



About the Capability Brown Festival 2016

The Capability Brown Festival 2016 is the first-ever nationwide celebration of the work of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown. It marks the 300th anniversary of his birth in August 1716.

The Festival unites 19 partner organisations, in the UK's largest festival of its kind to date. It is funded with a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, with additional match funding, and funding in kind, from the Festival's partners and supporters. The Festival is managed by the Landscape Institute.

The Festival has two key strands. The first is about increasing audiences and public access to the sites Brown worked or advised on. People will be able to explore and engage with Brown's legacy landscapes, features and houses. The Festival will encourage as many Brown sites as possible to open in 2016, including those not ordinarily open to the public, and will support site owners and guardians in interpreting their landscapes for visitors.

The second strand of the project is to discover more about Brown's work, and how he created his amazing landscapes and management systems with the tools available in the 18th century. Researchers, volunteers, independent groups and individuals, universities and sites themselves are being encouraged to undertake research projects on Brown and his work. This will be collated and shared through exhibitions, websites, social media and a range of events.

The Capability Brown Festival 2016 will:

- Celebrate Capability Brown as an artist and landscape designer.
- Encourage an increased number of people and a more diverse audience to visit, learn about and enjoy Brown's landscapes.
- Commission a range of interesting and innovative projects to encourage sites and people to get involved across the country.
- Encourage a greater appreciation of our designed landscape heritage.

To achieve this the Festival project team will:

- Offer a comprehensive programme of support to owners of Brown sites, aiming to open as many as possible during Festival year, including those not normally open to the public.
- Develop a network of hub sites across England to support and engage the Brown sites in their area or region.

- Work with sites, with a special focus on those in urban areas and those commissioned to run projects, to bring Brown to new audiences.
- Interpret all or as many sites as possible, using research by volunteers who will be trained and supported by the Festival.
- Use media, PR, partner and central communication opportunities to promote understanding of Brown's art and design influence.
- Stimulate new research, and create a definitive record of Brown sites.
- Ensure that the Festival's findings, research and learning resources are accessible to as many people as possible, and share learning as it develops through a programme of regional seminars.
- Engage volunteers in all aspects of the 2016 celebrations.

Background: Lancelot 'Capability' Brown

Lancelot 'Capability' Brown changed the face of eighteenth century England, designing country estates and mansions, moving hills and making flowing lakes and serpentine rivers.

Brown was baptised on 30 Aug 1716 at Kirkharle, Northumberland, the fifth of the six children of William Brown, a yeoman farmer and Ursula, née Hall, who had worked in the big house on the Kirkharle estate. He went to the village school at Cambo, and then began work as a gardener at Kirkharle, leaving in 1739.

In 1741 he reached Stowe, Buckinghamshire where he rapidly assumed responsibility for the execution of both architectural and landscaping works in the famous garden. It was at Stowe in 1744

that Brown married Bridget Wayet, with whom he eventually had nine children. While at Stowe, Brown also began working as an independent designer and contractor and in autumn 1751, shortly after Cobham's death, he was able to move with his family to the Mall, Hammersmith, the market garden area of London.

His nickname of 'Capability' is thought to have come from his describing landscapes as having "great capabilities".

His style

Brown's style derived from the two practical principles of comfort and elegance. On the one hand there was a determination that everything should work, and that a landscape should provide for every need of the great house. On the other his landscapes had to cohere and look elegant.

While his designs have great variety, they also appear seamless owing to his use of the sunk fence or 'ha-ha' to confuse the eye into believing that different pieces of parkland, though managed and stocked quite differently, were one. His expansive lakes, at different levels and apparently unconnected, formed a single body of water as if a river through the landscape, that like the parkland itself, ran on indefinitely.



© Portrait of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, c.1770-75, Cosway, Richard (1742-1821)/Private Collection/Bridgeman Images

This effortless coherence is taken for granted today in a way that was predicted in his obituary: 'where he is the happiest man he will be least remembered, so closely did he copy nature his works will be mistaken'.

His business

Brown offered a number of different services to his clients: for a round number of guineas, he could provide a survey and plans for buildings and landscape, and leave his client to execute his proposal; more frequently he provided a foreman to oversee the work, which would be carried out by labour recruited from the estate. Even in 1753, when he opened his account with Drummond's Bank, Brown was employing four foremen and by the end of the decade he had over twenty foremen on his books. Finally, he could oversee and refine the work himself, usually by means of visits for a certain number of days each year.

He also practiced architecture, and during the 1750s contributed to several country houses, including Burghley House, Blenheim, Chatsworth and Harewood. However his architecture played second fiddle to his 'place-making'. In 1764 he was appointed to the gardens of Hampton Court, Richmond and St James' and he then moved to Wilderness House, Hampton Court.

Brown had suffered from asthma all his life, and his habit of the constant travel, together with his practice of not always charging for work (he would sometimes allow his client to determine the value of what he had done and seems frequently to have submitted plans and surveys without a bill), did affect both his health and finances. He continued to work and travel however until his sudden collapse and death on February 6th 1783. He died at his daughter Bridget Holland's house in London, but was buried at Fenstanton, in Cambridgeshire, the only place he is known to have owned property and where he became Lord of the Manor.

