

fig 2: Title page of *The Diseases of Bath - A Satire*, 1737

*Bath in Time - Bath Central Library Collection*

It is supposition but it seems likely, that prior to his appointment at Bellott's, Peirce was already in Bath, perhaps working for Bave, or even Harington - both of whom were from long established and influential Bath families. John Wood implies that Peirce was in Bath as early as 1723, but this seems too early.<sup>5</sup> Whatever the exact date of Peirce's arrival, it is likely that he had only been resident in Bath for upwards of five years when he was featured in Mary Chandler's poem *The Diseases of Bath A Satire*.<sup>6</sup> [fig. 2]

My muse! Say next what evils follow *these*?  
*Bath* has one Surgeon - he's the next disease.  
 Tho' (by the by) my Friend, I'd have you know;  
 'Tis his Profession only makes him so.  
*Pierce* is humane, and, tho' a surgeon bred,  
 Is much too honest to enhance his trade:  
 Deals but against his grain in blood and steel;  
 And can the pain, he gives to patients, feel.  
 Not of that base, amphibious Fry of Men,  
 Whose bare Approach wou'd make a Wound gangrene.  
 Proof against gold; friend to his species; -- He Hates Mischief's hand, tho'

involved undertaking a seven-year practical apprenticeship; unlike a physician one did not have to gain a university degree. Only surgeons were licensed to operate. Being involved in the medical world was highly competitive as physicians and surgeons chased after patients and their fees. The leading London obstetrician, William Hunter (1718-83), spoke of the 'happiness of riches'.<sup>3</sup> In terms of medical hierarchy, a surgeon fell between an apothecary and a physician. Peirce was appointed surgeon to Bellott's Hospital in April 1733, alongside Dr. Edward Harington<sup>4</sup> as physician. Peirce was to replace the recently deceased apothecary and surgeon Francis Bave of Northgate Street. He was the brother of Dr. Charles Bave, whose practice, on Lower Borough Walls, devolved upon Peirce's friend and colleague Dr. William Oliver (1695-1764). Oliver came to Bath in 1728, having already established himself as a physician in his home town of Plymouth. He gained his medical degree from Pembroke College, Cambridge followed by further study at Leyden University. Bave, Oliver and Peirce were all involved with the administration of the Mineral Water Hospital, the institution at the epicentre of eighteenth-century Bath's social and commercial connections.



**fig 3: Dr. Oliver and Mr Peirce the First Physician and Surgeon Examining Patients Inflicted with Paralysis, Rheumatism and Leprosy, 1761, by William Hoare**

*Bath in Time - Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases*

not recognise their efforts as being equally humanitarian. Wood donated the architectural plans for the hospital, and building works commenced in the summer of 1738. In recognition of his professional generosity, Wood was elected a Governor of the hospital in October 1739. As a trustee, Peirce attended meetings from at least March 30th 1738.<sup>11</sup> Although the minutes specify the election of other trustees, no such record remains for Peirce and his attendance at the weekly meetings was erratic.<sup>12</sup> On May 1st 1740, Peirce was appointed surgeon, alongside his friend Oliver and Bellott's colleague Harington as physicians. The medical world was quite incestuous, but with no overseeing authority (Royal College of Surgeons of England) until 1843, positions were given on personal recommendation and to apprentices. For example, in 1742, Pope wrote to Allen asking that he vote for Mr. Cleland to gain one of the surgical positions available at the hospital, as 'it seems Mr Pierces [*sic*] Prentice is to be the other.'<sup>13</sup> A physician and a surgeon were nominated on a weekly rota to handle admissions; Peirce remained as Senior Surgeon and Governor until May 1st 1761, resigning alongside Oliver.

Peirce was a cultured man and a scientist - a true man of the Enlightenment, a collector of books and a patron of the arts. Indeed the author Henry Fielding described Peirce as 'a

connoisseur of art' in 1743, and he is included in William Carew Hazlitt's list of important book collectors.<sup>14</sup> Amongst the artefacts that Peirce left in his will,<sup>15</sup> was a portrait of Sir Charles Williams. This may have been of Sir Charles Hanbury Williams (1708-59), a politician and satirist; he was also, importantly in this context, a supporter of the establishment of the Foundling Hospital in London and one of its founding governors. The comparison between Bath's new hospital and the Foundling is not new, but perhaps here we have a legitimate link, the two are also contemporary. The Foundling Hospital, a highly fashionable charity, was established by Royal Charter in 1739.<sup>16</sup> William Hogarth had encouraged his fellow artists to donate works so that the Foundling Hospital might attract wealthy benefactors. In Bath, contemporary artists such as William Hoare (1707-92) (a founding member of the Royal Academy) donated portraits to adorn the walls of Bath's new hospital, which was also, of course, an agreeable way to get one's work known by a wider audience. One of Hoare's greatest artistic achievements is surely his monumental work *Dr. Oliver and Mr. Peirce Examining Patients* [fig. 3] which he presented to the hospital in 1762, the year after it had been exhibited at the Society of Artists, where its 'accurate observation of nature' had met with critical acclaim; especially, one imagines, the arthritic swelling of the young child's wrists and the distinct signs of skin disease across the hands.<sup>17</sup> Hoare shows his friend Peirce in a sympathetic light. He has an air of intelligence, calmness, and poise; and whilst he commands our attention, his deferential look towards Oliver is illustrative of eighteenth-century medical hierarchy.



fig 4: Peirce's memorial tablet at St Swithin's, Bath, by Prince Hoare (1711-69)

Photograph - Dan Brown

Hoare and Peirce remained life-long friends, with Hoare acting as an executor of his estate. Peirce's memorial tablet, at St. Swithin's Church, Walcot [fig. 4], was undertaken by Hoare's younger brother Prince (1711-69) and it is likely that he was also responsible for one, or both, of the two known marble busts of Peirce.<sup>18</sup> At his death, Peirce also owned another portrait by Hoare of Henry VIII's surgeon Sir John Ayliffe (c.1490-1556). This was surely a commission, prompted by the fact that Peirce owned a box of surgical instruments reputedly given by Henry VIII to Ayliffe. The current whereabouts of the instruments and Hoare's portrait are not known; it is therefore impossible to substantiate either object.<sup>19</sup> However, this reference is fascinating, as although Hoare was one of the most celebrated society portraitists of his day, posthumous likenesses of historic figures do not feature in his oeuvre; equally this shows Peirce's antiquarian tendencies. In May 1779, Hoare too became a Governor of the hospital, 'by virtue of [his] donations'.

