



CALL FOR PAPERS: Capability Brown: perception and response in a global context

An **ICOMOS-UK International Conference** in collaboration with the **University of Bath**, in association with the **Garden History Society** and the **National Trust**, and supported by the **ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Cultural Landscapes**

9–11 September 2016, University of Bath, England

Deadline for abstracts: **31 August 2014**

Contact: admin@icomos-uk.org

Through its Cultural Landscapes and Historic Gardens Committee, ICOMOS-UK is organising an international conference, at the University of Bath from 9 to 11 September 2016, to explore themes around “Capability Brown: perception and response in a global context”. The tercentenary of the birth of Lancelot “Capability” Brown (1716–1783) is being celebrated as an opportunity to look at his life, work, style and significance. Most countries in Europe or under European influence had their own equivalent periods of naturalistic design. Brown wrote no books and left no written explanation of his work. Much is not understood about him and can only be inferred from his actual work and when seen in a wider context. The ICOMOS-UK conference will explore these dimensions and how Brown’s work has been interpreted over the last 250 years.

The conference will address the following themes:

1. What was and is the significance of Lancelot Brown’s work in his own time, since and now?
2. To whom, how and when was the work of Brown and his contemporaries known in countries beyond Britain?
3. How did the work and style of Brown relate to landscape design in countries beyond Britain?
4. Can Brown’s style be meaningfully associated with any international art-historical movements?

The reputation of Brown and other designers in the naturalistic style has varied over time. The four periods of history that are of interest for the purposes of the conference are:

- o During Brown’s lifetime
- o Between Brown’s death and the end of the British ‘Georgian’ period, 1783–1837
- o From the accession of Queen Victoria in 1837 until 1918
- o From 1918 to the present.

The papers, among which selected presentations of 20 minutes each and brief interventions of 10 minutes, will form the basis of the conference, and will feed into the discussions.



GARDEN HISTORY
SOCIETY



To propose a paper, please submit a **concise one-page abstract (max. 300 words), in English, by e-mail to admin@icomos-uk.org** by 31 August 2014.

The abstracts should indicate:

- the title of the paper
- the chosen theme and the period(s) treated
- three to five keywords that reflect the general theme of the paper
- the author's name(s), any institutional affiliation and contact details (postal address, phone, fax, e-mail)
- if you are an ICOMOS member, your ICOMOS National Committee.

No more than one abstract will be considered per author (unless for the second abstract you are not the principal author).

Selection and Review Process

Authors are sought for a special issue of *Garden History* (44) to be published in Summer 2016, and speakers are also wanted for the September 2016 conference. In several cases this will be the same person.

The first phase in the process is for the Selection Committee to review the abstracts. Those authors of potential interest for either the publication or the conference will be invited to develop their abstracts into 1,000 word outlines, and style notes will be issued at that stage.

The Selection Committee will then select papers for the conference and the publication (possibly for both). Names of selected conference speakers will be passed to the conference organisers. The selected authors will be invited to submit fully referenced 3,000 word papers with illustrations (rough versions of illustrations will be acceptable at this stage).

When these papers are received they will be sent out to reviewers for blind peer-review. The Selection Committee will negotiate any desirable alterations to the text. Authors will then submit final papers with high-resolution digital illustrations, and the Selection Committee will check these and pass them to the Editor of *Garden History*. Authors will be responsible for obtaining any necessary permissions.

Timescale

The timetable will run according to the **ends** of the following months:

Aug 2014: **Deadline for 300 word abstracts**

Dec 2014: **Deadline for invited 1,000 word outlines**

Jun 2015: **Deadline for selected 3,000 word papers with illustrations**

Jun 2015: **Speakers selected to give 20 minute presentations in Sept 2016 notified**

Nov 2015: **Deadline for final papers with digital images and their permissions**

Mar 2016: **Publication in *Garden History* 44 (Summer 2016)**

Selection Committee: Peter Goodchild, Marion Harney, David Jacques, Michael Symes and the Editor of *Garden History* (Barbara Simms).

Symposium Secretariat: Sarah Yates, Events and Membership Coordinator, ICOMOS-UK
SarahYates@icomos-uk.org





Background

Lancelot “Capability” Brown was not an isolated figure but **part of a general movement in garden and landscape design**. This movement promoted a ‘naturalistic’ approach as opposed to a ‘geometrical’ one, and was often called ‘the English style’. A main branch of it was concerned with the application of ‘picturesque’ principles. There were many practitioners of the naturalistic style and many variations in its application. Brown, for a time (c.1750-1783), was pre-eminent at a key period in the development of naturalistic landscape gardening.

The most recent catalogue of his works is by John Phibbs and was published in *Garden History* 41:2 (2013). This lists over 300 sites, of which two were outside the UK (Richmond in Braunschweig, and Laeken in Brussels).

During Brown’s lifetime, there were several different styles, approaches, or aesthetic modes in landscape gardening, each with its own characteristic ingredients. For example, there was the ‘Rural and Extensive Garden’, the ‘Grand Manner’, the ‘Ornamented Farm’ (Ferme Ornée), the ‘Rococo Garden’ (a present-day term), ‘the Beautiful’, ‘the Picturesque’, and ‘the Sublime’. Although each had distinctive ingredients, these different styles also had many ingredients in common with one another. In addition to this, and in practice, the characteristics of one mode might be mixed with those of another.

Brown is customarily associated with the ‘Beautiful’ and not with the ‘Sublime’ or the ‘Picturesque’. English literary culture has made a sharp distinction between these modes, but from the point of view of landscape gardening, the distinction is not clear cut and it could be asked whether Brown’s style should, in fact, be regarded as representing one interpretation of picturesque principles, i.e. the ‘Polite Picturesque’ as opposed to the ‘Rustic Picturesque’. The experience and perceptions of landscape professionals from outside the UK may have some interesting light to throw on this and other aspects of Brown’s life, work and style.