

CHAPTER 6

Place-Making: Capability Brown and the Landscaping of Harewood House, West Yorkshire

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Harewood House, north of Leeds in West Yorkshire (Figure 6.1), is surrounded by one of the key landscapes where Capability Brown is celebrated as the designer: ‘Boasting 1000 acres of “Capability” Brown designed landscape, Harewood represents one of his most important designs ... [w]ith soft, rolling hills and mature, established tree lines, visitors can experience the idyllic, picturesque views “Capability” Brown imagined for Harewood in the 1760s.’² Brown’s involvement at Harewood lasted for nearly twenty-five years, from his first visit in 1758 before the house was even built to his final payment from Edwin Lascelles in 1781, but the extent and nature of his engagement varied considerably over that period. This study will, for the first time, evaluate Brown’s role at Harewood in the context of how the new landscape evolved over the late-eighteenth century. In doing so it will shed new light on the wider context of how designed landscapes were created and how designs were realised on the ground; it will explore the work practices behind the creation of a large new country seat and park, overlaying an older, medieval landscape. In doing so it reveals the contributions of various designers, not just Brown, who were involved in the creation of this grand new park, using the detailed documentation and recent archaeological excavations. By doing this within the context of the eighteenth-century development of the landscape it provides a more detailed insight into Brown’s contribution than has been possible at other sites where documentation is less comprehensive. It thus enables a deeper understanding of Brown’s practice and of his legacy. This chapter will critically examine the assumption that he was the predominant designer at Harewood, and will argue that the nature of Brown’s success was more complex than traditional historiography has allowed.

Henry Lascelles (1690–1753), who had made his considerable fortune in the Atlantic slave trade, bought the estate of Gawthorpe and Harewood in 1739, at which time Gawthorpe Hall, the medieval manor house, was its centrepiece (Figure 6.2). The manor house was probably built in the fourteenth century by the Gascoigne family, who then substantially remodelled it in the late 1470s. The estate and the house were both enlarged

¹ Rebecca Burton at the Harewood House Trust, Gail Falkingham, Tom Williamson and Jan Woudstra have all helped in the creation of this chapter.

² Harewood website <http://harewood.org/explore/capability-brown-300-festival-2016>, accessed 25 October 2017.

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Figure 6.1: *Harewood House from the south, having entered the park by Lofthouse Gates.* Harewood House in West Yorkshire is celebrated for its landscape setting that was transformed from the late-eighteenth century and which involved many of the important designers of the day including Capability Brown and Humphry Repton. Photo copyright Jonathan Finch, 2019, CC BY-NC 4.0.

in the early-seventeenth century by the Wentworth family, who inherited it through marriage in the 1570s. After the execution of Thomas Wentworth, 1st Earl of Strafford, at the outbreak of the Civil War, it was sold, and eventually bought by the Lascelles family, who still live on the estate today. Henry Lascelles installed his son Edwin as lord of the manor from about 1748, but the transformation of the landscape began in earnest after Henry's death in 1753. The 'New House at Gawthorpe', named Harewood House, was built by John Carr of York between 1758 and 1771, a period that coincided with Brown's rise from first establishing his own practice as a landscape designer or 'place-maker' in 1751 to being lauded as 'the great Arbiter of British Taste' by 1772.³ As such it can be used as a measure of his status, his methods, and his contribution to landscape design.

The earliest representation of the landscape is a late seventeenth-century plan of Gawthorpe, made for John Boulter, who inherited the estate in 1697. It shows the manor house, with its compact formal gardens, canal, and fish pond, amidst a landscape of enclosures and woodland. By the time Jonathan Teal made his survey a century later in 1796, the landscape had been transformed into a park, with clumps, belts, rides and a serpentine lake, overlooked by the palatial Harewood House built on a new site, raised up above the lake. The process by which the landscape of Gawthorpe was erased to create the modern landscape of Harewood is, however, far from clear.

³ *Public Advertiser*, 9 September 1772.

