of the Heathens Detected* published in 1741, he demonstrated that the origins of 'ancient Greek

¹⁶ Drawn by author from Wood, *Choir Gaure*, *Vulgarly called Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain*, Described, Restored and Explained, 66.

¹⁷ Wood, The Origin of Building or the Plagiarism of the Heathens Detected, 221.

architecture' was in fact plagiarised and was not Greek in origin. The Roman architect Vitruvius had claimed Greek origin for his norms of architecture which he outlined in *De Architectura* but he had plagiarised them from Jewish architecture.

Wood claimed that architecture became:

the chief study and delight of the Princes, the most renowned in history, we need not wonder that the people of every nation should endeavour to be thought the inventors of the rules for building such structures as, by their beauty, attached the admiration of the intelligent world; and wherein the Grecians bore away the palm from all others; for being a people naturally inclined to fiction, they so dressed up their story of the origin of the orders that the Romans very readily have given the invention of those beautiful parts to them, as appears by the writing of Vitruvius, who thus accounts for the rise of building in general and of order and proportion in particular.¹⁸

In *The Origin of Building* Wood carefully outlined the development of Building in a Biblical framework. The creation of a system of consistent architectural norms had its foundation in the Holy Scriptures. He compared the writings of Vitruvius with some Biblical texts to demonstrate that Vitruvius' source was from the Bible or at least from ancient buildings that had copied the original Biblical buildings, such as the Temple of Solomon.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the plan of the Temple of Solomon had been an ongoing debate; this debate generated many reconstructions from Biblical sources. The debate not only included theologians and architects, such as, Juan Bautisa Villalpando,¹⁹Benedictus Arias Montanus²⁰ and Leonhard Rauwolf²¹ but also the scientist Isaac Newton²² and Antiquarian William Stukeley²³ plus many others. The main source of the reconstructions was the Bible. There are two main descriptions in the Bible in I Kings 6-8 and the Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 40-42. There are minor differences in these descriptions; however, there are great similarities. Ezekiel 42:20 states that the Temple precinct is five hundred cubits square. Yet Wood's reconstruction was rectangular.

¹⁸ John Wood, *The Origin of Building or the Plagiarism of the Heathens Detected* (London: 1741), 4.

¹⁹ Juan Bautisa Villalpando and Hieronymus Prado, *Ezechielem Explanationes Et Apparatus Urbis hierosolymitani Commentariis Et Imaginibus Illustratus*, Roma, 1604.

²⁰ Benedictus Arias Montanus, Exemplar, siue de sacris fabricis liber, (Antwerp 1572)

²¹ Leonhard Rauwolf, *Itinerarium per Palaestinam* (Rotenburg 1681)

²² Isaac Newton, 'A Treatise or Remarks on Solomon's Temple Introduction to the Lexicon of the Prophets, Part Two: About the Appearance of the Jewish Temple, Babson Ms 0434,' in unpublished manuscript, *Babson College*, (Massachusetts: Babson College, mid-1680s).

²³ Stukeley, 'The Creation, Music of the Spheres K[ing] S[olomon's] Temple Microco[sm]- and Macrocosm Compared &C,' in unpublished manuscript, The Freemason's Library (London, 1721-1724)



Figure 2: Wood's ground plan for the Temple of Solomon²⁴ Drawn by the author from Wood, *The Origin of Building or the Plagiarism of the Heathens Detected*, plates 24 & 25

²⁴ Drawn by the author from Wood, *The Origin of Building or the Plagiarism of the Heathens Detected*, plates 24 & 25

The splendour and the majesty of the Temple were awe inspiring.

The Temple being supposed to have represented the universe, the entablature round the inside of the structure may be conceived to have intimated the division between heaven and earth; the lights, those of the firmament; and all the plain surface of gold, that beautiful and terminate view a clear day exhibits to the eye: the cherubim above, and the pillars below, represented the inhabitants of heaven, and those of the earth; the first in their real shapes the last hieroglyphically.²⁵

While the structure of the Temple was the universe itself, Wood took the measurements of the Temple to be monuments of Biblical events. The porch's height of one hundred and twenty cubits was in memory of the deluge. The four hundred pomegranates in four rows represented the number of years from the birth of Isaac to the end of the bondage of God. The seven wreaths of chain work, circumscribing the seven nets of chequer work in the chapiter of each of the pillars, corresponds with the seven days of the victory God gave the Israelites and to the total overthrow of the Pharaohs who were swallowed by the Red Sea.