Another of Peirce's 'intimate friends' was Dr. Oliver.<sup>20</sup> They had worked together since at least 1733, were neighbours on Queen Square, shared an interest in the arts and a mutual friendship with Allen and Pope, whom they both saw also as patients. After wintering in Bath in 1739-40, Pope was still too frail to return to his home at Twickenham alone, and so Allen and Peirce accompanied him.<sup>21</sup> Certainly

Pope's correspondence with Oliver, dating from January 1740 until November 1743, talks freely of Peirce, who he called 'The Master of Lilliput'.<sup>22</sup> Oliver and Pope were almost certainly introduced by Allen, who had known Pope since 1736. Oliver, like Allen, was from Cornwall, he was also a poet and his relative Reverend William Borlase (1696-1772), was a gifted antiquary, mineralogist and classical scholar. Borlase contributed large quantities of rare minerals and fossils from the Cornish mines to the extension Pope was building to his grotto at Twickenham. After his falling-out with Allen in 1743, Pope stayed with Oliver. There are a number of known portraits of Pope undertaken by Hoare, and Pope also left a substantial legacy to the Mineral Water Hospital.<sup>23</sup>



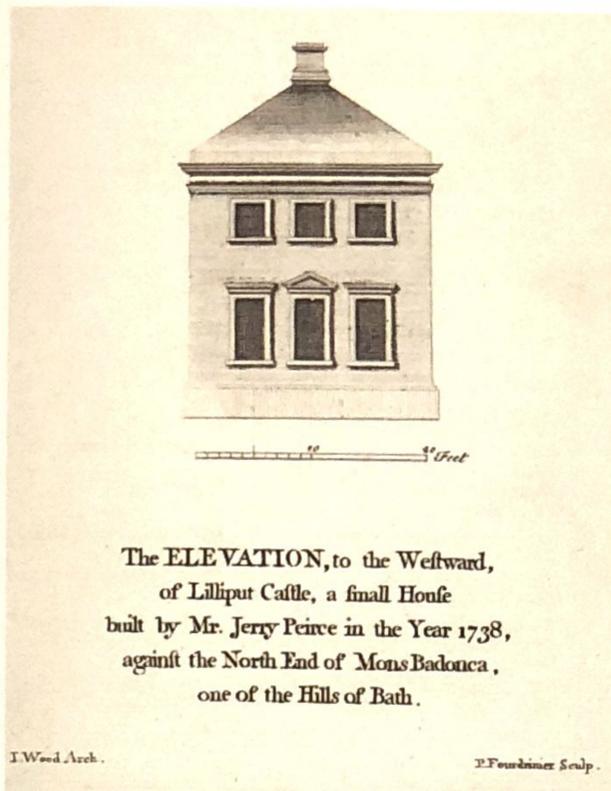
fig 5: Alexander Pope whilst in conversation with Ralph Allen at Prior Park, sketched by William Hoare and published in 1797

*Bath in Time - Bath Central Library Collection*

Pope is well known for his advocacy of natural landscape gardening. He was a practitioner too, and found gardening a major distraction. He told Allen, "I thank God for every Wet day and for every Fog, that gives the headache, but prospers my works."<sup>24</sup> Of course, he is also well known for the advice he gave Allen at Prior Park and Lord Bathurst at Cirencester Park; it should be noted that both these estates were also depicted by Thomas Robins (1716-70). Evidence shows that Pope had visited Lilliput Castle before 1743, when he writes to Oliver that he can no longer afford the time to stay there, but instead would pass a night in Bath so that he can see Oliver and Peirce.<sup>25</sup> In August 1742, he urges that Allen pass on a gift: "Pray let the Bundle of Willows be given to Mr Pierce."<sup>26</sup> Even the name of Peirce's abode might have been influenced by his friendship with Pope [fig. 5], who in-turn was friends with Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) the author of the 'blockbuster' *Travels into Several remote nations of the World in four parts by Lemuel Gulliver, first a surgeon, and then a captain of several ships* (1726).<sup>27</sup> Swift's political satire embarks with Gulliver's arrival in the land of Lilliput, where, compared to Gulliver, the inhabitants are miniature. The term Lilliputian, meaning small, passed quickly into the English language.

Although moral and god-fearing, the Lilliputians were obsessed with small and petty concerns that threatened to tear their community apart. Lilliput was representative of Britain, the Emperor being a follower of the Low-Heels, symbolic of the Whigs, just as George I and II were.

So, underlying the narrative is Swift's assessment of the politics of Queen Anne's reign that had seen a strong two-party representation. Swift favoured the Tories; and whilst Pope, Oliver, Allen (and we can presume Peirce) are recorded as Whigs they increasingly aligned themselves with those who were critical of Robert Walpole's administration. The Patriot Whigs, as this faction was known, was formed by William Pulteney, later 1st Earl of Bath, in 1725. By the middle of the 1730s, there were over 100 Patriots in the Commons. For many years they provided a more effective opposition to the Walpole administration than the Tories, and effectively created a three party political system. The Patriot Whigs held meetings at Stowe,



**fig 6: Western elevation of Lilliput Castle, built by John Wood the elder in 1738**

*Bath in Time - Bath Central Library Collection*

his involvement in the hospital that first brought Peirce into contact with Wood. Nevertheless, in the same year as the foundation stone was laid for the hospital, Peirce engaged Bath's most fashionable (and controversial) architect to design him a retreat on land he had purchased on the outskirts of Bath [fig. 6]. His choice of a country retreat, within easy access of the city, relates directly to John Milton's poem *L'Allegro* (1645). Milton was extremely influential within intellectual circles in the eighteenth century. Pope, for one, was a great admirer and kept a portrait of the poet in his bedroom (along with ones of Dryden and Shakespeare) so 'that the constant remembrance of 'em may keep me always humble'. Pope's admiration did not dwindle as Pope recommended Allen have a sculptural bust made of Milton as part of the scheme at Prior Park.<sup>28</sup> Swift was another advocate, quoting lines from *Paradise Lost* in his correspondence with Pope in 1716.<sup>29</sup> As we will see, Milton's influence extended further at Lilliput Castle.

According to Nicholas Kingsley, Peirce acquired less than 100 acres in the parish of Cold Ashton sometime between 1737 and 1742, but unfortunately does not quote a source for this information.<sup>30</sup> An estate survey completed for Peirce by Thomas Thorpe<sup>31</sup> shows that he owned the land by 1741, and as Lilliput Castle is also shown on the survey (as a summerhouse), Wood's assertion that he designed the building in 1738 is perfectly reasonable. The land Peirce chose was significant, not only for its important association with the Civil War Battle of Lansdown, but also because of the area's Roman camp, medieval park and monastic grange. Robins alludes to this heritage in his sketches of the Castle, one from the north, the other to the south; this 'to-and-from' practise is a trait of Robins' work. In the foreground of no. 33 (the sketches are all inscribed with numbers in ink) [fig. 7] are, what appear to be, two fragments of decorative carved stone. The one to the left shows a female bust in profile that could arguably be described as Roman. The detail to the right shows two medieval figures. These do not appear to be in relative perspective

where Richard Temple, 1st Viscount Cobham, acted as mentor to a number of the rising stars, known as 'Cobham's Cubs', including George Grenville and William Pitt the Elder, both of whom were to become future Prime Ministers. It was the mutual suspicion of Walpole, and a fondness for gardening, that encouraged an acquaintance between Cobham, Pitt and Pope. The Whigs used garden design politically, an important element of which was the garden building, which they saw as a status symbol.

