

Capability Brown at Scampston



The lake with Scampston Hall in the background ©Chris Gallagher

Capability Brown was at Scampston in the 1770s, extending the Great Water lake and New River and building the attractive Palladian Bridge and cascade for Sir William St Quintin, the 5th Baronet. Scampston has been owned by the St Quintin family since the late 17th century.

Brown may have been involved in remodelling the estate at an earlier stage, perhaps drawing up a plan in the late 1750s. He was busy in Yorkshire then, advising the owners at Harewood and probably Burton Constable too. The Scampston account books don't mention him until 1771, when a surveyor called Mr Luccock was paid for "drawing a plan to send to Mr Brown".

In May 1773 Brown's account at Drummond's Bank was credited with £100 (£162,000 in 2015) from Sir William. This sum is thought to have covered his plans for the park, including the bridge and cascade. Brown's own account book mentions a "journey to Scampston near Malton Autumn 1773" and later visits.

Scampston www.scampston.co.uk/hall

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For more information about Brown and his work go to capabilitybrown.org/research



Capability Brown

Lancelot 'Capability' Brown (1716-1783) was born in the Northumberland village of Kirkharle, and went on to popularise the English landscape style, advising on over 250 large country estates throughout England and Wales.

Formal gardens gave way to naturalistic parkland of trees, expanses of water and rolling grass. He also designed great houses, churches and garden buildings, and was skilled in engineering, especially with water.

This guide was created as part of a festival celebrating the 300th anniversary of his birth. Find out more about the man and his work at capabilitybrown.org/research

Portrait of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, c.1770-75, by Richard Cosway (1742/1821)/Private Collection/Bridgeman Images.



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The Great Water

The landscape at Scampston went through several phases of work during the 18th century. Garden designer Charles Bridgeman (1690-1738) produced plans for formal gardens in around 1730, which included a central lawn bordered by trees and shrubs, and a T-shaped canal. The 4th Baronet (1700-70), who preferred a more informal layout, may have contacted Brown when he was advising at other properties in Yorkshire in the 1750s.

It's not known whether Brown was involved in the creation of the Great Water, probably completed by 1759. This replaced earlier formal pieces of water, and



Brown's Palladian Bridge at Scampston ©Scampston Hall

may have been the first phase of Brown's masterplan for Scampston. Around this time the turnpike road was moved to enlarge the park. The newly built Scampston Bridge carried this road across the Swan Beck.

Paintings from the mid 1760s, thought to be by artist William Marlow, show the lake at this time with a more natural shape. Another picture shows a Gothic Deer House in the park, south of the road. This building has also been linked with Brown, though there is no evidence that he was involved in the improvements at Scampston during the 1760s.



Cascade at Scampston by Francis Nicholson c. 1790 Courtesy of the Legard family of Scampston

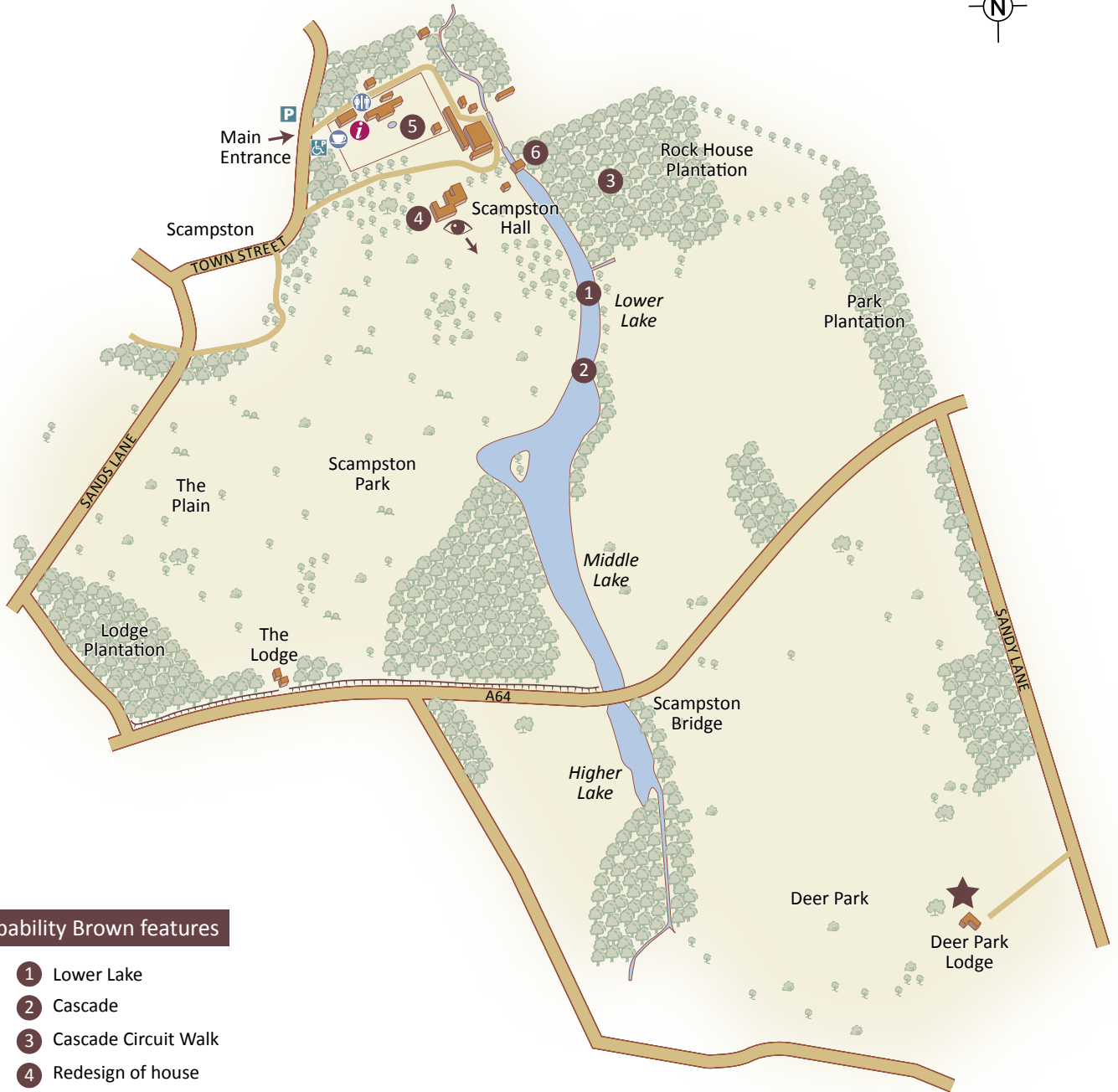
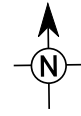
New River and cascade