The number of pillars and the measurements of the court of the Temple also reflected monuments. The inward court was built with three rows of hewn stones and a row of cedar beams. Wood calculated the number of columns around this court to be four hundred and eight which represented the number of years from the Israelites coming out of Egypt to the time of Solomon beginning the Temple. The length of the great court was eight hundred and forty cubits by five hundred cubits. The measurement of five hundred cubits has Biblical precedence, but Wood claimed that the number of pillars in eight hundred and forty cubits was one thousand and eight, and this commemorates the number of years from Solomon beginning the Temple itself to the birth of Christ.²⁶ According to Wood, Solomon's Temple was not only a divine piece of architecture, it was also a divine piece of history which encoded events into its numbers and measurements. It was "an hieroglyphical representation of the past history of the world, of the law of God, and of the rewards and punishments attending virtue and vice."²⁷

'History' and Architecture

Wood closely linked history, or his version of history, to his architecture. In his plan of Solomon's Temple he encoded numbers and measurements into the architecture that expressed the divine history. These measurements of the Temple were often unique to Wood and had no Biblical precedents. The Temple also represented the universe. In his reconstruction of Stonehenge, every stone, angle and line represented the Pythagorean planetary system that was used as a model of learning and was the basis of the Druid's ceremonies as taught by the Arch Druid and king of the Britons, Bladud, who had established Bath as a centre of Druid learning. Both buildings had 'written' into the architecture the plan of the universe.

A couple of month before John Wood the Elder died at the age of 49 in 1754, he laid the foundation stone for the Circus and the Royal Crescent was built between 1767 and 1774. These building were continued by his son John Wood the Younger and are often attributed

²⁵ Wood, The Origin of Building or the Plagiarism of the Heathens Detected, 124

²⁶ Wood, The Origin of Building or the Plagiarism of the Heathens Detected, 127-28

²⁷ Wood, The Origin of Building or the Plagiarism of the Heathens Detected, 90.

to him. Tim Mowl has demonstrated, through comments made by Tobius Smollett, a contemporary novelist and essayist, that the Circus, the Crescent and the adjoining street were designed by the same architect, Wood the Elder, his son was only the supervising builder, who carried out the original design very faithfully and efficiently. Two years after Wood's death,

Smollett spoke of his 'extraordinary genius' to which an ungrateful city corporation was 'indebted for a great part of the trade and beauty of the place, [yet] they have industriously opposed his best designs, which, had they been executed, would have rendered Bath, in point of elegant architecture, the admiration of the whole world.²⁸

The group of buildings that consist of Queen Square, Gay Street, the Circus and the Royal Crescent should be considered as the work of John Wood the Elder.

This complex of buildings works as a whole, with the plan being harmonious, and connects and enhances the city of Bath, not just as individual houses, but as a holistic monumental design, something that Wood strongly believed in. Wood believed that architecture, through its divine development and the collected earthly riches, is a monument to the pride of a nation. In both his reconstruction of Solomon's Temple and Stonehenge he encoded the buildings with numbers and dimensions that emphasized them as monuments of celestial history and/or knowledge; these numbers and dimensions were "hieroglyphical representation of the past history of the world." His interpretation of the history of Bath coloured his perceptions, but history and knowledge were represented in the legendary founder of Bath, Bladud. The designs of the Circus and the Crescent have elements in the design that replicate the ancient British history of Bath.

