



Friends of Wimbledon Park

Capability Brown's 300 Year Anniversary Group

(A subcommittee of the Friends of Wimbledon Park)

Introduction

The Friends of Wimbledon Park have agreed with the 3 owners of what is left of the original Capability Brown Wimbledon Park landscape (LB of Merton, All England Club and The Wimbledon Club) to prepare celebrations for next year to mark the 300th Anniversary of Capability Brown's birth in 1716, and to be a part of the countrywide 2016 Festival planned. To this end, FOWP have set up the Capability Brown 300 Year Anniversary Group.

Invitation

This circular is sent to invite those who might be interested in joining the Capability Brown 300 Year Anniversary Group and becoming involved in developing programmes for next year's celebrations - to contact n.steiner@btinternet.com.

Background

Last July Mary Buckley reported:

“There will be celebrations of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown's landscape's in 2016, which is the tercentenary of his birth in 1716, and Wimbledon Park's landscape is designed by him.

Brown was a landscape architect who has been described as 'England's greatest gardener' with over 170 gardens including, Blenheim, Chatsworth and Longleat. In London he designed gardens at Syon Park, Kew Gardens, Hampton Court and the Spencer estate at Wimbledon House .

The first Earl Spencer had an estate of 1200 acres which stretched from Tibbett's Corner to south Wimbledon. Much of the land was sold to developers in the 1870's, but in 1914, Wimbledon Borough Council purchased the remaining land and Wimbledon Park was opened.

A group has been formed to celebrate the 300th Anniversary and the first Information Day was held on 18th June 2014 in Warwickshire. 100 people attended and delegates included the National Trust, estate owners and managers, head gardeners, local authorities and volunteer groups. There were also representatives from English Heritage, The Heritage Lottery Fund and tourist organisations.

The aim of the Festival is to:

1. Celebrate Capability Brown
2. Encourage an increased number of people and a more diverse audience to visit, learn about and enjoy Brown's landscapes.
3. Pilot a range of projects to encourage sites and people to get involved across the country.
4. Encourage a greater appreciation of our designed landscape.

The Heritage Lottery Fund has given the Festival a development grant to help them raise the profile of the national Festival in advance of 2106. The work done in the development stage will influence the second round bid in October 2014. This will create a chance of having a full grant by 2015, in order to put their ideas into action by 2016.

A seminar of particular interest concerned the opening up of parks to individuals and groups who would otherwise not have an interest in the park or access to a park. In relation to Wimbledon Park, the possible activities could include:-

- Encouraging groups to participate in the care of the park, for example with a gardening group.
- Events for the elderly such as local history talk
- Workshops for children about our landscape and ecology
- An exhibition about the history of the park

The Festival organisers are keen to have urban sites which encourage the best potential for involving non-traditional audiences”.