Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown worked on the landscape at Trentham between 1759 and 1780 for the Earl Gower. He expanded Trentham Lake to become one mile long by damming the River Trent, re-modelled Trentham Hall and the surrounding parkland, and created two lodges. He incorporated Kings Wood into his design, and separated the park from the pleasure garden with a ha-ha (sunken wall and ditch).

Brown arrived at Trentham in 1759 and provided his plan for ‘Intended Alterations’ that same year. It was the first of three commissions. The last payment from Earl Gower is recorded in his own hand in his account book in 1780, just three years before he died. His work at Trentham was described by John Byng, 5th Viscount Torrington and popular columnist: “my old friend Brown is to be traced at every turn: he certainly was a grand planner and leveler of ground - and a judicious former of water; the lake, here, is very fine...”.

Find out more about the man and his work at capabilitybrown.org/research

Trentham Gardens: www.trentham.co.uk/trentham-gardens

Particular thanks to Amanda Dawson and Michael Walker at Trentham
For more information about Brown and his work go to capabilitybrown.org/research
Brown incorporated parts of the existing landscape into his grand design, such as the hanging woods of Kings Wood and the curved deer lawn below, which connected with the lake to the north west. The grazed parkland was separated from the pleasure garden by a ha-ha, shown on Brown’s plan as a double ha-ha. This was later moved 80 feet back in the 1840s when Barry and Nessfield were working at the estate; Barry created the Italian Garden.

Brown swept away a number of the avenues which had been planted in a goose foot pattern, but kept an earlier avenue of beech trees, which is still there today, within Kings Wood. He also removed what remained of the earlier formal gardens and returned these to more natural-looking grassland.

An island in the lake
Brown also created a large island at the north of the lake which was later removed. The lake had already been formed but was expanded to 80 acres and reshaped by Brown in his distinctive style, with serpentine edges and a depth of 4 feet throughout. Beside the lake are a triple-tunnel 18th century boat house and an ice house dating from 1723. Brown did not build these, but it is likely that he remodelled them during his improvements.

Views from the woods
Views link the house to the west side of the lake, and to Kings Wood and the parkland beyond. Near the ice house are a number of specimen trees, such as a group of Jeffries Pine, an Umbrella Pine and several Red Woods, which were planted in the 19th century. There are also views from the lakeside along the lake, which now has four islands, and to the wooded hill in the south of the park. This area was acquired later as the site for today’s monument of the first Duke of Sutherland, and provides one of the best vantage points to appreciate the scale of Brown’s work at Trentham.
Capability Brown features

1. Capability Brown Centre
2. Parkland
3. Woodland
4. Lake
5. Islands
6. Approach drives
7. Georgian Triple Arch Boathouse
8. Ice House
9. Ha-ha

Specimen trees
Woodland or copse
Parkland trees
Shrubbery

Visitor Centre
Refreshments
Toilets
Parking

500 yards
500 metres
Biodiversity at Trentham Gardens

At Trentham the parkland supports a variety of habitats including wood pasture and parkland, lowland heathland, ancient woodland, deciduous woodland, broadleaved and mixed coniferous woodland and habitats associated with the lake and river including lowland fens.

Trentham contains the King’s & Hargreaves Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest, an ancient oak semi-natural woodland with rowan, hazel and holly shrubs and bluebell, wood anemone and wild garlic flowering in spring. The woods support a rich beetle fauna including a high proportion of notable species and locally important breeding birds.

See [www.capabilitybrown.org/garden/trentham-gardens](http://www.capabilitybrown.org/garden/trentham-gardens) for further information about King’s & Hargreaves Woods SSSI.

As part of the restoration of the gardens, a new annual meadow, ecologically matched to the site, has been planted. Parkland has also been restored to allow the re-introduction of the grazing of rare breed cattle, typical of Brownian landscapes.

Trentham today

The Trentham Estate is an award-winning visitor attraction, welcoming 3.2 million visitors a year, and is open every day except Christmas Day. The estate includes Trentham Gardens, around the house and lake, the family-friendly monkey forest and woodland walks. Parts of the original estate landscaped by Brown are now private.