Peirce obviously enjoyed professional success; he was able to speculate with property owning houses on Queen Square and Gay Street, stables on John Street and a house in Weymouth. The first leaseholder of a completed house on the north side of Queen Square was one Mrs. Pearce in 1736. She occupied the building under the central pediment, and it seems likely that this was Peirce's wife, Ann. This would also suggest why her nephew, Elliott Salter, inherited the Queen Square property whilst everything else went to Peirce's side of the family. It should be noted that Jerry and Ann had no children of their own. It may have been his property portfolio, or equally

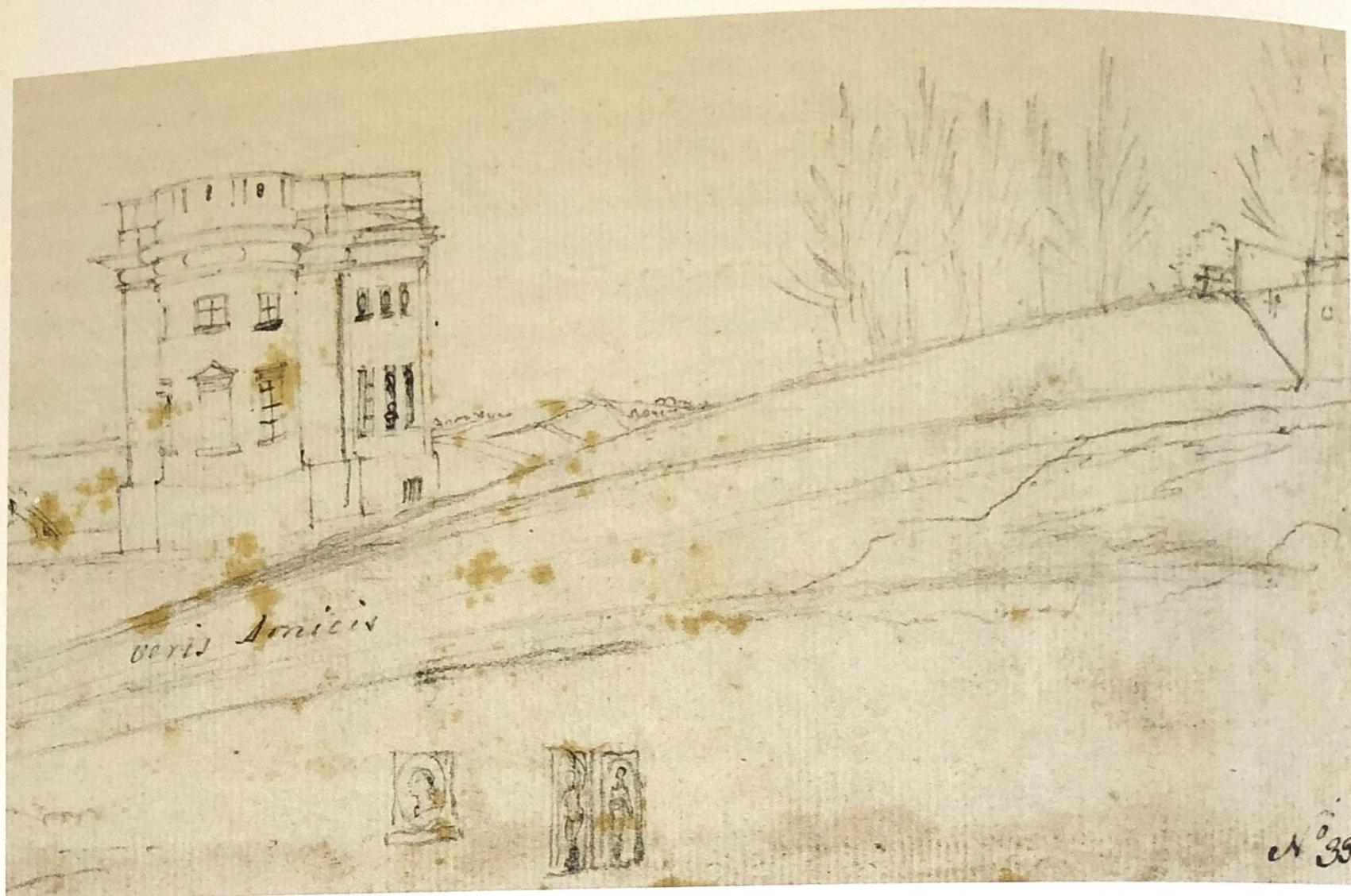


fig 7: Detail from sketch no. 33 by Thomas Robins (1716-70) of the modified Lilliput Castle showing decorative carved stone fragments in the foreground, c.1754-60

*Bath in Time - V&A Images/Victoria and Albert Museum*

to the building, and perhaps refer blatantly to the historic links the area enjoys. This sketch is also inscribed '*veris amicis*', a Latin phrase meaning *For True Friends*, possibly carved above the entrance. Was Robins referring to his friendship with the owner of the property, or to the use of Lilliput as a place for congenial meetings? Peirce's memorial tablet is testament to his popularity and the respect he enjoyed:

for many years [Peirce] practised surgery in the city of Bath with the highest reputation and success: he attracted general esteem and love due to his many amiable qualities, and when death summon'd him hence drew the tribute of a sigh from every heart within the circle of his numerous acquaintance.<sup>32</sup>

Equally, so little is known about how Robins secured his commissions, it seems probable that he relied on personal recommendations from friends such as Peirce.