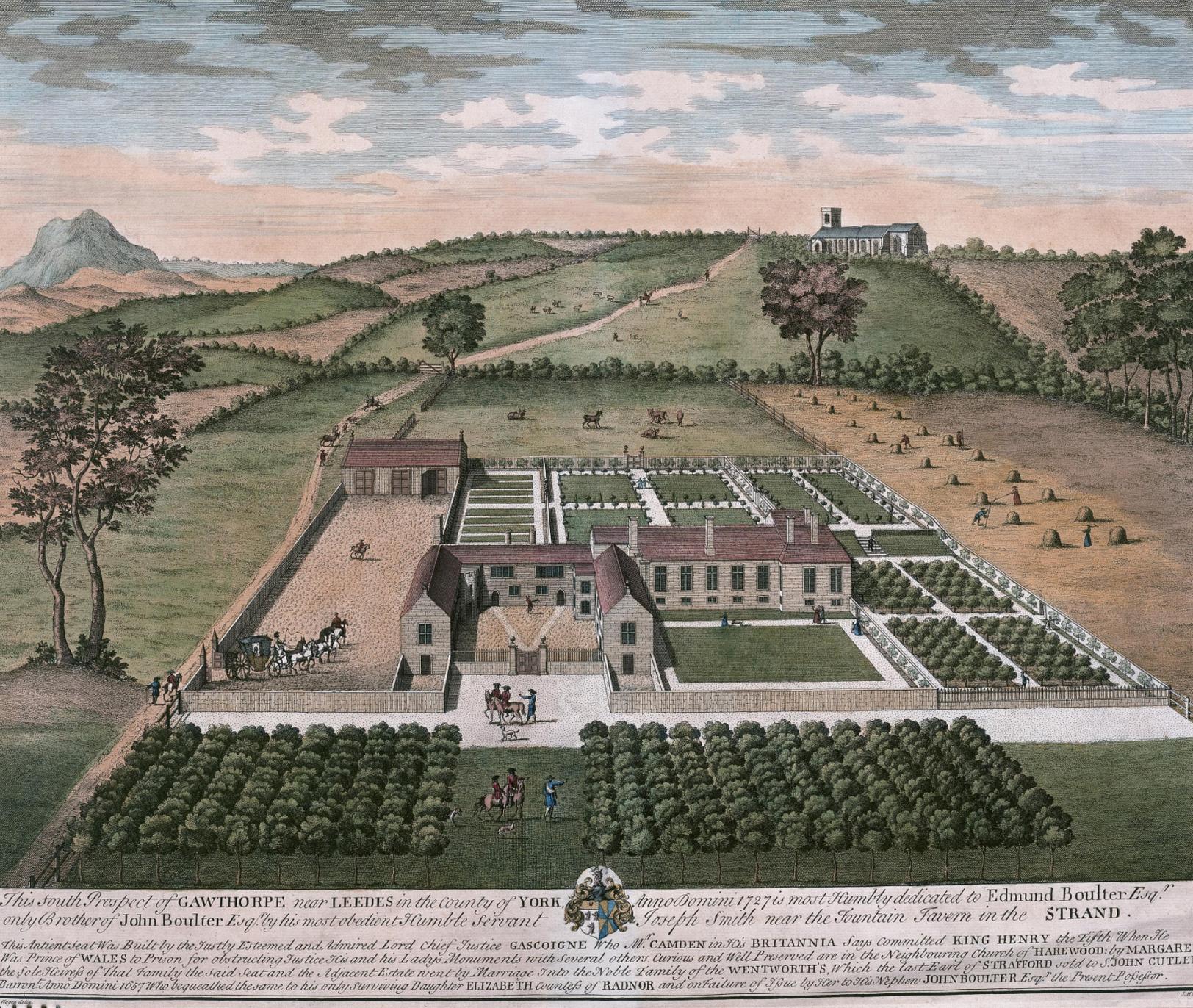


Figure 6.2: South Prospect of Gawthorpe near Leedes in the County of York, Willem van Hagen, 1727. Gawthorpe Hall, was the late medieval focus of the Harewood landscape and home to the Gascoigne family for thirteen generations. Reproduced by courtesy of the Earl and Countess of Harewood and Harewood House Trust.

Gawthorpe

The landscape depicted on the estate plan of c. 1698 (Figure 6.3) bears the marks of its gradual evolution. Areas of medieval open field still existed, although the general character, typical of the West Riding, was of small piecemeal enclosures. A good number of trees and pieces of woodland were interspersed amongst the fields. For example, in 1657 Oak Close, near to the hall itself, had 140 oaks ‘for fierwood’, probably pollarded within wood-pasture, and twenty ash trees.⁴ Commons were extensive with ‘Weardley Moore’ to the west and the contiguous Harewood, East Keswick, and Rigton commons to the east. Harewood common is shown with a number of enclosures or ‘intakes’ which were described as ‘new’ in the 1650s.

⁴ WYAS HAR/Surveys/10a Survey of Trees at Gawthorpe, Harewood and Weardley 10 January 1657; see Williamson, T., Barnes, G. & Pillatt, T. (2017). *Trees in England: Management and disease since 1600*. Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press.



Figure 6.3: Detail from *Gawthorpe Estate plan* c. 1698. The earliest representation of Gawthorpe. It shows the hall in the midst of an enclosed landscape, its fish pond to the west and the parish church to the north. Reproduced by courtesy of the Earl and Countess of Harewood and Harewood House Trust.

The house itself was surrounded by modest formal gardens and orchards, all of about three acres, surrounded by a high stone wall. The licence to crenellate Gawthorpe Hall, granted to the Gascoignes in 1480 after a phase of substantial remodelling, included the emparking of around 2,000 acres of land. It was disparked at the very beginning of the seventeenth century, but was described in 1656 as ‘in former tymes stored with Deere, a Parklike place it is’, and field names such as ‘High Park’ survived to indicate its extent.⁵ To the south-west of the house was the ‘Great Stanke or Pond’, reportedly well stocked with trout, roach, gudgeon, and eels, and fed by a small tributary of the Wharfe, which also powered a watermill.

The house and gardens shown on the late seventeenth-century plan accord to a high degree with the two best images of the house and landscape, which were produced in the 1720s, one from the south (Figure 6.2), the other from the north, and likely represent what the Lascelles purchased in 1739 (Figure 6.4). The west of the manorial complex was occupied by a cobbled service or stable yard, on the north side a kitchen or herb garden, next to a larger formal garden of gravel paths and clipped shrubs, whilst along the eastern side of the buildings a similar formal compartment was terraced with steps down into the orchard gardens. A large lawn or bowling green occupied the south front of the hall’s classically proportioned extension, described as the ‘new building’ in 1656, with a three-sided courtyard in front of the medieval hall range.⁶

Such was the continuity of the landscape between the late-seventeenth century and when the Lascelles arrived at the end of the 1730s that the first survey of tenants and land for the new owners simply used the

⁵ WYL250/2/Sur/12a Survey of Harewood, 10 November 1656.

⁶ WYL250/2/Sur/12a Survey of Harewood, 10 November 1656.