In the early 1770s Brown visited Scampston several times. This new phase of work saw the extension of the Great Water, as the Swan Beck was reshaped to create the New River. This continued south under Scampston Bridge as far as Scampston Mill, where planting masked the head of the water. At the north end of the river, close to the house, Brown designed a Palladian bridge (now listed Grade II*), which was blocked at the rear to disguise the end of its course.

Built of stone and brick, the Palladian Bridge has three arches and a covering pavilion supported by pairs of Ionic columns. Its elegant design echoes the style of the covered bridges at Stowe, Buckinghamshire and Wilton House, Wiltshire.

Brown was an expert in managing changes of levels in his linked water features to make them appear seamless. At Scampston he built a cascade, which is mentioned in a letter of thanks from Sir William. That letter, dated March 1773, also refers to work on a ha-ha (sunken wall and ditch) that was under way at that time. Sir William was also having an island made in the water, where it appeared too wide. Work on the water was finished by 1777, when the banks were turfed.

Capability Brown at Scampston Hall



Capability Brown features

- 1 Lower Lake
- 2 Cascade
- 3 Cascade Circuit Walk
- 4 Redesign of house
- 5 Walled garden
- 6 Palladian bridge

★ Eye-catcher

↑ Viewpoint

⋈ Ha-ha

Specimen trees

Woodland or copse

Parkland trees

Shrubbery

Visitor Centre

Refreshments

Toilets

Parking

Disabled Parking

200 yards

200 metres



The Lake from Brown's Palladian bridge ©Scampston Hall

Scampston Hall

Brown has also been credited with redesigning the house during the 1770s. The only evidence for this lies in similarities between the corner turrets at Scampston Hall and those at the houses he is known to have designed at Croome Park and Newnham Paddox. The current Scampston Hall is listed Grade II* and was remodelled by architect Thomas Leverton around 1795-1800. A guidebook from 1787 praised Brown's maturing landscape at Scampston, though his name was not mentioned: "The park, ornamented ground, and the splendid mansion... received most of the improvements from the finished taste, good sense, and munificence of Sir William St. Quintin, Bart."



Aerial view of Scampston Hall ©Scampston Hall



Trees in the park ©Scampston Hall

Biodiversity at Scampston

At Scampston the parkland features support a variety of habitats including wood pasture and parkland, deciduous woodland and coniferous woodland. Lowland fen is associated with the lakes which host a range of species such as tadpoles, toads, and dragonflies, which can easily be spotted during spring and summer seasons.

Scampston today

The house and gardens at Scampston are open to the public, and visitors can still see Brown's landscape on a self-guided walk along the Cascade Circuit. There is also a formal garden scheme of linked 'rooms' designed by Piet Oudolf, the Dutch garden designer known for his bold use of perennial plants. Please check www.scampston.co.uk for visitor information.