Robins was born in Charlton Kings, near Cheltenham. He married in 1735 and his six children were all baptised in his hometown between 1736 and 1748. Robins made a living as an artist travelling around the country depicting the seats of gentleman. He was also a regular visitor to Bath. Within his sketchbook, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum's collection, are at least 45 sketches of Bath and its environs. The sketches date from c.1754 to 1765, and were

mainly undertaken between the months of April and June. Of the sketches that are dated, it appears that Robins would spend July and September undertaking commissions to paint country estates. He would then return to Bath for the fashionable autumn season, advertising in October 1752 that he could be found at George Speren's shop, the Fan and Crown in Orange Grove, and was offering art lessons to the gentry. He also produced fashionable fans and engravings, including his *Prospect of the City of Bath*, published in October 1757. Robins moved permanently to Bath in 1767/8,<sup>33</sup> living in Marchant's Court, a development described as 'entirely new' by Wood in 1749. The court, developed by Quaker banker and member of the hospital committee, Richard Marchant, comprised thirteen small houses, and provided a link from the High Street through to the Quaker Meeting House. The actual date of Robins' first visit to Bath however remains elusive, but we do know that his painting of *The King's and Queen's Bath* dates from 1747. He is often credited with being a subscriber to Thorpe's *An Actual Survey of the City of Bath, in the County of Somerset, and of Five Miles Round*, published in 1742. However, this Thomas Robbins is more likely to have been the well established gardener from Widcombe who was also responsible for the replanting of Orange Grove in 1737.<sup>34</sup> What is worth noting moreover is the number of subscribers to this survey who can be identified as being associated with Peirce and Lilliput Castle, including Allen, Pope, Oliver, Rev. Sparrow, Wood, Hoare, John Whittington (Peirce's neighbour at Hamswell House), Harington, Marchant, and Peirce himself.

In the revised (1749) version of Wood's *An Essay Towards a Description of Bath*, he presents three of the villas he designed as being connected - each a representation of one of the three classical orders 'from the Simplicity of a neat plain Dress to the highest Pitch of Elegance'. However, each villa was commissioned separately between 1734 (Belcomb Brook Villa) and 1748 (Titanbarrow Loggia). The second villa to be built was Peirce's Lilliput Castle. It is possible to agree with Wood's assertion that Belcomb was in the Ionic style and Titanbarrow the Corinthian, but Lilliput is not fully in the Doric style. In *The Origin of Building, or the Plagiarism of the Heathens Detected* (1741) Wood expresses his fixation with the origin of the three orders of architecture. As a Christian, Wood needed the Orders to be God-given, and not descended from Classical antiquity. In order to achieve this, Wood constructed a story whereby the divine proportions for the Tabernacle, revealed by God to Moses on Mount Sinai, were later plagiarised by the heathens - the Ancient Greeks and Romans.<sup>35</sup> Wood had a strict set of architectural forms that he planned to build, manipulating a patron's requirements

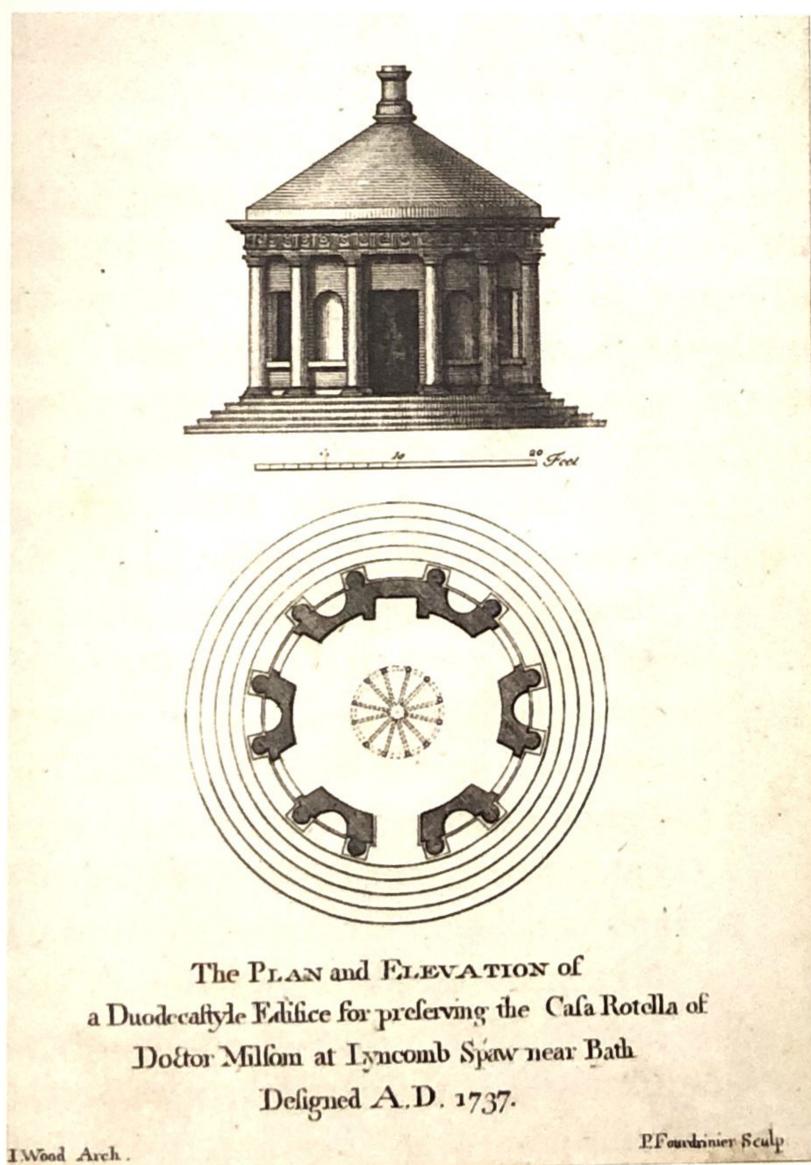


fig 8: John Wood's plan and elevation for a proposed Doric Temple at Lyncombe Spa, 1737  
*Bath in Time - Bath Central Library Collection*

in order to fulfil his own vision. For instance, in the case of the Circus, Wood had previously designed circular buildings in order to create his Temple to the Sun. In the years after Wood had completed his work at Belcomb, he designed a number of buildings in the Doric order. One for 'Dr' Milsom's recently discovered spa at Lyncombe, comprising a circular temple with four doors and twelve Doric columns supporting a frieze and, significantly, a conical roof with a central chimney [fig. 8]. However, Milsom chose the design of his business partner Dr. Hillary instead. Possibly in the same year, 1737, Wood offered John Wicksted a design for his seal-engraving factory, which was to have been 'two and thirty feet square; of the Dorick Order; one story high; and covered with a pyramidal roof, in the vortex of which the funnels of the chimneys were to rise up'. Wood hoped to rebuild St. Swithin's Church with the same proportions as Moses' Tabernacle, since he believed that the church was on the site of a Pagan High place. The vestry rejected his proposal and offered the job to Robert Smith, churchwarden. Wood did not hold back on his indignation of being surpassed by a 'jobber'.