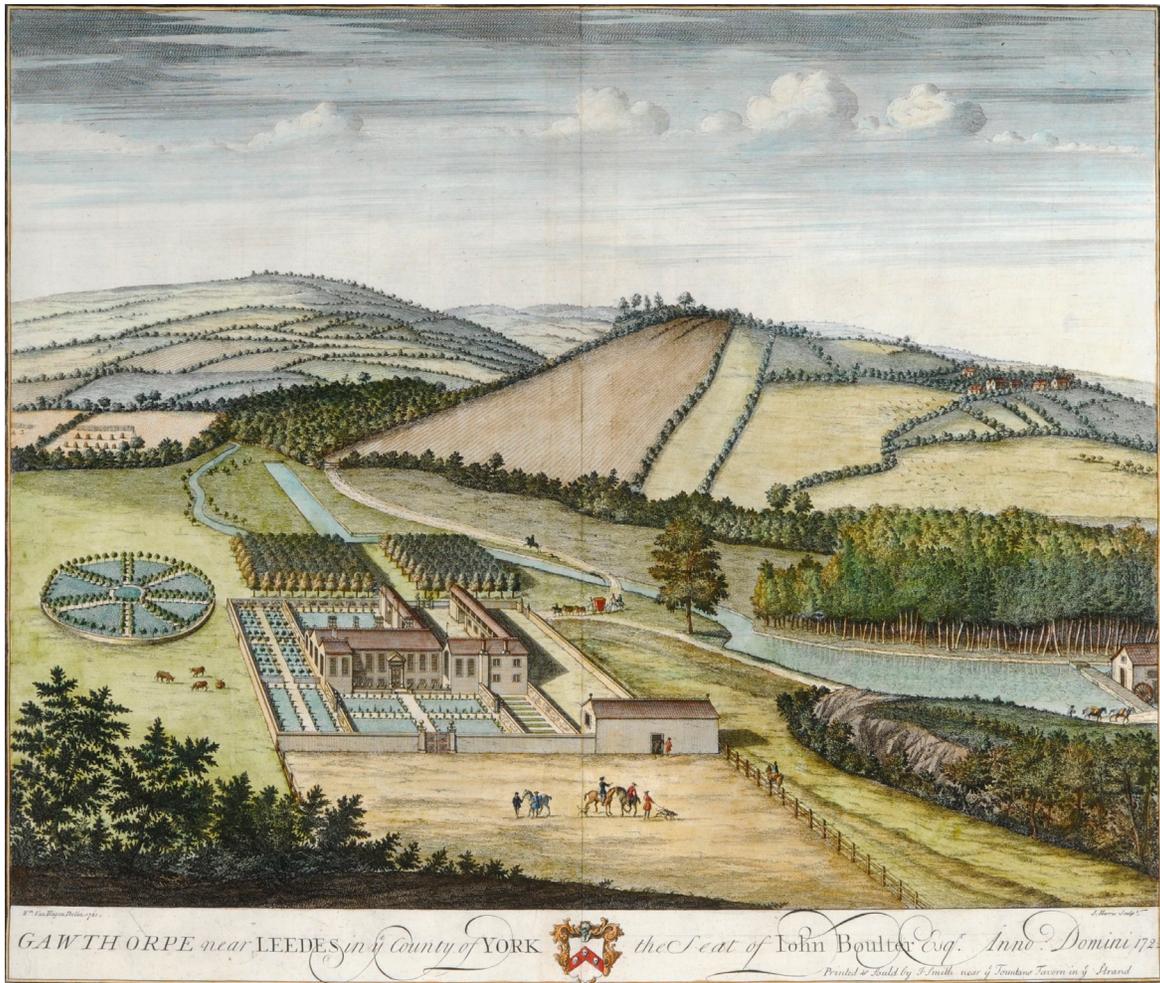


Figure 6.4: *Gawthorpe near Leedes in ye County of YORK*, Willem van Hagen, 1722. The earlier of the pair of prints from the 1720s shows Gawthorpe from the north, with the stable yard and terraced formal gardens, the watermill at the head of the fish pond (far right), and an ornamental canal axially aligned with the hall. Reproduced by courtesy of the Earl and Countess of Harewood and Harewood House Trust.

late seventeenth-century plan and its numbering system.⁷ It seems clear, therefore, that the major transformation of the landscape began after the arrival of the Lascelles in 1739, with the most significant changes implemented after Edwin Lascelles inherited in 1753. The initial phase of Lascelles ownership up to 1753 saw attempts to adapt the manor house and landscape to the needs of its new owners, rather than a fundamental change. In 1749 Francis Richardson (d. 1761) was paid £16-16s for six days attendance and for a 'fair design of the plantations &c about Gawthorp House'.⁸ Little is known of Richardson, who worked in the north and was a contemporary of the Greenings.⁹ Having worked at Worksop in 1738, he worked extensively at Welbeck Abbey (Notts) for the Countess of Oxford between 1745 and 1752, and latterly at Cannon Hall, near Barnsley just thirty miles south of Gawthorpe, for John Spencer. Richardson had a preference for the contemporary late geometric style, integrating some informality within an essentially traditional, geometric framework, but

⁷ WYL250/3/Sur/13b Survey of Harewood, c. 1738–39.

⁸ WYL 250/3/Estate Accounts/225 Cash Book 8 August 1749.

⁹ Jacques, D. (1983). *Georgian gardens: The reign of nature* (p. 72). London: Batsford; Williamson, T. & Brown, D. (2016). *Lancelot Brown and the Capability Men: Landscape revolution in eighteenth-century England* (pp. 115–116). London: Reaktion Books; For the Greenings see Bott, this volume.

by 1759 he had responded to changing tastes and proposed clumps, belts, and a sinuous lake at Atherton in Lancashire.¹⁰

His plans for Gawthorpe do not survive, but work started on a ha-ha in 1751, and over 1,000 fir trees were purchased in March 1753.¹¹ Work had also begun on the kitchen garden and hothouses in 1750 and two years later the hot house was glazed and stocked with pineapples, including 100 brought from Newburgh Priory in North Yorkshire.¹² The combination of ha-ha, walled kitchen garden, and plantations suggests that a new set of landscape aesthetics was being implemented, with the productive element removed to a discreet distance and views opened up across the wider landscape. In many ways these were very similar characteristics to those found in the landscapes Brown designed in the early stages of his career. It is not clear if Richardson had any input over the second half of the decade before his death in 1761, but slope-making and alterations to Gawthorpe Hall itself appear in the accounts.

The apparent hiatus in landscaping during the late 1750s coincides with Edwin Lascelles's decision to embark on building a new house, on a new site, and on a new scale, following the death of his father. The site for the 'New House at Gawthorpe' had been determined by 1755, and the local architect John Carr submitted plans for the house that year, whilst beginning to work on the new stable block. Lascelles continued to actively review all possible architectural options even after Carr had submitted plans; he paid for plans from William Chambers in 1755/6, and then integrated Robert Adam's ideas into Carr's original plans just before work began in early 1759.¹³

It is much harder to discern the same degree of consultation about the landscape from the documentary evidence, although Lascelles was in correspondence with other landowners engaged in similar projects, such as Richard Sykes at Sledmere in the East Riding.¹⁴ There is, however, no record of Richardson providing a plan for the landscape around the new house, but in early 1758 Brown made his first visit to Harewood, for which he was paid £21.¹⁵ Already lauded as 'the famous Mr Brown', Robert Teesdale, the head gardener at Castle Howard, who had been advising about the new kitchen garden, wrote excitedly to Lascelles's steward Samuel Popplewell asking to see 'a few random Pencil Strokes of Mr Brown's Designs for your Place' and later called Brown 'that Great Man'.¹⁶ Brown's account book has undated entries for 'Two General Plans for the House' and 'A General plan for the Ground', which he must have submitted shortly after his visit, demonstrating firstly that the ongoing discussions about the house were not definitively concluded and, secondly, that Brown saw the two elements, the house and the surrounding landscape, as equally important.¹⁷