Today the Circus has an overgrown copse of trees and a circular area of lawn in the centre, but an etching of the Circus by John Robert Cozens (1773) shows the original intention for the Circus. There is a central raised and paved reservoir, with thirty unusual, monolithic hitching posts prominent in the design.²⁹ There are thirty houses in the Circus; however, while there are thirty numbers to the houses, house number 19 opens into Bennet Street instead of the Circus. Thus there are only twenty-nine front doors which open into the Circus.³⁰ These numbers are replicated in his reconstruction of Stonehenge, in the thirty standing stones of the outer circle and the twenty-nine standing stones of the inner circle, which are emblematic of the days of alternate lunar months. The house number 6 is the only house in the Circus to have a centralized door. According to Wood the number six also had lunar significance for the Druids, "the six pillars together may be conceived as the six days on which the moon revolved about the earth before the Druids began their ages; each of which commenced when the moon was six days old."³¹ The measurement of the diameter of the Circus and Stonehenge.

 ²⁸ Mowl, 'Prehistory and Palladian – John Wood's King's Circus, Bath,' in *New Light on English Palladianism: Papers Given at the Georgian Group Symposium London* ed. Charles Hind (London: The Georgian Group, 1988), 31.
²⁹ Mowl, 'Prehistory and Palladian – John Wood's King's Circus, Bath,' 31; Mowl and Earnshaw, *John Wood:*

 ²⁷ Mowl, 'Prehistory and Palladian – John Wood's King's Circus, Bath,' 31; Mowl and Earnshaw, *John Wood:* Architect of Obsession, 181.
³⁰ Jo Odgers, "The Emblematic City: John Wood and the Refounding of Bath," in *Primitive: Original Matters in*

 ³⁰ Jo Odgers, "The Emblematic City: John Wood and the Refounding of Bath," in *Primitive: Original Matters in Architecture*, ed. Jo Odgers, Flora Samuel, and Adam Sharr (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 160.
³¹ Wood, *Choir Gaure*, *Vulgarly called Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain, Described, Restored and Explained*, 85.

 ³² Wood, Choir Gaure, Vulgarly called Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain, Described, Restored and Explained, 85.
³² Jo Odgers, 'The Emblematic City: John Wood and the Refounding of Bath,' in *Primitive: Original Matters in Architecture*, ed. Jo Odgers, Flora Samuel, and Adam Sharr (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 162;

were not only both circular in form, they are also both aligned with the rising sun at the Summer solstice (see Figures 3 and 4). Wood encoded the Circus with the numbers and orientation used by the Druids at Stonehenge.

The Royal Crescent has a residential road, laid out in a crescent shape, and contains thirty houses. The moon shape and the number 30, representing one of the lunar months, appears to imply a celestial relationship, which is strengthened by the visible connection between the Circus and the Crescent in the plan (see Figure 5). However, this is not backed up by the measurements of the Crescent. The solar and lunar symbolism is not as clearly apparent in the Crescent as it is in the Circus. This could be explained by the fact that although the Crescent was of Wood the Elder's conception, it was Wood the Younger who built it after his father's death, and perhaps Wood the Elder had not completed all the details of the proportions of doors, etc. in the plan for Wood the Younger to follow.

Vaughan Hart, "Lost Cities and Standing Stones," *The Journal of Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland* 6 (1995), 26; R. S Neale, *Bath 1680-1850: A Social History* (London, Boston and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 196.



Figure 3: The Circus³³ Drawn by author from Odgers, 'The Emblematic City: John Wood and the Refounding of Bath,' 161

³³ Drawn by author from Odgers, 'The Emblematic City: John Wood and the Refounding of Bath,' 161



Figure 4: Wood's survey of Stonehenge with its surrounds, and the avenue that is aligned with the sun³⁴ Drawn by author from Odgers, 'The Emblematic City: John Wood and the Refounding of Bath,' 161

³⁴ Drawn by author from Odgers, 'The Emblematic City: John Wood and the Refounding of Bath,' 161



Figure 5: Queen Square, the Circus and Royal Crescent³⁵ Drawn by author from John Summerson, *Heavenly Mansions and Other Essays in Architecture*, *Heavenly Mansions and Other Essays in Architecture* (New York and London: W.W Norton and Company), 95

