Birthplace of Capability Brown awarded National



Kirkharle, the birthplace of Capability Brown Alexis Moore

This year is the 300th anniversary of the birth of Capability Brown and sites across England and Wales are getting ready to celebrate as part of the Capability Brown Festival.

Now Kirkharle, the birthplace of the man known as the grandfather of landscape architecture and the man who created the image of a quintessential English garden, is making its own mark thanks to a grant of £20,100 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

Born in the Northumberland hamlet in 1716 and baptised in St Wilfrid’s Church, Brown began his now legendary career as an apprentice gardener on the Kirkharle estate. In 1770, and by then a widely known and hugely respected landscape architect, Brown returned to his hometown and left a sketch of his ideas for how the park could be developed.

His ideas were not made a reality however and the sketch was lost until 1980 when they were discovered in a house nearby. In 2000 some of the estate’s farm buildings were converted were converted into a visitor and arts centre with the long lost plan implemented in 2009. This year the CB300 project, led by Kirkharle Creative, will enable the local community and schools to plant 300 trees to bring a small part of Brown’s vision to life.

A wide variety of activities will take place in Kirkharle Courtyard throughout the summer, including 18th century picnics, poetry workshops, guided walks and talks, performances and a range of other activities.

Ivor Crowther, Head of HLF North East, said: “Without Capability Brown we wouldn’t have our image of the quintessential English garden and without National Lottery players we wouldn’t be able to spend this year celebrating in the place where he took his first steps to an incredible legacy. We’re delighted to support this project and look forward to what promises to be an exciting year.”

Inspiration of Newcastle Central architect’s rare landscapes

200 trees will be planted and 200 memories will be shared to celebrate 200 years of Bolam Lake – the most intact survivor of the rare landscapes designed by John Dobson and said to be inspired by Capability Brown.

More than three decades before he completed Newcastle’s famous Central Station, Dobson was at the beginning of what would become an illustrious career when he was commissioned by Lord Decies of Shortflatt to create a pleasure ground including an artificial lake and sculpted woodland.

Capability Brown, born in nearby Kirkharle a century earlier, was said to have influenced John Dobson’s landscape design.

Northumberland County Council has secured £54,900 from HLF to explore historical records of the site, carry out vital planting and repairs and reach out to local schools and communities to celebrate Bolam Lake’s bi-centenary.

Councillor Ian Swithenbank, cabinet member for local services at Northumberland County Council, said: “This is excellent news for Bolam Lake Country Park. The HLF grant will be of benefit to the park and its visitors for years to come; allowing us to carry out improvements including a new information leaflet and interpretation panels. We also plan to improve paths around the lake and plant around 200 new trees. A programme of events over the summer will help to mark the bi-centenary of Bolam Lake.”

Notes to editors

The Capability Brown Festival unites 21 partner organisations in the UK’s largest festival of its kind to date.

- It marks the 300th anniversary of the birth of Lancelot Capability Brown in August 1716 at Kirkharle
- The Festival is managed by the Landscape Institute and 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
- Many Brown sites, including those not normally open to the public, will host special events, tours and activities throughout 2016
- More information can be found on the Capability Brown Festival website

Further information

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