The timing and purpose of Brown's visit to Harewood in 1758 is critical to the interpretation of the landscape that evolved over the next twenty-five years, as it is bound up in the decision to build a new house in a new location, integrated with a new ornamental landscape and parkland, all in the latest neo-classical taste. It is tempting to suggest, therefore, that, when work started on the house soon after Brown's visit, his opinions were important at least to the relationship between the house and the landscape, and the coherence of the landscape around the house. It must be borne in mind, however, that it was far from unusual to commission and then reject plans even from prominent designers. Christopher Sykes, who took over the Sledmere project from his father, Richard, in 1770, commissioned and rejected plans from both Brown and Thomas White, before incorporating elements of their ideas into his own preferred design.¹⁸

Without the plans, Brown's vision for the 'capabilities' at Harewood must remain conjectural, as must their relationship with the extant historic landscape. However, the payment to Brown for his visit, the fact that Brown

¹⁰ Cowell, F. (2005). *Richard Woods (1715/6–1793): Surveyor, improver and master of the pleasure garden* (pp. 112, 185–187, 191). Norwich: University of East Anglia; Laird, M. (1999). *The flowering of the landscape garden* (pp. 121–124). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press; Jacques, D. (2015). *Georgian gardens* (p. 72).

¹¹ WYL250/3/Estate Accounts/225 Cash Book June 1751, April 1752, March 1753.

¹² WYL250/3/Estate Accounts/225 Cash Book June–August 1750; WYL250/3/Estate Accounts/225 Cash Book April–August 1752.

¹³ Wragg, B. (2000). *The life and works of John Carr of York*. York: Oblong.

¹⁴ Mauchline, M. (1992). *Harewood House: One of the treasure houses of Britain* (pp. 23–24). Ashbourne: Moorland Pub. Co.

¹⁵ WYL250/ACC/247, Payment to Brown by Lascelles £21, 12 December 1758; Perhaps worth around £3,000 today – see Floud, R. (2016). Capable Entrepreneur? Lancelot Brown and his finances. *Occasional Papers from the RHS Library*, 14, 19–41.

¹⁶ WYL250/CORR/2, Robert Teesdale to Samuel Popplewell 12 March 1758/9; Mauchline, M. (1992). *Harewood House* (p. 36).

¹⁷ RHS Lindley Library: Lancelot Brown Account Book, 1759–83 [MS 998 BRO BRO]. Available online at <https://www.rhs.org.uk/education-learning/libraries-at-rhs/collections/library-online/capability-brown-account-book>, accessed 27 September 2016, f 118.

¹⁸ Neave, D. & Turnbull, D. (1992). *Landscaped parks and gardens of East Yorkshire* (pp. 65–67). Hull: Georgian Society for East Yorkshire.

produced plans for the house and for the landscape, and, critically, the close relationship between Brown's visit and the start of work all suggest that Brown was well placed to influence the design of the landscape. The uncertainty about Brown's influence on the Harewood landscape is, however, compounded by the fact that, after the single payment in 1758, Brown did not receive regular payments relating to Harewood until 1774. Such a long absence – some sixteen years – during which extensive works were under way, might suggest instead that Brown's vision for the landscape had been rejected by Lascelles. However, a closer examination of events, in the context of what is now known of Brown's networks and working practices, arguably supports the idea that Brown may have maintained a degree of influence over the landscaping *in absentia*, through his network of foremen.

Significantly it was Richard Woods (1715–93), not Brown, who was consulted about the landscape at Harewood after Richardson's death in 1761. Woods appears to have been the preferred successor locally as he also took over similar Richardson commissions at nearby Cannon Hall and Cusworth, where Woods submitted detailed instructions and plans for creating the lakes, in what might be considered a Brownian style.¹⁹ Woods's tenure at Harewood was, however, brief. In mid-March 1764 he staked out a southern approach road to the new house from Lofthouse with Samuel Popplewell.²⁰ In November he was paid £56-14s-0d for surveying and 'setting out the grounds', and his foreman Anthony Sparrow was also paid £12-3s-0d for his wages and his 'journey to Gawthorpe'.²¹ The immediate focus of their attention was probably the northern pleasure grounds, which would shield the house from the new turnpike road and offered views across Wharfedale.²² By early February 1765, Sparrow and his men had begun 'shaving the hill' to the north of the house, whilst Lascelles instructed the gardener on where to get trees for planting from within the estate.²³ By early March Sparrow's gang was 'very busie trenching and planting', but Woods was being elusive and Sparrow told Popplewell he had not heard from him.²⁴ By May the situation had deteriorated irretrievably as Woods struggled to cope with the logistics of his own success and fell out with his foremen. Woods left Harewood abruptly, and ordered Sparrow to join him in Northumberland.²⁵ Sparrow, whose relationship with both Woods and Popplewell had been defined by his drinking, applied to stay at Harewood and, surprisingly, was kept on after assurances that he would reform his behaviour and with Popplewell's assurances that he was capable of executing the landscape plans.²⁶

The choice of Thomas White (1739–1811) to succeed Woods in 1765 marks a return to Brown and his foremen. White had worked for Brown from April 1759 until July 1765, at Chillington (Staffs) and Glentworth (Lincs), as well as Temple Newsam and Sandbeck in Yorkshire.²⁷ Brown prepared a plan of Temple Newsam, ten miles south of Harewood, for Charles Ingram in 1762, and White worked there for Brown, probably as a foreman, in the early 1760s.²⁸ Lascelles had already shown an interest in the improvements at Temple Newsam, and wrote to Popplewell in December 1761 instructing him to 'take the Gardener to Temple Newsam, you will then be able to judge by se'in theirs how it is conducted'.²⁹ White left Brown's direct employ in 1765 and worked immediately at Harewood for Edwin Lascelles.³⁰ Woods's premature departure had left Edwin Lascelles mid-project and his employment of a new designer without his own portfolio would have been an uncharacteristic gamble. The fact that White was in charge at Harewood until Brown's return in the early 1770s suggests that Brown might have played a part in promoting his former employee as someone to execute the improvement of

¹⁹ Cowell, F. (2009). *Richard Woods* (pp. 117, 185–193); Jacques, D. (2015). *Georgian gardens* (p. 83).

²⁰ WYL250/CORR/5 19 March 1764, f 108.

²¹ WYL250/3/247.

²² Cowell, F. (2009). *Richard Woods* (pp. 196–197); Hay, M. (1993). *The northern pleasure ground of Harewood* (p. 26). Unpublished dissertation (MA, University of York).

