

Creating a Capability Brown Landscape

KS1 supporting materials for teachers



Lancelot
‘Capability’
Brown
Landscape Architect
born at Kirkharle
1716

Thanks to:

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Keywords and ideas for following through/research:

history (e.g. border reivers), local history (medieval village), family history, surveying and surveying techniques (from prehistoric e.g. Stonehenge or Romans, to modern day), landscape, human intervention, sculpture, artist, gardener, types of garden, planning, measuring, scale, perspective, areas, volumes (earth-moving and water), native trees, diverting water flows, draining boggy land, flooding, water-table, plants, art (link to Henrietta Loraine and watercolours or local plants or other artists), ecosystems, farming, wildlife, swans, migration, seasons, mapping, contours, routes/roads and transport

Useful links:

Historic England - <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001049>

Kirkharle: - <http://kirkharlecourtyard.co.uk/>

Capability Brown: - <http://www.capabilitybrown.org/>

Capability Brown's Water Designs - <https://capabilitybrown.wordpress.com/browns-lakes/>

Parks and Gardens UK - <http://www.parksandgardens.org/> <http://www.parksandgardens.org/places-and-people/site/1965?preview=1>

Potential work in the classroom before or after the visit:

1. Look at Ordnance Survey map OL42 (4 cm to 1 km) for Kirkharle
2. Work out the Grid Reference for Kirkharle Courtyard.
3. Measure the distance to Cambo School via the roads of today and via fields, looking for a route that Lancelot might have taken. If looking for shortcuts the A696 had not been built, but don't forget he needed to cross any water.

Things to bring:

- Picnic rugs to sit on
- Printed packs - for teachers, children and the map
- Colouring pencils
- Copies of Lancelot Brown's original plan for the lake.

Provided at Kirkharle

- Clipboards
- Pencils
- Knotted ropes

Potential artists for comparison with Capability Brown's work

Andy Goldsworthy – described as a land artist, he creates natural sculptures, sometimes temporary/fleeting. Process of looking at what is already in a landscape, working with natural materials, often includes water. His work is also a process of identifying focal points, colour and how the art is viewed in the landscape. Capability was creating permanent 'installations' that would look natural, he was also reflecting current fashions or the need to promote the idea of a person's education and social standing. The latter more so in the structures in his landscapes. See:

<http://www.ipadartroom.com/andy-goldsworthy-inspired-lesson/>



Mcginly, Wikipedia - Andy Goldsworthy Tree with stones around it 07, Yorkshire Sculpture Park

Charles Jencks – described as a landscape architect. Like Capability Brown, he also uses glimpses and views e.g. Northumberlandia. The structure is full of curves, perspective, and contours. Another structure, much smaller (but you can still walk around it), not too far away is in Edinburgh at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, called Landform.



Creating a Capability Brown Landscape

Lancelot Brown was born here at Kirkharle in 1716, 300 years ago. He walked to school at Cambo and back every day (3 miles or 4.8 kilometres - about 23 football pitches to school and then the same back again). When he left school, at the age of 15, he worked for the owners of Kirkharle. At that time, the Loraine family owned Kirkharle. He learned his skill of creating landscapes in this little corner of Northumberland.

Lancelot's landscape designs involved moving earth, creating lakes and planting trees. The aim was to create enjoyment for all visitors. Lancelot had the extraordinary skill of seeing how to improve what was already in a landscape. He could see the capabilities. This earned him the name Capability Brown.

Lancelot Capability Brown decided to create a plan for a lake in the landscape at Kirkharle, for the young Sir William Loraine (cousin to Lancelot's nephew, as his brother John had married into the Loraine family).

Information about the site from Historic England:

Kirkharle was a medieval settlement. The Loraines were landowners there as early as the fourteenth century. Sir William Loraine (1658-1743) succeeded to the Kirkharle estate as second Baronet in 1718. His Uncle was Sir John Fenwick of Wallington and Sir William was a barrister in London. In 1701 Sir William was elected as an MP. Whilst he lived at Kirkharle he built a new mansion house, out-houses, gardens, fountains, and fishponds. He restored and refurbished St Wilfrid's church and 1694-1738 planted many hedgerows, forest and fruit trees. He did a great deal of work on the land, building new farmhouses and buildings. His work on the land would have had a great impact as it included draining boggy areas and clearing stones to prepare the land for useful cultivation. His works are probably the reason that Kirkharle village, that formerly stood immediately to the west of Kirkharle Hall (south of Kirkharle Burn and to the left of the entrance road to Kirkharle), was rebuilt slightly further south and west, where the houses are today. The original village is probably where Lancelot Brown was born.

