

# ICOMOS

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS AND SITES  
CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MONUMENTS ET DES SITES  
CONSEJO INTERNACIONAL DE MONUMENTOS Y SITIOS  
МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ СОВЕТ ПО ВОПРОСАМ ПАМЯТНИКОВ И ДОСТОПРИМЕЧАТЕЛЬНЫХ МЕСТ  
WORLD HERITAGE LIST N° 428

## A) IDENTIFICATION

Nomination : The City of Bath

Location : Avon

State Party : United Kingdom

Date : December 23, 1986

## B) ICOMOS RECOMMENDATION

That the proposed cultural property be included on the World Heritage List on condition that confirmation is received that the Draft City Plan has been officially approved.

## C) JUSTIFICATION

Many of the hot baths constructed in Europe by the Romans have become major historic cities, including Aquae Sextiae (Aix-en-Provence), Aquae Grani (Aix-la-Chapelle), Civitas Aquensis (Baden-Baden) ou Aquincum (Budapest), to mention just four examples.

In Britain, Aquae Sulis, constructed some 20 years after the Conquest in 60-70 A.D., continues, under the name of Bath, to be a renowned spa. Its apogee was in the 18th century. Its source, which yields over 1,200,000 liters of water daily at more than 46° C, explains the lasting destiny of the small town of Avon. The Romans built a temple there dedicated to Sulis, a local divinity who they associated with Minerva, as well as a hot bath measuring 91 m x 45 m and including two pools, five baths and all the standard equipment for tepidaria, frigidaria and hypocausts. These hot baths were built between the 1st and 4th centuries, and their rediscovery came about beginning gradually in 1755. Excavations at the site and the improvement thereof began in 1879.

The old Roman city was conquered by the Saxons in 577 but was never wiped out of existence. In the Middle Ages Bath became a major wool-producing centre; in 1174, it began in its specialized hospital to receive patients suffering from rheumatism. The religious influence of the city was considerable from 1091 to 1206, because at that time the episcopal see at Wells was temporarily transferred to Bath. Thus one cathedral was built under the episcopacy of Robert de Lewes (1136-1166). It was demolished shortly after 1495 and was later reconstructed as an abbey church in the Perpendicular style. The abbey church was still uncompleted at the time of the Reformation and the work was

finished with great difficulty shortly before it was dedicated in 1609.

In the 18th century, the middle-sized city of Avon experienced an extraordinary rebirth under the impetus of three exceptional figures: John Wood, Ralph Allen and Richard "Beau" Nash, who had the ambition to make it one of the most beautiful cities in Europe, an ideal site where architecture and the landscape would combine harmoniously for the delight of the enlightened cure takers.

The Neo-Classic style of the grand public buildings (the Assembly Rooms, built in 1771 by John Wood, Jr. and the Pump Room built from 1793 to 1799 by Palmer in accordance with the plans of Thomas Baldwin) harmonize with the grandiose proportions of monumental ensembles such as Queen Square (1729) and the Royal Circus (1754), both works of John Wood Sr.; and especially, the Royal Crescent, an extensive row of dwellings in a half-circle formation built from 1767 to 1776 by John Woods Jr., to a scale reflecting the ambitions of Bath under the reign of George III.

Whether of disproportionate or reduced dimensions, the Neo-Classic constructions of Bath -- special mention should be made of Prior Park and Pulteney Bridge -- all express the great influence of Palladio, who Wood, Allen and Adam considered to be their master. Yet these creations transpose to the scale of the city, a landscape aestheticism that Vincence's architect had particularly expressed in villas in la Brenta: the organization of space is less that of a Renaissance city than that of the types of city gardens whose principles were formulated a posteriori by 19th-century town planners.

ICOMOS, considering the exceptional value of the historic and monumental ensemble of Bath, expresses an opinion in favor of the principle of including this property on the World Heritage List. However, it would be necessary to know the general protection situation of the 4,900 classified or listed monuments of Bath. In spite of many preliminary reports (cf. Bath. A Study in Conservation, 1968; Yesterday's Tomorrow. Conservation in Bath, 1975; Saving Bath, 1978), the management plan drafted in 1984 under the name Draft City Plan has not been approved. In a city of over 80,000 inhabitants, the safeguarding of a major and discontinuous monumental heritage (there is an historic centre, but Prior Park, with its landscapes by Ralph Allen and Capability Brown, is 1.5 km from the centre) poses serious problems which cannot be avoided.

ICOMOS, October 1987