An evaluation of his work

Brown is best remembered for landscape on an immense scale, constructing not only gardens and parkland, but planting woods and building farms linked by carriage drives, or 'ridings', many miles from the main house. Although his work is continually reassessed, every landscape gardener and landscape architect since, both in Britain and across the developed world, has been influenced in one way or another by Brown. Over two centuries have passed since his death, but such are the enduring qualities of his work that over 150 of the 260 or so landscapes with which he is associated remain worth seeing today. The images that Brown created are as deeply embedded in the English character as the paintings of Turner and the poetry of Wordsworth.



Founding partners: Capability Brown Festival 2016



The **Landscape Institute** manages the Capability Brown Festival on behalf of the Festival Partnership. The Landscape Institute is the Royal Chartered institute for landscape architects. As a professional body and educational charity, it works to protect, conserve and enhance the natural and built environment for the public benefit.



The **National Trust** is Europe's largest conservation charity which aims to preserve and protect special places and spaces, for ever for everyone. It cares for historic buildings and gardens, mills, coastline, forests, woods, fens, beaches, farmland, moorland, islands, archaeological remains, nature reserves, villages and pubs.



The **Historic Houses Association (HHA)** represents more than 1,600 of the UK's privately (and some charitably) owned historic houses, castles and gardens, many of which are considered to be iconic of Britain's unique heritage. HHA Member properties welcome 13 million visitors each year, as well as 300,000 learners of all ages. 54% of HHA Member properties support community or charitable events and the HHA has more than 40,000 Friends, who can enjoy visiting hundreds of Members' gardens and houses free-of-charge. HHA Members own over 70 Capability Brown sites and continue to care for the landscapes he created,



English Heritage cares for over 400 historic buildings, monuments and sites - from world-famous prehistoric sites to grand medieval castles, from Roman forts on the edges of the empire, to a Cold War bunker. Through these, it brings the story of England to life for over 10 million people each year. It is a registered charity.



Historic England is the public body that looks after England's historic environment. It champions historic places, helping people understand, value and care for them. It works to identify and protect England's heritage, supporting change and delivering national expertise at a local level.



Natural England is the government's advisor on the natural environment. It provides practical advice, grounded in science, on how best to safeguard England's natural wealth for the benefit of everyone. Natural England works with farmers and land managers, business and industry, planners and developers, national and local government, interest groups and local communities to help them improve their local environment.



VisitEngland works with partners throughout the country to achieve an ambitious programme of marketing and tourism development. While dealing with a range of daily issues, such as responding to requests for advice from government, the industry or stakeholder organisations, the VisitEngland team also manages business support and research functions and leads on a wide number of development and marketing activities.



The National Garden Scheme opens thousands of gardens throughout England and Wales to raise money for nursing and caring charities. Most of the gardens are private and are not normally open to the public.

THE GARDENS TRUST

The Gardens Trust was formed on July 24 2015 by the merger of The Garden History Society and the Association of Gardens Trusts.



Kolab is a collaborative award-winning full service digital agency based in London, Dorset, Cambridgeshire, Surrey, Dublin, and in the heart of Europe.



The National Association of Decorative & Fine Arts Societies (NADFAS) is a leading arts charity which opens up the world of the arts through a network of local Societies and national events.



VisitBritain is the national tourism agency, a non-departmental public body, funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, responsible for promoting Britain worldwide and developing its visitor economy. Its mission is to grow the value of inbound tourism to Britain, working with a wide range of partners in both the UK and overseas.



Parks & Gardens UK is the leading on-line resource for historic parks and gardens providing freely accessible, accurate and inspiring information on UK parks, gardens and designed landscapes and all activities concerned with their promotion, conservation and management.

Festival partners



Blenheim Palace is home to the 11th Duke and Duchess of Marlborough and birthplace of Sir Winston Churchill. Designated as a World Heritage Site in 1987 the Palace is a true masterpiece of 18th Century Baroque architecture that sits amongst over 2000 acres of 'Capability' Brown landscaped parkland and Formal Gardens.



Sharing the best in Gardening

The **Royal Horticultural Society** is involved in many activities that promote and benefit gardening for members and the wider public.



Bridgeman Images is the world's leading specialist in the distribution of fine art, cultural and historical media for reproduction. Every subject, concept, style and medium is represented in its collections, from the masterpieces of national museums to the hidden treasures of private collections.



The **Embroiderers' Guild** builds awareness of stitch and textile art, and has branches across the UK. It aims to educate, encourage, inspire, and promote the achievement of excellence, and welcomes members of all ages, background and levels of experience.

Festival supporter



The **Georgian Group** is the national charity dedicated to preserving Georgian buildings and gardens. Every year, it is consulted on more than 6,000 planning applications involving demolition or alterations, intervening when necessary to help save Georgian buildings and protect others from harm.

Festival funder



The Capability Brown Festival has been made possible through a **Heritage Lottery Fund** grant. Thanks to National Lottery players, the Heritage Lottery Fund invests money to help people across the UK explore, enjoy and protect the heritage they care about - from the archaeology under their feet to the historic parks and buildings they love, from precious memories and collections to rare wildlife.