²³ WYL250/CORR/5 9 February 1765, f 156; WYL250/CORR/5 20 February 1765, f 160; Hay, M. (1993). *The northern pleasure ground of Harewood* (p. 44).

²⁴ WYL250/CORR/5 21 March 1765, f 161.

²⁵ WYL250/CORR/5 1 May 1765, f 166.

²⁶ Cowell, F. (2009). *Richard Woods* (pp. 154–155); WYL250/CORR/5 1 May 1765, f 166; 12 May 1765, f 168.

²⁷ Account of Lancelot Brown at Drummonds Bank, RBS Archives: 1759: £170, 1760: £385, 1761: 585, 1762: £590, 1763: £560, 1764: £350, 1765: £325 LB a/c Drummonds.

²⁸ Jacques suggests that White was 'far more independent than any of Brown's foremen' *Georgian gardens* (p. 87).

²⁹ WYL250/CORR/5 3 December 1761; see also Hay, M. (1993). *The northern pleasure ground of Harewood* (p. 46).

³⁰ Turnbull, D. (1990). *Thomas White (1739–1811): Eighteenth-century landscape designer and arboriculturist* (pp. 5, 80). Unpublished thesis (PhD, University of Hull).

the site in a manner compatible with both Brown and Lascelles's vision of seven years earlier, and in preparation for Brown's return.³¹

Having first visited Harewood in December 1765, White returned in late February and reviewed the resources available in the estate nurseries, 'plumps', and plantations. He concluded that 'a great number of Firs are now wanted' and submitted an order for 3,000 trees to Mr Perfect's nursery in Pontefract, most of which Sparrow had planted by late April.³² White was paid for drawings in November 1766, and a large-scale plan survives at Harewood.³³ It shows the grounds including shrubberies to the east of the house, the northern pleasure grounds, and to the south a large lake. White set about 'contracting' Wood's scheme in the pleasure grounds to save on the costs of mowing, and the accounts show that he was engaged with earth-moving projects, including a ha-ha or sunken fence, and that he also constructed a mount, on which he set out the planting in January 1767.³⁴ By March he had set out an 'open plantation upon the first swell of the ground from the church ... and mark't out several places for odd trees', which like the 'Great Hill' was to be planted chiefly with large trees, firs and shrubs from the estate nursery. Popplewell assured Lascelles that 'you will find a vast deal of Trees has been planted & many of them very large'.³⁵ White provided a further catalogue of evergreens and other plants, which Popplewell estimated would cost 'upwards of £60'; Sparrow was despatched with the waggon to collect them from the nursery in Pontefract, and White returned in April to supervise the planting.³⁶ White was again at Harewood in February the next year searching the nurseries for suitable plants with which to thicken the plantations and, as Lascelles wanted to finish the planting that season, White prepared his final catalogue.³⁷

White's time at Harewood, like that of Woods, was not without its tensions, perhaps as a result of Sparrow's continued presence and disappointment that White, only twenty-seven years old, had been brought in above him. The fact that White wrote directly to Lascelles also appears to have upset Popplewell's sensibilities. Popplewell reported in March 1766, for example, that 'Sparrow does not approve of the sunk fence to the west as Mr White has staked it out', and frequently took the opportunity to contrast Sparrow's 'exceeding careful and diligent' attitude with the intervals between White's visits, although White's vouchers for 1767 indicate that he visited every fortnight in the planting season and one or two days every three weeks in the summer.³⁸ Exactly when White left Harewood is unclear. It may have been in the spring or summer of 1768, when the planting was completed, and demand grew across the county for his services – he undertook three new commissions in the East Riding in 1768/9, at Burton Constable, Houghton Hall, and Welton House. It is perhaps no coincidence that by the end of February 1768 Popplewell reported that Sparrow was 'quite reformed, is becoming exceedingly careful and sober. I'm told he thinks of matrimoney', and then in November Popplewell referred to 'Mr Sparrow', perhaps suggesting an elevation after White's departure.³⁹ There was however another hiatus in landscaping during 1769, which could suggest White left having largely completed his scheme of works, but in early 1770 work began again.

Harewood and Brown

The 1770s marked the final phase in the creation of the new landscape at Harewood. Edwin Lascelles moved into his new house in 1771, having married the year before. But when he moved in the northern lawn and pleasure ground were unfinished and the key aesthetic view – that immediately below the south front of the new house – was yet to be started. Looking south, down the hill, the area where the new lake would be was

³¹ White also filled an interregnum between Brown's first visit and later formal involvement at Burton Constable, Jacques, D. (2015). *Georgian gardens* (p. 88).

³² WYL250/ACC/269 Cash Book 1745–81, f 22; WYL250/CORR/5 1 March 1766.

³³ WYL250/3/269 f 126; Turnbull did not see the plan. It is currently mounted, but inaccessible for reproduction. See Finch, J. 'Thomas White's plan of Gawthorpe, 1766', forthcoming.

³⁴ The location of the mount is unknown. Hay argues it was a raised walk within the northern pleasure grounds, but Cowell suggests it was south of the house. John Jewell in *The tourists companion* (1822) describes an octagon seat in the northern pleasure ground as being 'fixed on a mount' (p. 42). It is not identified on the key to White's plan so may have been inherited from Woods's scheme.

³⁵ WYL250/CORR/5 f 205 7 March 1767; f 207 16 March 1767.

³⁶ WYL250/CORR/5 f 208 No date – but between 1 April and before 13 April 1767.

³⁷ WYL250/CORR/5 f 214 13 February 1768.

³⁸ WYL250/ACC/ 379 SP Bills and Vouchers 1767; Hay, M. (1993). *The northern pleasure ground of Harewood* (p. 51).

³⁹ WYL250/CORR/5 f 216, 27 February 1768; f 218, 16 November 1768.

described in 1767 as ‘swamps & Marshes’, and between the new house and the water stood Gawthorpe Hall.⁴⁰ Brown and his foremen returned to Harewood after a gap of almost fifteen years to construct the lake and put the finishing touches to the grand scheme. The majority of the work for this phase was carried out by two of Brown’s team – Dickinson and Sanderson.⁴¹ Dickinson appears in the records from early 1770, before Brown’s plan of the proposed water in 1772 and the regular payments to Brown that begin in 1774, whereas Sanderson is not mentioned until work on the new lake had begun in earnest from 1776, suggesting he was drafted in specifically to deal with the difficult hydraulic engineering.