Wood was compelled to create a Doric tabernacle, but his original design for Peirce of Lilliput, comprising five bedrooms and four octagonal closets, was far too big for Peirce's requirements. With the failure of his other tenders, Wood must have seized the opportunity Peirce was offering him. In his *Essay*, Wood describes in detail 'the house that enriches the end of Mons Badonca', a reference to Aylett Sammes' name for the site from his 1676 publication *Britannia aniqua illustrata: or, The antiquities of ancient Britain*. Standing four miles from the centre of Bath and about a quarter of a mile below the Lansdown Monument, the link with the battle appears to have been significant. The monument appears in two of Robins' sketches, firstly no. 34, where the top of Lilliput Castle can just be seen below the brow of the hill. Secondly, in the sketch of the east front of the castle [no. 30], the monument is clearly seen to the left at the end of a long alleé [fig. 9]. The Battle of Lansdown saw two lifelong friends come together on opposing sides. During a temporary truce, Sir William Waller (Parliamentarian) wrote an extraordinary letter to his childhood friend Sir Ralph Hopton (Royalist), 'The experience I have had of your worth and the happiness I have enjoyed in your friendship are wounding considerations when I look upon this present distance between us'.<sup>36</sup> The monument was erected

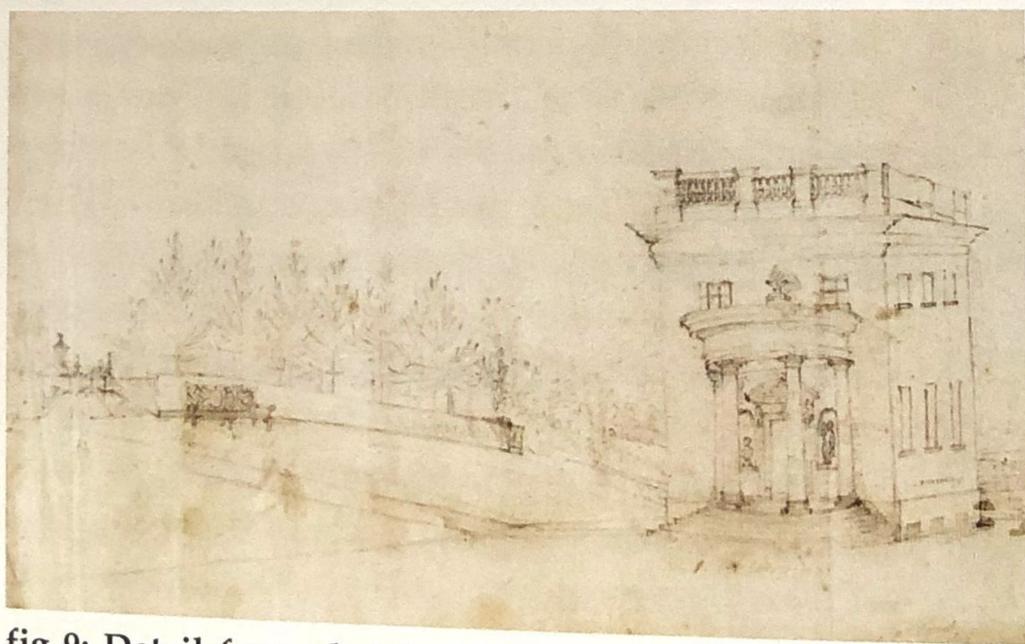


fig 9: Detail from sketch no. 30 by Thomas Robins of the modified Lilliput Castle with the Lansdown Monument visible to the far left, c.1754-60

*Bath in Time - V&A Images/Victoria and Albert Museum*

in 1720, on the site that Cornish Royalist Sir Bevil Grenville (1596-1643) fell from his horse, having received a lethal blow to the head with a pole-axe.<sup>37</sup> The monument served a number of purposes for Peirce: as a fashionable garden eye-catcher, further illustration of his passion for antiquarianism, and as a symbol of his allegiance to the Patriot Whigs. Richard and George Grenville, the nephews of Lord Cobham and brothers-in-law of Pitt, were distantly related to Sir Bevil Grenville, an association the family were happy to embellish.<sup>38</sup>

Of equal note is that the Earldom of Bath passed by descent to Bevil's great grandson, William, but became extinct after his suicide in 1711. The title was recreated in 1742 and bestowed on Pulteney.

What Wood eventually designed for Peirce was a three-by-three bay 21sq. ft. retreat, consisting of a cellar storey, almost entirely sunk into the ground with the window lintels illustrated by Robins in sketch no. 30. Above this were one-and-a-half principal storeys, again clearly

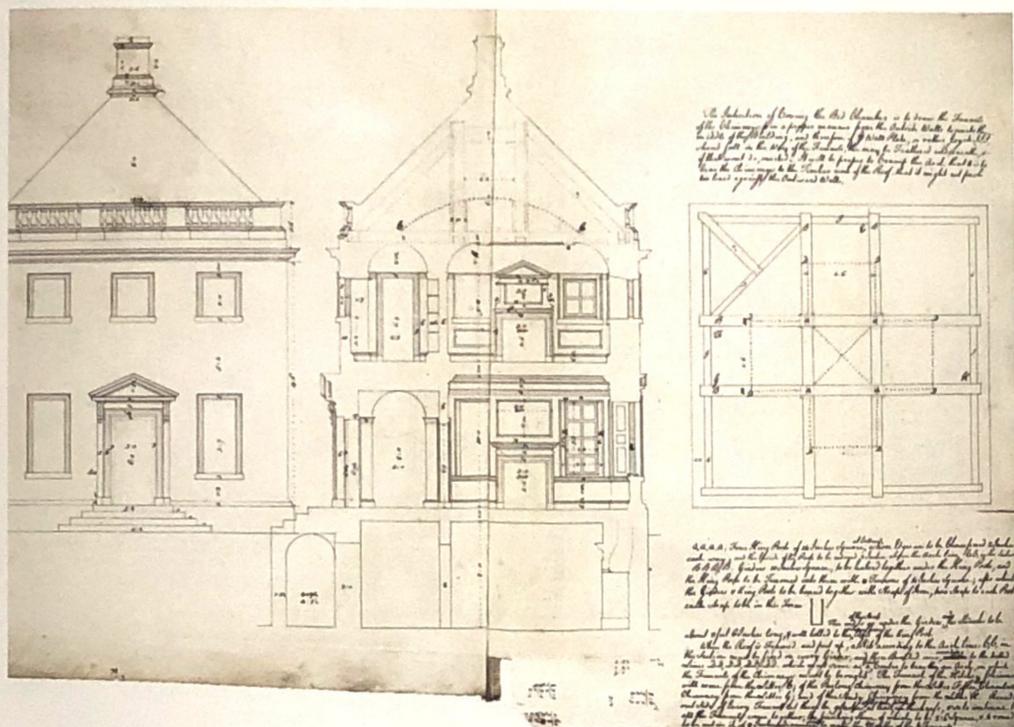


fig 10: Elevation, plan and section of Lilliput Castle by John Wood, c.1737

*Bath in Time - Bath Central Library Collection*

*Essay*, Wood chose to illustrate the plain west front, where he says the windows were dressed with architraves and crowned with friezes and cornices. Wood continues his description:

The central window having the Addition of a Pediment to distinguish it: All the Ornaments were intended to have been such as were proper to the *Dorick Order*; and the Building being crowned with an Entablature, the whole was first covered with a Pyramidal Roof; in the Center of which the Funnels of the Chimneys rose up in a small Pedestal.