The geometry of his plans also appears to have had significance beyond the aesthetic. In the St James Triangle, an open space by the Avon River and in front of the Grand Parade (Figure 6), Wood designed a formal garden which is a circle inscribed within a triangle, intersected by three lines. In the centre of the circle is an obelisk that is triangular in plan. In the *Description of Bath* Wood included a plan of Queen Square with a formal garden that was not built

³⁵ Drawn by author from John Summerson, *Heavenly Mansions and Other Essays in Architecture*, *Heavenly Mansions and Other Essays in Architecture* (New York and London: W.W Norton and Company), 95

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(Figure 7). It was designed to be a perfect square and at the centre of the square was to be a circle with four diagonals, each ending in a small circle, and in the centre was to be a square obelisk. R. S. Neale suggests that the layout of the Gardens of both Queen Square and St James Triangle were designed in the shape of the Vitruvian man.³⁶ However, although Wood accepts that the Classical orders were derived from human proportions, he considered that the numbers and dimensions that he attributed to the Temple were in a direct relationship with the divine plan of the universe. "In the works of the Divine architect of all things, we find nothing but perfect figures, consisting of the utmost regularity, the sweetest harmony, and the most delightful proportion."³⁷ By the nature of their geometric plan they were divine.



Figure 6: The plan of St James Triangle³⁸ Drawn by author from Wood, An Essay towards a Description of Bath, unpaginated.

³⁷ Wood, The Origin of Building or the Plagiarism of the Heathens Detected, 71.

³⁶ R. S Neale, *Bath 1680-1850: A Social History* (London, Boston and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 193 & 196.

³⁸ Drawn by author from Wood, An Essay towards a Description of Bath, unpaginated.



Figure 7: The plan of Queen Square including a formal garden that was not built³⁹ Drawn by author from Wood, *An Essay towards a Description of Bath*, unpaginated

As seen in Wood's work on the reconstructions of Solomon's Temple and Stonehenge, he took the numerology of the design very seriously, and it is difficult to believe that the numerology in his plans, and in the buildings in Bath, could be a coincidence. He embedded the numbers and the geometry of his preferred history into his architecture.

Conclusion

For Wood, Stonehenge and the Temple of Solomon were more than temples. They held the knowledge of the universe – its history and its structure. They held divine knowledge and architecture was the vehicle of this knowledge. What did Wood believe he was going to achieve by attempting to recreate the ancient monument of Stonehenge and the other celestial inferences in his architecture of Bath? Perhaps if Wood had lived long enough to complete his plan fully this question could have been answered. The meaning, which was encoded into his buildings, was important to Wood, so it is likely that the grouping had a meaning or message but unfortunately that message is lost. However for this meaning Wood has created a unique city.

In the 1772 edition of the New Bath Guides it stated:

³⁹ Drawn by author from Wood, An Essay towards a Description of Bath, unpaginated

to one man's abilities and enterprising genius is Bath indebted for an elegance in its buildings superior to any other place in England... Mr Wood's skill and judgement in architecture was hardly to be equalled by any one person of his time.⁴⁰

In the 1915 The Book of Bath it stated:

Architecturally Bath is essentially a Georgian City, rather it may be called *the* George City, for nowhere can eighteenth century architecture and town planning be seen in such perfection. Its handsome streets and such magnificent buildings as the Royal Crescent, the Circus, Queen Square, Pulteney Street, and the Parades are a monument to the genius of John Wood and the architects of the eighteenth century, and the delight of every visitor of taste.⁴¹

There is no doubt that Wood's history of Bath was fanciful; however, form this fantasy Wood's created an elegant city and has left a significant and enduring architectural legacy.

About the Author

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Dr. Tessa Morrison is an Australian Research Council post-doctoral fellow in the School of Architecture and Built Environment at the University of Newcastle, Australia. Her academic background is in art history, mathematics and philosophy, she has published extensively on geometric and spatial symbolism. Her current research project focuses on sixteenth and seventeenth century sacred architecture.

⁴⁰ As quoted by Peter Borsay, *The Image of Georgian Bath, 1700–2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 112.

⁴¹ John Hatton, *The Book of Bath* (Bath: Bath City Council, 1915), 49.