Dickinson’s arrival in 1770 is significant because, as one of Brown’s network of trusted and skilled workmen, it demonstrates Brown’s influence on the site before 1772. Popplewell cast his critical eye over the new arrival and found him, unusually, ‘never wanting’ and ‘exceedingly diligent’, though perhaps ‘want[ing] more authority’.⁴² In February 1770 Dickinson and his team of nineteen men were at work from before six o’clock each day, ‘removing of the earth about the building’.⁴³ ‘Moving the hill’ on the north side of the house had been one of the most significant pieces of work undertaken during the landscaping, and had been going on since at least 1765. The Duchess of Northumberland commented in 1771 that the site of the new house was ‘very bad’ because ‘[Mr Lascelles] is forced to take away at immense labour & expence a l[a]rge hill w[hi]ch rises immediately in front of it’.⁴⁴ George Hunter, just one of the men with a gang of labourers involved in the task, was paid nearly £400 for his part in removing the hill over the year 1771/2.⁴⁵ As Hunter and his men dug, Dickinson was busy planting large trees and filling in with small ones, just as White had done, before staking, raising, and ‘dishing’ the earth around their roots, but by 1774 he was setting out ‘the Pattern Lines for the men that are moving the earth’, presumably prescribed by Brown, as the area was shaped and planted.⁴⁶

With the north front nearing completion, attention turned to the south, and the primary task was the demolition of Gawthorpe Hall in order to clear the view to the lake. Work to dismantle the house had begun in April 1770, when the interior was gutted, and the glass was removed in February 1771.⁴⁷ The house was cleared of ‘rubbish’ in February 1773, and then John Muschamp, the estate mason, began the demolition of the buildings themselves later in the spring.⁴⁸ A frustrated Edwin Lascelles demanded that Muschamp be ‘expeditious’, but his final bill for ‘pulling down the Old House’ was not presented until September 1774.⁴⁹

The length of time it took to remove Gawthorpe Hall reflects the extent of the building, its courtyards, and gardens, as well as the monumental size of the medieval structures. Excavations on the site (2009–12) revealed part of the manorial complex and, critically, the earth moving enacted by Brown and his men to erase the site from view.⁵⁰ The manor house was taken down only as far as was absolutely necessary to achieve the carefully graded slope to Brown’s new lake. On the higher north side of the structure one or two courses of stone were left of retaining walls to the gardens and on the north face of the hall itself. However, on the south side the medieval walls, which were up to 1.5 m wide, had been removed to the top of the foundations, level with the cobble courtyard, parts of which also remained *in situ*. Between the two external walls, internal floors and steps remained where they could be accommodated in the gradient, with a single course left on top of the medieval

⁴⁰ Ismay, Rev. J. (1945). A visit to Chapel Allerton and Harewood in 1767. *Transactions of the Thoresby Society*, 37, 333–344 (p. 339).

⁴¹ Stroud (1975, *Capability Brown*) believes ‘Dickinson’ was Cornelius Dickinson; Brown and Williamson (2016, *Lancelot Brown and the Capability Men*) follow Stroud’s lead, but Hay (1993, *The northern pleasure ground of Harewood*) calls him a ‘local man’. There were Dickinsons resident at Harewood throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the estate survey 1796/7, the interestingly named Lancelot Dickinson held the second largest tenanted farm of 209 acres. The ‘Dickinson’ who appears regularly in the correspondence is clearly an experienced landscaper and planter and a close reading of the archive indicates he was connected to Brown, and was therefore most likely to be Cornelius Dickinson. Lynch (2016, *Capability Brown in Yorkshire* in P. Eyres [Ed.] *Yorkshire Capabilities: the Yorkshire landscapes of Capability Brown*. Leeds: New Arcadian Press) has Christopher Sanderson, although he is habitually referred to as Mr Sanderson or just Sanderson in the correspondence.

⁴² WYL250/CORR/5 7 July 1770; 31 March 1770; 29 February 1770.

⁴³ WYL250/CORR/5 29 February 1770; 21 March 1770.

⁴⁴ Lynch, K. (2003). *The tourists: Selected extracts from the accounts of early visitors to Harewood House*. Unpublished.

⁴⁵ WYL250/247 Stewards Cash Book. Perhaps around £30,000 today – see Floud, R. (2016). Capable entrepreneur? Lancelot Brown and his finances. *Occasional Papers from the RHS Library*, 14, 19–41

⁴⁶ WYL250/CORR/5 13 February 1771, f 243; 20 February 1771, f 244; 26 February 1774, f 274.

⁴⁷ WYL HAR 225 Stewards Cash Book 1763–75 unpaginated, 14 April 1770, 21 February 1771.

⁴⁸ WYL250/CORR/5 f 263, 15 February 1773; f 266 31 March 1773.

⁴⁹ WYL250/CORR/4/2/15 8 February 1773; WYL HAR 225 Stewards Cash Book 1763–75 unpaginated, 5 September 1774.

⁵⁰ Finch, J. et al. (forthcoming). *Making the modern: Gawthorpe Hall, Harewood House and creating the English landscape*.

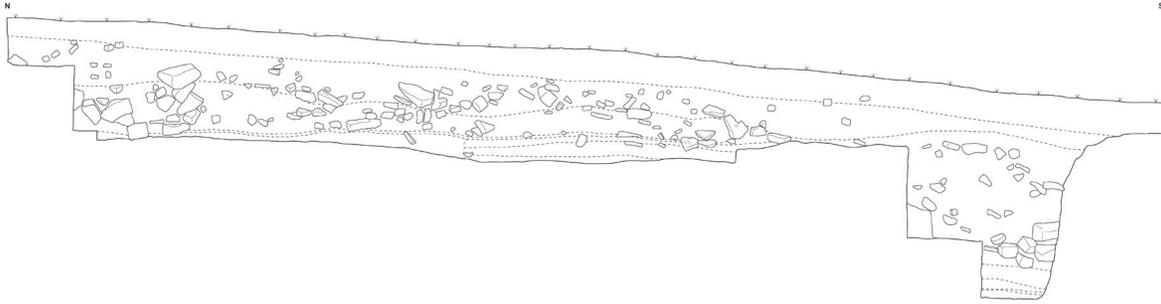


Figure 6.5: A section drawing from the excavation of Gawthorpe Hall showing how voids were filled with large rubble which was levelled off with a demolition layer, over which was a finely graded levelling layer and topsoil. The retaining wall of the garden (far left) was less than 30 cm below the surface. Drawing by Neil Gevaux. Copyright Jonathan Finch CC BY-NC 4.0.

wall footings. Very little worked stone was recovered from the site indicating it was re-used elsewhere on the estate, probably in the village, as the main house itself had been completed.