Fundamentally, Wood designed Peirce a box so odd 'that the Wits of Bath soon gave it the Name of T. Totum'.<sup>40</sup>

It was Wood's scheme to draw all the flues together and up through a central pyramidal roof that was vital to his design, but which in turn certainly condemned the building [fig. 11]. Wood of course blamed the builders and Peirce for Lilliput Castle's failure. He states that Peirce enjoyed throwing extravagant and boisterous parties, the result was that the kitchen chimney could not cope with the 'unreasonable use' and caught fire - twice. Having rebuilt the roof once, it is understandable why Peirce looked for an alternative solution, one that Wood condemned as ill proportioned and robbing the castle of its 'chief Beauty' - its pyramidal roof. Peirce's alterations, which must have happened before 1749 for Wood to have included it in his

defined in Robins' sketch. Inside, the layout included a hall, dining parlour, an alcove bedchamber "with a light closet", and a small second bedroom. In the cellar storey there was a pantry, kitchen and 'the precept of convenience may be very justly said to shine so eminently in every part of this little box as to render it the *Multum in Parvo* (much in little) of all Bath'. These details are demonstrated in Wood's drawings held by Bath Central Library [fig. 10]. What he also shows is a simple triangular pedimented entrance, as would befit the Doric. This original building still exists within the current Battlefields as the building's entrance hall. In

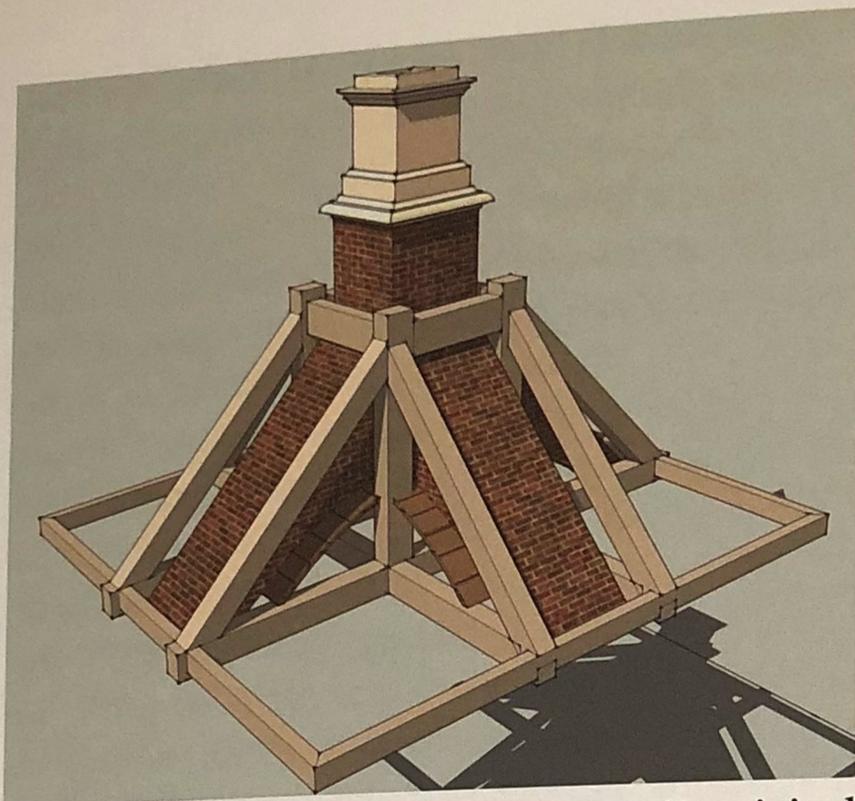


fig 11: Reconstruction from John Wood's original drawings of the troublesome roof and chimney arrangement, c.1737

Computer visualisation - David Martyn, Studio Red

tabernacle - was a failure, and this is probably why he omitted it from the first version of *Essay*. Nevertheless, by the second version, Wood believed that the strength Lilliput had illustrated by surviving (in part) two devastating fires which were 'sufficient to have warmed and kindled any other structure into one universal Blaze' meant it not only deserved its status as his Doric (the strong) cottage, but also 'fairly entitle[d] it to its surname of castle'.

Thorpe's survey shows the castle, the stables, the spring and pond in Upper Roggers's Ground (enclosed by a wall, still in situ) and a garden to the south of the castle. According to Wood, the term did not refer to land once owned by someone named Rogers, but to Rogus, meaning, 'importing a great Fire wherein human Bodies were burnt to Ashes'. Wood unsurprisingly concluded that this was therefore an ancient druidic sacrificial site. As was fashionable at the time, Peirce built a rockwork arch and a hermit's cell in his grounds. Previously unidentified, the view Robins shows in sketch no. 13 [fig. 12] is now obscured by the larger Battlefields House, although the arch still exists. As its name suggests, rockwork was a favourite device of the Rococo gardener, and in scale at least Peirce's grounds at Lilliput correspond with the style. The stone arch shares similarities with another depicted by Robins, that at Batheaston Villa, the home of Lady Miller the host of the infamous poetry competitions. Robins also recorded the rockwork piers that supported Allen's Chinese gates at Prior Park. Hermitages, on the other hand has both druidical and Christian origins, and for the Georgian antiquarian they were irresistible. Seen as rustic retreats, for contemplation by the owner and his guests, their impact relied on them being hidden and discovered whilst walking the grounds, often at the end of a dark arbour. Equally they were used for sociable picnics and romantic trysts. All this was conscious as 'a hermitage in a landscape played with sexual intrigue, as well as with nature and solitude, history and the idea of holiness'.<sup>41</sup> As Isabel Colegate explains, by the beginning of the 1700s the fear of solitude and God had been replaced by a feeling of 'pleasurable awe and humble respect'.<sup>42</sup>

publication, comprised a flat, lead-lined roof, surrounded by a balustrade. It is this roof that Robins captures in his sketches. John Harris has suggested that the architect responsible for these modifications was John Sanderson (ac.1730-d.1774). However, although his drawings correspond with the roof changes, they do not include the semi-circular bays that Robins illustrates in sketch no. 30 and no. 33 [figs. 7 and 9]. Neither Wood nor Sanderson included any reference to these projections in their drawings or descriptions. One can only assume that at some point in the 1750s Peirce engaged a further architect to make these improvements. For such a passionate architect as Wood, desperate to fulfil his mission to both prove and recreate Bath's status as the ideal ancient city, Lilliput - his



fig 12: Sketch no. 13 by Thomas Robins of the rustic stone arch within the grounds of Lilliput Castle, c.1760  
*Bath in Time - V&A Images/Victoria and Albert Museum*

