Creating a Capability Brown Landscape

KS1 Activities

Photographer - Georgia Smith

Lancelot
'Capability'
Brown
Landscape Architect

born at Kirkharle
1716

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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).

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.

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.

1blank drawing box

d. Can you see any birds today? Write down what they are (there might be swans, ducks):

_____

_____

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:

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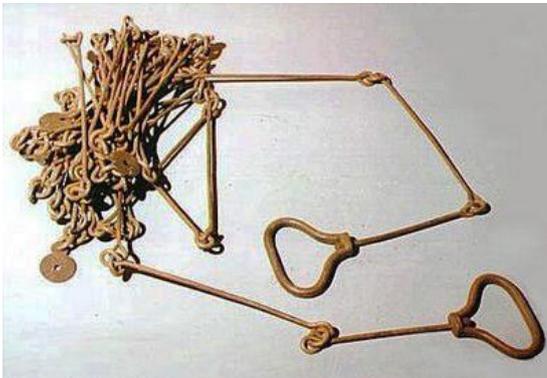
A Gunter's Chain was a 66 foot (20.1 m) chain made of 100 thin iron links measuring 7.92 inches (20.1 cm) each. 66 feet is the length of a cricket pitch. 80 Chains equal one mile! One mile is about 1.61 kilometres.

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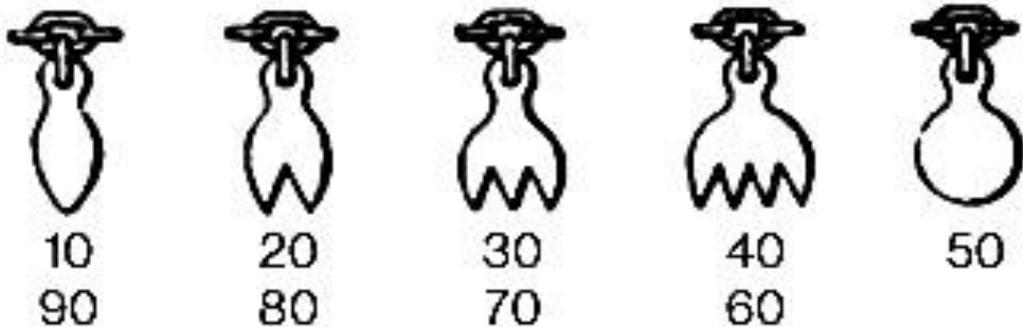
b. You have lengths of knotted rope (the knots are every 20 cm - so a bit like a Gunter's Chain). It is 200 cm long (how many metres?). Work together to:

- 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: _____

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

_____

_____

_____

_____