Once the buildings had been dismantled and removed, the new slope was carefully graded over the former hearths, floors, and foundations. Voids which had been left within the building, such as between the building and the terraced garden for example, were first filled with large pieces of rubble from the demolished building. The whole site was then covered with a demolition layer of rubble pieces, broken bricks, and a considerable amount of plaster or lime, within which was mixed discarded ceramic and glassware. This layer was then levelled off with a layer of finer material, of smaller pieces, again mixed with broken ceramics and glass, over which the final covering of topsoil was applied. The demolition layer was spread right across the site, to a depth of up to 40 cm, whereas the levelling layer was between 10 and 20 cm, suggesting a very carefully planned and expedient process (Figure 6.5). However, the depth at which medieval Gawthorpe was buried was considerably less than recommended by contemporaries and may reflect the urgency of the operation. In June 1773 Dickinson lowered the ground on the south side of the new house, most likely immediately in front of the house itself, where Muschamp laid flagstones in 1775.⁵¹ Once the flags had been laid along the length of the house in 1776, Brown's newly arrived foreman Sanderson, ploughed the south front in advance of sowing, marking the final obliteration of the earlier, medieval manorial complex and its landscape.

The final two works that would complete the southern park were the approach road from Lofthouse Gates, designed by Carr in 1771, and the 'pond' or lake itself. The southern approach from Lofthouse on the Leeds Road was conceived to provide a number of views of the house at different angles and distances. It began with a high and distant view of the house from the gates (see Fig. 6.1) before descending into the woods, crossing the beck at the south-eastern end of the new lake, then emerging for a dramatic view, framed by planting, below the southern front of the house, before making its way up to the east of the house and around to the northern entrance. A similar route had been staked out by Richard Woods in 1764, but in March 1774 Dickinson and his men were 'sinking and stoneing the Coach Road up the west end of the Bridge as Mr Brown set it out' and by May they had 'finished the Ends of the Bridge & the Road thro' the Wood & that part which leads to Lofthouse Gate'.⁵²

The centrepiece of this landscape was, undoubtedly, the expanse of water. Given Brown's reputation for mastering water within a landscape, it is sometimes assumed that the lake was entirely Brown's creation. However, when the late seventeenth-century plan of Gawthorpe is overlaid on the modern landscape it is clear that the northern or upper part of the lake maps closely onto the earlier 'Great Stank' or fish pond, and it is the southern or lower end which was new, wrapping around the southern end of the kitchen gardens and creating a broad expanse of water at the eastern end visible from the new house. It is worth noting that Lascelles had contemplated improving the dam and pond in 1757, a year before Brown's first visit, with John Wooler of

⁵¹ WYL250/CORR/5 7 June 1773, f 269; 17 May 1775.

⁵² WYL250/CORR/5 12 March 1774 f 275; 19 March 1774, f 276; 14 May 1774 f 278.

Whitby producing a detailed design. Originally a military engineer, Wooler had worked on several projects in the north-east including the port of Bridlington and Clifford's Fort on the Tyne.⁵³

Brown's visit in 1758 possibly resulted in Wooler's practical designs being dropped in favour of wider ambitions and something more fashionable. Brown's plan of the water from 1772 makes it clear that this was to be his major contribution, overriding White's plan, and he visited to supervise the initial work on the site of the new lake in 1774, as Popplewell wrote: 'I think Mr Brown will soon be weary of his 3 wheeled cart in that flat ground.'⁵⁴ Dickinson raised the banks to take the new water level, whilst Sanderson and his men were engaged levelling and 'sinking' – or deepening – the area for the new water in April and May 1777. However, Popplewell reported that the new dam head proved problematic immediately: 'The beginning of last week we put down the plug at the Dam Head & you will (if possible) be more surprised than I was when I tell you that the water ran out half as fas[t] as it came in.'⁵⁵ Sanderson opened up the dam and discovered a leak in the clay wall, and in February and March 1778 work was under way sloping the banks and raising the clay wall at the dam head.⁵⁶ Popplewell also reported that, whilst working on the pond, Dickinson had returned several times to the front of the house and 'quickly perceived that the Pond must be widened.'⁵⁷ Popplewell then accompanied Dickinson as he staked out a new line, roughly ninety feet wider than Brown's plan, of which the steward concluded 'I think will look well'. This is important evidence because it clearly shows that Brown's foreman was confident and trusted enough to take the initiative, and had the ability to achieve Brown's overall vision, even when it meant adapting his plans.

By May, however, there was another problem with the water at the dam head, which had 'wrought a hole close to the Plug next the Water just where it was before so large as to bury a horse & has caused the Earth to drop in & part of the gravel walk but has not broken thro' the clay wall.'⁵⁸ How best to resolve the problem and whose labour to use rumbled on and caused considerable friction between Sanderson and Popplewell.⁵⁹ In an effort to solve the problem Lascelles and Popplewell looked again to civil engineers, including Robert Owen, engineer for the Leeds–Liverpool Canal, before settling on James Hudson, who Popplewell reported was 'a very clever, sensible man and [appeared] to know what he is about.'⁶⁰ However, by March 1780 the dam head had failed again and this time James Hudson offered to overhaul the structure, which he thought weak, including a new plug and plug tree, for £200 with a £1,000 bond that it would last for fourteen years.⁶¹ It was thus Hudson's intervention that finally secured the success of Brown's main contribution to the maturing landscape (Figure 6.6).

Once the lake was finished, work ornamenting the grounds continued with John Muschamp the estate mason building a temple in the 'Fir Plomp' by the side of the lake, pictured in an early painting by Nicholas Dall and finishing the walks around the water's edge, whilst Carr designed a Temple of Venus in 1780, that stood on the edge of the plantation above the lake to the south, facing the house as an eye-catcher.⁶² Brown struggled to extract the money he was owed by Lascelles, eventually resorting to calling on him at his London house to press for payment. Lascelles complained that he had 'always said and did insist upon it that the ground was scandalous lay'd & beggarly Sown, and that Several other parts were Slovenly Run over and badly finished' but finally settled Brown's bill in May 1781.⁶³ The last payment to Sanderson was made on the 31st December 1781, and it is interesting to note in the context of the importance now placed on Brown's account book that Popplewell recorded 'it is a matter of indifference to Sanderson whether he receives the money from you or Mr Brown.'⁶⁴

Improvements continued after Brown and Sanderson had left Harewood, particularly in the northern pleasure ground. James Webb, described in the nineteenth century as one of Brown's 'pupils', received Sanderson's

⁵³ Rennison, R. W. (2002). Wooler, John. In, Skempton, A. W. et al. *A biographical dictionary of civil engineers in Great Britain and Ireland* (Vol. 1 1500–1830, pp. 797–798). London: Institute of Civil Engineers.