Radiating out from the Castle are three distinct tree-lined *alleés* stretching to the east, north and northwest. A survey of the land today shows evidence of beech trees in a line that correspond with the planting shown by Thorpe. At the end of one of these avenues, the land drops down and widens out into an overgrown triangular patch of ground, distinctly separate from the rest of the open-field. Consideration of the shadows shown in Robins' sketches, combined with the evidence of historic planting, suggests that the original site of Peirce's hermit's cell has at last been discovered. In 2006, the author found the gothic window and surrounding stones depicted in Robins' sketches of Peirce's hermitage. Although a significant find it was obvious from its location that this section, at least, had been moved and rebuilt. Robins drew Peirce's hermitage twice; no. 103 is pen and ink, and appears to have been taken from a viewpoint further away than sketch no. 10. It is probable that this undated sketch was undertaken a few years earlier, when the cell and surrounding planting were new. No. 103 is inscribed, the pencil so faint it is almost invisible to the naked eye. Alongside the Milton verse transcribed in ink is the same verse in minute writing. On the bed in front of the cell are the words 'flowering shrubs', and by the tree to the right is written 'aspen tree'. Aspen are native plants, and admired for their delicate nature; they spread by suckers off a root system, and so can



fig 13: Sketch no. 10 by Thomas Robins of the hermit's cell within the grounds of Lilliput Castle, 27 May 1760  
*Bath in Time - V&A Images/Victoria and Albert Museum*

being his preliminary work. On the left hand side is a scale from one to twelve, and below that further faint numbers, perhaps showing some mathematical workings in order to translate this view into a larger format. Peirce did leave a 'picture of Lilliput' to Mrs. Elizabeth Isted, his widowed neighbour from John Street; could this have been a painting by Robins? It seems highly likely that Robins produced more finished paintings than we know of today; if for no other reason than he needed to make a living.<sup>44</sup>

Within the cell, Robins shows a human skull resting on a shelf, under which is a dog curled up. On the back wall is a square void, perhaps a plaque, which was probably transcribed with the Milton verse from *Il Peneroso*, the pendant to *L'Allegro*, inscribed on sketch no. 95.

And may at last my weary age  
 Find out the peaceful hermitage  
 The hairy Gown and Mossy Cell,  
 Where I may sit and rightly spell  
 Of every Star that heav'n doth shew  
 And every Herb that sips the dew,  
 Till old experience do attain  
 To something like Prophetic strain.

Pope's friend George, 1st Lord Lyttelton (1709-73), secretary to Frederick, Prince of Wales from 1737, and his father Sir Thomas also displayed these lines from Milton at their hermitage (c.1739) at Hagley Hall. Pope visited Sir Thomas there in 1739, where he made sketches for three new garden buildings.<sup>45</sup> After the death of Sir Thomas in 1751, Lyttelton replaced the Tudor house with a Palladian mansion (1756-60) designed by Sanderson Miller

quickly create a grove to hide a garden feature such as a hermit's cell. The Latin name '*tremula*' literally means to tremble, and refers to the way the leaves flutter and move in the slightest breeze - perfect for such a location.<sup>43</sup>

No. 10 is far more detailed [fig. 13] and includes a colour wash. Dated May 27th 1760, the vegetation looks more mature. In Robins' hand is inscribed '13 inches/ by 8 inches and quarter is the measure of Mr Peirce's view done before'. This is approximately twice the size of any of the known sketches of Lilliput, and therefore suggests that Robins was commissioned by Peirce to produce a painting of the estate, these sketches

(who also worked for Allen), was assisted by architectural draughtsman John Sanderson, quite possibly just a coincidence, but nonetheless noteworthy. Lyttelton was one of the greatest exponents of political landscape gardening following the example of his uncle Lord Cobham at Stowe. 'More accomplished operators knew that the social interaction bound up with landscape gardening - visiting each other's estates and swapping ideas, honouring each other with monuments, communication through symbolism - was a valuable aid in building political consensus.'<sup>46</sup> Cobham was ousted from the Government in 1733, and from 1732 had been working with William Kent to design himself an overtly political garden at Stowe. Amongst the garden buildings is the Temple of British Worthies; an exedra of sixteen busts set in individual niches that look over to the Temple of Ancient Virtue. Amongst those worthies are Milton, Shakespeare, Inigo Jones, Elizabeth I, William of Orange, Pope and the Black Prince. The Black Prince was Frederick, the Prince of Wales and heir to the throne. In opposition to his parents, the Prince showed his allegiance in return by also using Kent at his garden at Carlton House, where he designed (but never built) a temple that honoured ancient and modern heroes, including Pope and Cobham. Another connection and possible influence was The Hon. Charles Hamilton who expended vast sums laying out the gardens at Painshill, Surrey. From 1738 he was employed under Lyttelton in the household of the Prince of Wales. He must have created his hermit's cell in the 1740s, as he famously advertised for a hermit to reside there for seven years for a fee of 700 guineas. The Prince died in 1751, the succession passing to his son George. Peirce's retreat may seem a long way from the high political stakes of the Royal household, but as we have seen at Lilliput, symbolism and antiquarianism play out with equal Whig gusto.

Peirce died on January 4th 1768, aged 72 and Lilliput was inherited, by descent, by his nephew Jerry Peirce Crane in 1784; a man described by his wife's uncle as 'ungentlemanly and dishonourable'.<sup>47</sup> Crane was a spendthrift, splurging over £300 on an extravagant carriage from Philip Godsale in 1789. The following year, however, he was forced to sell both the stables on John Street and Lilliput Castle to help pay off his debts. The sale raised £3,500, but it was not enough to save the carriage, which was sold in 1799; nor himself, as records show he was sent to debtors prison in 1804.<sup>48</sup> Crane was not a worthy heir, the significance of Peirce's fashionable haven lost in time. Peirce is buried, alongside his limner friends, Robins and Hoare at St. Swithin's Church. The *true friends* referred to by Robins seem to have included the ultimate movers and shakers, not only in Bath, but in the entire country.