The A696 did not exist until 1830 and divided the Kirkharle estate. The A696 was a link road to Edinburgh, built as a turnpike road, suggesting the funds to build/maintain the road came from tolls. A Turnpike Trust would have existed to do this. A Toll House existed at Ponteland by the bridge. A toll gate existed, the Knowes Gate, at Kirkwhelpington. Information about Northumberland turnpike roads can be found here: <http://www.turnpikes.org.uk/map%20Northumberland%20turnpikes.jpg>

Health and Safety at Kirkharle Lake

Please note the following statement when visiting Kirkharle Lake:

We hope that you enjoy the natural beauty of Kirkharle Lake Walk, but it should be noted that **NO LIFE SAVING EQUIPMENT HAS BEEN PROVIDED AROUND THE LAKE WALK.**

You are most welcome to use the defined footpath around the perimeter of the Lake. All users do so at their own risk. **Children should be supervised at all times.**

Dogs are welcome to enjoy the walk but must be kept on leads. **PLEASE CLEAN UP AFTER YOUR DOG.**

To prevent disturbance to the aquatic life entry into the stream / Lake is not permitted.

Setting the scene for the children regarding the landscape:



On arrival, get the children to visit the bridge that you crossed as you came into the car park. This is where Kirkharle Burn enters the main site. If they look up the river (to the SW - see the map provided) they can see the burn coming down a small hill. Above the burn on the left is the site of the original village of Kirkharle where it is thought that Lancelot Brown was born.

If they then stand on the other side of the bridge or alongside the burn by the grass and trees (minding any cars and taking care not to fall in!) they can see a huge difference in the burn. It is now in a manmade culvert. Get them to see that it is lined with stones along its bottom and sides, why might this be?



Walk down through the courtyard where you will see Young Capability Brown, but keep an eye on the burn, on the right. It is completely culverted in a couple of places. On the wall to the left of Young Capability is a large wall-mounted version of the plan by Capability Brown for a lake a Kirkharle. (Note the toilets are in the courtyard, facing you to the left of the jeweller's).



Keeping Young Capability to your left escort the children to the entrance to the lake. At the beginning, there is an impressive entrance and a panel with information about Capability Brown. There is space through the gates on the grass to get the children started on their tasks. They can also note that on the right of the gravel path down to the lake, before they get to the white bridge, they can still see the Kirkharle Burn in its culverted state.

Note: Harder to see in the summer when the grass is longer.

They will be thinking about how Lancelot 'Capability' Brown learned about the landscape at Kirkharle. When they start their tasks they will go to the white bridge, here they will be able to see that once the burn goes under the bridge it is no longer in a stone-lined culvert, in a very short distance it is very straight and the gravel path is alongside it. Is this natural?

A useful exercise would be to look at Bing Maps <http://www.bing.com/mapspreview> before they come to Kirkharle and also the Ordnance Survey map OL 42. These could be used to think about what Capability Brown had to work with, what the children have as a starting point today and how even without visiting somewhere, they can get a good idea of what they will find. In addition, this links to the use of Satellite imagery and the European Space Station - how much we can see from 'space'.

How young Lancelot 'Capability' Brown might have learned to look at a landscape

You are young Lancelot Brown and you are learning about landscapes. You are going to look at the lake and investigate some of the ways that Lancelot worked. Lancelot would have used existing maps and plans. However, maps were not as detailed as we have today, but the Loraine's would have had plans of the Kirkharle estate. You have a plan showing the lake, the path around it and the location of the information panels.

1. Young Lancelot got his ideas working here and walking to school and back every day. He would have known all about the area, every little dip or rise in the landscape and where the land became boggy when it was wet. He would not have had wellington boots! Lancelot would have observed all the animals and the plants. Lancelot would also have known what changes happened during every season of the year.

Kirkharle Lake is really two connected lakes. However, in some places you cannot see both lakes, it looks like one big lake.

Lancelot's original plan was for one lake, have a look at his plan. The plan had to be adjusted because the main road to Kirkharle, the A696, had not been built when the plan was drawn. That's the clever bit of the way that the lakes were made in 2009, we look into the distance and from some places we are tricked into thinking that there is only one lake!

2. Lancelot probably kept notes and drawings of what he saw. Let's find out what is here now by taking a clock-wise walk around the lake path from the white bridge:
 - a. Don't rush past the bridge over Kirkharle Burn, what creatures might live in the water? Either in Kirkharle Burn or in Kirkharle Lake?

- b. Be on the lookout for plants, flowers and trees. These are very important in designing a garden or landscape. Lancelot included many trees in all of his landscape designs. Draw a tree on the next page for Lancelot to include in his plans.