⁵⁴ WYL250/CORR/5 23 Mary 1774 f 279.

⁵⁵ WYL250/CORR/5 4 June 1777 f 310.

⁵⁶ WYL250/CORR/5 11 February 1778 f 311–312; 7 March 1777 f 313.

⁵⁷ WYL250/CORR/5 8 April 1778 f 317.

⁵⁸ WYL250/CORR/5 10 May 1778 f 317.

⁵⁹ WYL250/CORR/5 18 May 1778 f 319; 20 May 1778 f 319; 23 May 1778 ff 319–320.

⁶⁰ WYL250/CORR/5 3 June 1778 f 321.

⁶¹ WYL250/CORR/5 18 March 1780 f 338; WYL250/SC/4/2/50; WYL250/3/ACC/248.

⁶² WYL250/4/9/7–8 Plans of the temple dated 1780.

⁶³ WYL250/SC/4/2/39 28 March 1778.

⁶⁴ Quoted in Mauchline, M. (1992). *Harewood House* (p. 110).



Figure 6.6: *Harewood House from the south west*, J.M.W. Turner, 1797. Turner was one of the up-and-coming artists who visited Harewood to capture the house within the maturing landscape. In this view, the church is now all but invisible above the tree planting, and all trace of Gawthorpe has been erased from the grassy slope down to Brown's lake. Reproduced by courtesy of the Harewood House Trust.

final payment so was probably one of Sanderson's gang who remained and took charge of the works.⁶⁵ Webb finished the ha-ha on the southern side of the water, dressed the slopes, and made good the ground, before extending the layout of the northern pleasure grounds as far as the church. Adam Mickle, another of Brown's coterie, provided a plan of the plantations around the house and the northern approach road, including the new lodge gates designed by Robert Adam, in 1791.⁶⁶ So, just as it is difficult to identify the beginning of Brown's involvement at Harewood, so too his shadow is cast over its subsequent development, with workmen associated with Brown continuing to develop the grounds after Brown's death. At the beginning of the nineteenth century Humphry Repton – Brown's self-proclaimed successor and advocate – visited Harewood with

⁶⁵ Hay, M. (1993). *The northern pleasure ground of Harewood* (p. 54).

⁶⁶ WYL250/3/43 Estate plans.

a brief to improve the grounds. His main suggestion was a new entrance arch as the centrepiece within the village and a new approach drive from the arch to the east of the park, which, having entered the park from the village and new archway, curved to the south of the house before delivering guests to the north entrance.⁶⁷ However, as was often the case, Repton's plans were not adopted in full, particularly his desire to link the village and the park with a 'skreen' and arch. Instead, Muschamp the estate mason, presumably under direction from Lascelles, set the gate back from the village so as to become, in Repton's words 'unmeaning'.⁶⁸

Conclusion

Capability Brown's engagement at Harewood spanned his professional career and created one of the finest designed landscapes in Yorkshire, yet this study has demonstrated how difficult it can be to identify and isolate Brown's personal contribution to individual sites and to the development of landscape taste more generally in the second half of the eighteenth century. Far from emerging as the pre-eminent figure, Brown is elusive and problematic, one figure amongst many landscape designers, and one man amongst a complex network of surveyors and foremen who realised and adapted his vision. As such it suggests that traditional biographical and aesthetic narratives within historic landscape design might need to be re-assessed.

It can be argued that Brown's first visit to Harewood in 1758 set the framework for the landscape design at Harewood, but it is far from certain. When he returned some sixteen years after his first consultation, he was paid £6,800 over the next eight years to complete the landscape, yet between the visits both locally successful landscape designers and Brown's associates were employed at the site. It was, therefore, perhaps Brown's ability to provide reliable foremen and manage networks of workers to realise his landscapes that earned him as much business as his vision of the capabilities of the site. Woods failed to manage the project through Sparrow, but Brown sustained his professional relationships, even when Edwin Lascelles was critical of the results.

Through the first detailed examination of Harewood it is clear that connections between neighbouring owners with contemporaneous projects were as important as the *curriculum vitae* of the individual landscape designer. Edwin Lascelles's early efforts to improve the landscape drew on projects at nearby Cannon Hall and Cusworth Hall, but he was also corresponding with Yorkshire landowners engaged in landscaping at Sledmere, Newby, and Temple Newsam. The second key aspect to emerge from Harewood is that the succession of designers was underpinned by peripatetic foremen and gang leaders who were expected to negotiate complex relationships on the ground. The fact that Woods's foreman, Anthony Sparrow, stayed on at Harewood to work under White, and that White had worked for Brown at Temple Newsam before taking on Harewood, and that Lascelles considered retaining Sanderson after Brown left, shows that the owner's networks overlaid networks of foremen and associates that also provided links and continuities, beyond those of the designers themselves.

Harewood is significant to understanding Brown's work both because the grounds were created over a formative period of his career, and because the documentation and archaeology reveal much about his working practices. However, as with so many sites, the actual role Brown played is far from straightforward and many other landscape designers contributed to the developing landscape in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. It is only by detailed case studies such as this that we can understand the complex manner in which ideas were realised into landscapes, and it is only then that we can re-appraise how and why Brown achieved the success and celebrity that he did. But it will also serve to remind us that we might need to model a new vision of how designed landscapes were realised and developed over this most significant episode in the evolution of the landscape.

Select Bibliography

A select bibliography is available at the end of this volume, or at: <https://doi.org/10.22599/CapabilityBrown.o>.

⁶⁷ See Eyres, P. & Lynch, K. (2018). *On the spot: The Yorkshire Red Books of Humphry Repton, landscape gardener* (pp. 73–90). Leeds: New Arcadian Press.

⁶⁸ Finch, J. (2008). Three men in a boat: Biographies and narratives in the historic landscape. *Landscape Research*, 33(5), 511–530.