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## Notes

1. "Our PATCH of heaven" is how one current resident describes the land once owned by Peirce.
2. Godfrey F. Laurence, *Robert Peirce, MD. (1662-1710)*, unpublished Manuscript, Bath Central Library (Accession no. E806116).
3. In Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century*, (Penguin Books, London, 1991), p.77.
4. Descended from Sir John Harington of Kelston. Thomas Bellott founded Bellott's Hospital with monies entrusted to him by his employer Lord Burghley (d.1598). The facility opened in 1608/9, and originally provided accommodation for twelve poor men who had travelled to Bath for the cure.
5. John Wood, *Essay Towards a Description of Bath*, 1749 (Kingsmead reprint 1969), p.281. Wood refers to Peirce as having been a member of the original committee of thirteen. This would mean that Peirce was in Bath since at least 1723; not impossible, but there are no records or references to him until a decade later.
6. Mary Chandler, *The Diseases of Bath a Satire*, J. Roberts, Oxford-Arms, Warlock Lane, 1737. Chandler's poem, *A Description of Bath* (1734) acknowledges Dr. William Oliver for helping to edit her verse, so that 'Ev'n Pope approv'd'.
7. The Royal Society, Bulloch's Roll, NA7698.
8. Peirce recorded in the Philosophical Transactions, No. 452, p.56, that the tumour had a 'diameter perpendicularly [of] ten inches, laterally twelve inches, and antero-posteriorly nine inches'. Isaac Hays, *The American Journal of The Medical Sciences*, (Wiley & Putnam, London, 1841), p.116.
9. Marjorie Williams, *Lady Luxborough Goes to Bath*, (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1946), p.14. (Luxborough to Shenstone).
10. For a full history of the hospital see Roger Rolls, *The Hospital of the Nation: The Story of Spa Medicine and the Mineral Water Hospital at Bath*, (Bird Publications, Bath, 1988).
11. Bath Record Office, Mineral Water Hospital Archives.
12. Anne Borsay, *Medicine and Charity in Georgian Bath: A Social History of the General Infirmary, c.1739-1830*, (Ashgate, Aldershot, 1999). Appendix G shows that Peirce's average annual attendance for 1742/3 was 18, compared to Oliver's 49 or Sparrow's 29 or Hoare's 25. Only Dr. Alexander Rayner and Revd. John Chapman attended less.
13. George Sherburn (editor), *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope, 1736-1744, Vol.IV*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1956), p.401. Cleland did become surgeon, but was dismissed in 1743 due to improper conduct.
14. Henry Fielding letter 18 to James Harris, Twerton, September/October 1743. William Carew Hazlitt, *A Roll of Honour: A Calendar of the Names of Over Seventeenth Thousand Men and Women Who Collected Books*, (Ayer Publishing Reprints, 1971), p.178.
15. Blathwayt family papers, Gloucestershire Records Office, D1799/F138
16. Building work began in 1742; designed by Theodore Jacobsen, a steel merchant and amateur architect of German descent. It should be noted that John Sanderson was Jacobsen's assistant.
17. Dr. Oliver Stanley was able to identify the characteristics of rheumatoid arthritis in the two adults. The child also shows signs of swelling around the wrist and knuckle joints. *The St. James' Chronicle*, May 22/23 1762.
18. R. W. Falconer, (and A. B. Brabazon) *History of the Royal Mineral Water Hospital, Bath*, (Charles Hallett, Bath, 1888), p.35. Peirce left his marble bust to his friend Richard Luther Esq.
19. The majority of Peirce's belongings were left to his niece Mary's husband Stafford Crane; their son, Jerry Peirce Crane, married into the Blathwayt family.

20. (G. Eland), *Purefoy Letters, 1735-1753*, Vol. II, (Sidgwick & Jackson, London, 1931), pp.337-8.
21. *Correspondence*, Vol. IV, p.227.
22. *Ibid.*, p.469.
23. Pope gave a legacy of £150 to the hospital, minuted in the hospital papers on May 7th 1755.
24. *Correspondence*, Vol. IV, p.40.
25. *Ibid.*, p.469.
26. *Ibid.*, p.412.
27. Published on October 28th 1726, the whole impression sold out in a week.
28. *Correspondence*, Vol. I, p.120, & Vol. IV, p.351.
29. *Ibid.*, p.358.
30. Nicholas Kingsley, *The Country Houses of Gloucestershire*, Vol. II, 1660-1830, (Phillimore, Chichester, 1992), p.74.
31. Gloucestershire Records Office, D1799/P1.
32. Memorial tablet, located to the right of the altar at St. Swithin's Church, Walcot, Bath. Prince Hoare was paid £100.
33. Jane Sale, *Charlton Kings Local History Society Bulletins* 44 (Autumn 2000), 45 (Spring 2001) and 47 (Spring 2002). Robins was apprenticed to Jacob Porteret, whose will of 1743 refers to him as 'of Charlton Kings'. Robins sold the house he inherited from Porteret to William Prinn in 1767, and his last rental payment to Prinn for land adjoining his own was also made in that year. William Larnier's will (made in November 1768) refers to Robins 'now living in Bath'. His daughter Mary was married in 1765 in Charlton Kings, her independence may have been the instigator for the family's permanent move to Bath.
34. Bath Record Office, Chamberlain's Accounts, Sept. 2nd 1734 (1732-3), May 30th 1738 (1736-7), Trevor Fawcett and Marta Inskip, 'The Making of Orange Grove', *Bath History* Vol. V. 1994, p. 40.
35. Amy Frost, *Obsession: John Wood and the Creation of Georgian Bath*, (Building of Bath Museum, Bath, 2004).
36. John Wroughton, *The Battle of Lansdown 1643: An Explorer's Guide*, (The Lansdown Press, Bath, 2008), p. 33.
37. He was carried to the Rectory at Cold Ashton, where he died the following day July 5th. According to Mary Delany, his great-grand daughter, 'at the very moment he was slain, he had the patent for the Earldom of Bath in his pocket, with a letter from King Charles I acknowledging his services.' Lady Llanover (ed.), *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs Delany*, (Richard Bentley, London, 1861-2).
38. A portrait of Sir Bevil was commissioned by Lord Buckingham; Stowe sale 1848.
39. Essay, p. 235.
40. *Ibid.*
41. Isabel Colegate, *A Pelican in the Wilderness*, Harper Collins, London, 2002), p. xiii.
42. *Ibid*, p. 175.
43. Woodland Trust [www.british-trees.com/treeguide](http://www.british-trees.com/treeguide).
44. In 2008, Dan Brown and Cathryn Spence discovered and re-attributed a large oil painting at Gloucester Archives. Confirmed by John Harris, the painting shows Hempstead.
45. Maynard Mack, *Alexander Pope: A Life*, (Yale, London, 1985), p. 762.
46. Tim Richardson, *The Arcadian Friends*, (Bantam Press, London, 2008), p. 310.
47. Penelope Blathwayt eloped to Gretna Green with Crane in 1789. Her uncle, Sir Banks Jenkinson did not approve. D1799/F132/C21. In 1788 Crane had been forced to pay maintenance to Frances Davis, the mother of his illegitimate son.
48. Gloucestershire Records Office, D1799/C22.