- What type of tree is it?
- Does it keep its leaves in winter?

If you see any flowers that you like you could draw those instead. Lancelot would have known what would grow well here and what to include in his designs.



Note for teachers: the panel on flora might help with spotting plants and flowers. Its location is marked on the map. It includes watercolours painted by Henrietta Loraine in and around Kirkharle in the 1820s.

Marsh Marigold - Henrietta Loraine





- c. Walk to the end of the second lake. Walk up the bank and draw the view of the lakes (place marked on your map). Decide whether you want to turn the page round for the drawing or keep it this way up.



- d. Can you see any birds today? Write down what they are (there might be swans, ducks):
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Note for teachers: if the children struggle to spot any birds visit the Natural History Panel to help the children, it has potential visitors to the lake in every season.

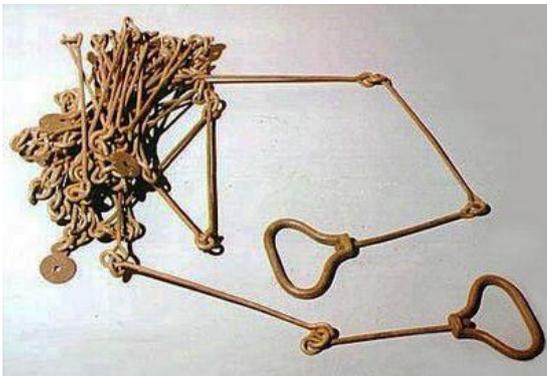


3. Let's think about how Lancelot measured things. Then we can compare the length of the first lake with the distance to Lancelot's school:

Note for teachers:

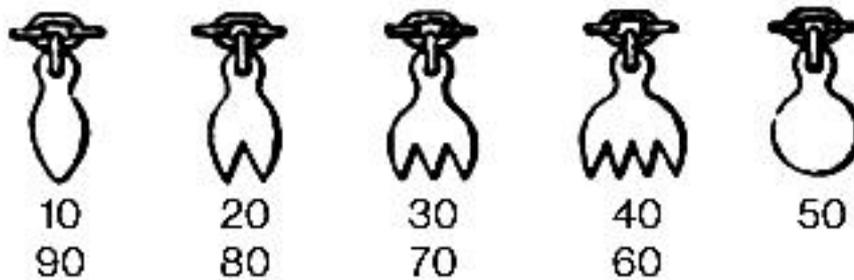
For safety, this section on measuring uses the gravel path as a guide, starting at the panel about the History of Farming at Kirkharle along to the panel about Natural History at Kirkharle. See the map for KS1 Activities.

- a. Measuring the length of the lake - Lancelot did not have very sophisticated tools. His main tool would have been a set of metal chains for measuring, called a Gunter's Chain:



A Gunter's Chain was a 66 foot (20.1 m) chain made of 100 thin iron links measuring 7.92 inches (20.1 cm) each. 66 feet is the length of a cricket pitch. 80 Chains equal one mile! One mile is about 1.61 kilometres.

The chain included markers every 10 links, called tallies. The marker at 10 and 90 would be the same, another design at 20 and 80, another at 30 and 70, again at 40 and 60, and another at 50. Why were these markers important?



b. You have lengths of knotted rope (the knots are every 20 cm - so a bit like a Gunter's Chain). It is 200 cm long (how many metres?). Work together to:

- Measure how long the first lake is, use the gravel path as a guide, from the panel about farming at Kirkharle to the panel about Natural History (wildlife at Kirkharle)
- Why is this better than counting the strides it takes to measure the length of the lake?
- Your results:

The lake is _____ lengths of knotted rope

Each rope is 2 metres long.

The length of the lake is _____ X 2 = _____ metres

Cambo School is 4.8 kilometres away.

There are _____ metres in a kilometre.

The school is 4.8 x _____ = _____ metres away.

Use the table below to estimate how many lengths of the lake Lancelot walked to Cambo School. Circle the nearest answer.

Estimated length of lake	Number of times you would walk this length to get to Lancelot's school
70 metres	69
75 metres	64
80 metres	60
85 metres	56
90 metres	53
95 metres	50
100 metres	48

Don't forget that Lancelot did this twice a day and in all weathers!

Would you be tired after this?

Let's find out how long it might have taken. Get your teacher to time you walking (not running) the distance you have just measured.

How long did it take? _____

To find out how long it would take you to walk to Cambo:

Multiply the time you took by the number you have circled in the table.

Your answer: _____

Note for teachers: you could use the calculator app on your phone to help out or get the children to do the sum back in the classroom.

4. What did you enjoy about your investigations at Kirkharle today?
